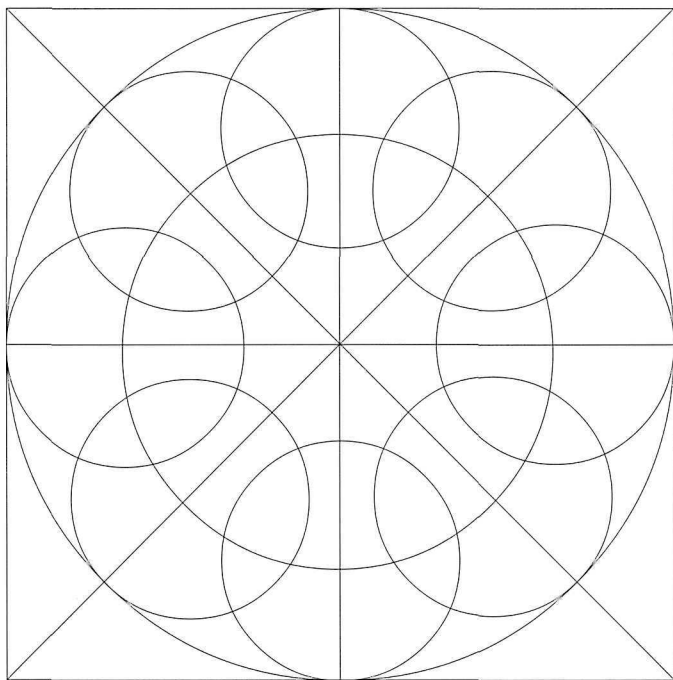


HISTORY IN THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



THEMES & CONCEPTS

HISTORY IN THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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The National Park Service's Revised Thematic Framework

Adopted by the National Park Service—1994
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Preamble

Over half of the units within the National Park Service (NPS) are cultural sites commemorating America's multi-faceted history. The NPS preserves these cultural resources—which include historic buildings, structures, landscapes and archaeological sites, as tangible evidence of the past—and strives to ensure that associated educational programming conveys an accurate and comprehensive view of history. The service also administers the National Historic Landmarks Program to recognize nationally significant cultural resources outside the park service. A conceptual tool for evaluating the significance of cultural resources within or outside the NPS is the service's "thematic framework" for history and prehistory. The framework is an outline of major themes and concepts that help us to conceptualize American history. It is used to help identify cultural resources that embody America's past and to describe and analyze the multiple layers of history encapsulated within each resource.

The first NPS thematic framework, adopted in 1936, consisted of several broad themes in American history. It was conceived in terms of the "stages of American progress" and focused mainly on the achievements of military and political figures. Revisions in 1970 and 1987 applied more detail in chronological and topical approaches and greatly expanded the number of themes and subthemes. However, the basic conceptualization of the past remained the same.

Thus, the 1987 framework did not adequately reflect how new scholarship has dramatically changed the way we look at the past. In the introduction to *The New American History* (1991), historian Eric Foner described this transformation:

In the course of the past twenty years, American history has been remade. Inspired initially by the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s—which shattered the "consensus" vision that had dominated historical writing—and influenced by new methods borrowed from other disciplines, American historians redefined the very nature of historical study.

That remaking of American's past has expanded the boundaries of historical inquiry to encompass not only great men and events but also ordinary people and everyday life.

Public Law 101-628, Section 1209 (1991) directed the NPS to revise the 1987 thematic framework to incorporate these new approaches to examining and understanding America's past. This resulted in a gathering of academic scholars and NPS professionals in Washington, DC, June 18-20, 1993, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the old framework and to develop a rough draft of a revised framework. The meeting, cosponsored by the Organization of American Historians and the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, and supported by the American Historical Association, resulted in a completely rethought, revised thematic framework. Through eight concepts that encompass the multi-faceted and interrelated nature of human experience, the revised thematic framework reflects a more interdisciplinary, less compartmentalized approach to American history.

The revised thematic framework is a significant departure from the thematic outlines previously used by the National Park Service. It, however, better serves the National Park Service and other interested parties in evaluating historic properties, in assessing how well American history is represented in existing park system units and other protected areas, and in enhancing park interpretive programs to provide a fuller understanding of the Nation's past.

Overview of the Revised Thematic Framework

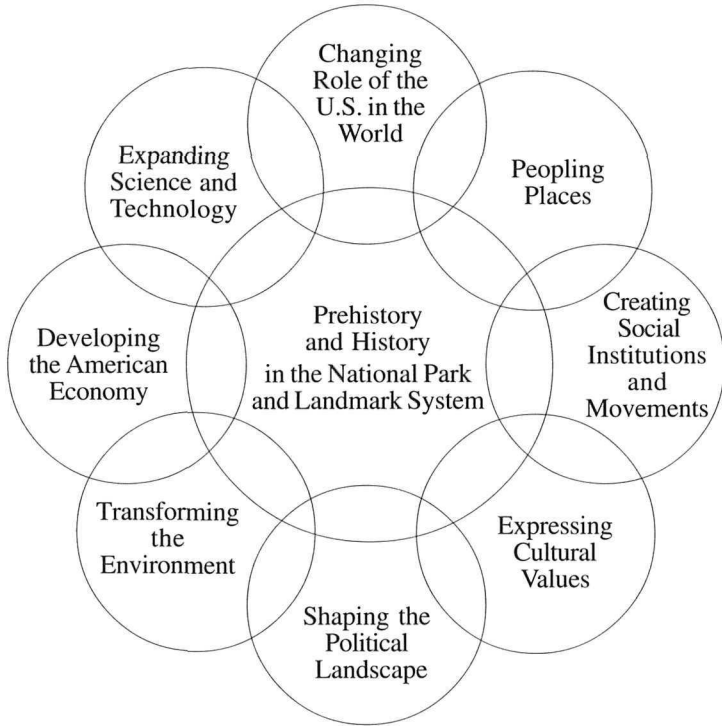
The revised framework will guide the NPS, working independently and with its partners in the private and public sectors, in:

- evaluating the significance of resources for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, for designation as National Historic Landmarks, or for potential addition to the National Park System;
- assessing how well the themes are currently represented in existing units of the National Park System and in other recognized areas; and,
- expanding and enhancing the interpretive programs at existing units of the National Park System to provide a fuller understanding of our nation's past.

The use of the framework need not be limited to the federal level, however, for the conceptualization it provides can equally inform preservation and interpretation at local, state, and regional levels.

The framework's themes are represented in the following diagram. They embrace prehistory to the modern period and a multiplicity of human experiences. The diagram reflects how scholarship is dramatically changing the way we look at the past, reconstructing it as integrated, diverse, complex, human experience. Each segment in the diagram represents a significant aspect of the human experience. The reality of the interrelationships is reflected in the overlapping circles.

The framework draws upon the work of scholars across disciplines to provide a structure for capturing the complexity and meaning of human experience and for understanding that past in coherent, integrated ways. For purposes of organization, the following outline, like the diagram, provides eight seemingly discrete categories, but they are not meant to be mutually exclusive. Cutting across and connecting the eight categories are three historical building blocks: people, time, and place.



People

The centrality of people may seem obvious but should not be taken for granted. In their work, recent scholars have emphasized that people are the primary agents of change and must be the focus when we try to recapture the past. The framework also recognizes the variety of people who have populated our past. In every category of the outline, consideration of the variables of race, ethnicity, class, and gender will help us better grasp the full range of human experience. This approach does not mean forsaking the whole and breaking up our past into small unrelated pieces, but rather recognizing how the whole has been shaped by our varied histories.

Time

Time is central to both prehistory and history, not simply as a mechanism to locate or isolate events in history, but also as the focus of our concern with process and change over time. The emphasis is not only on “what happened” but also on “how and why,” on the transformations that turn the past into the present.

There is no assumption of progress or inevitability in interpreting these transformations. Instead, the emphasis is on the tension between change and continuity and on understanding why and how particular choices were made. There is no fixed periodization scheme in this new framework. While the committee of scholars who worked on this revision recognizes that there are moments of significant change in our past, it has not proved valuable to break the past up into rigid segments of time that often ignore or obscure the complexity of historical change.

Place

The outline that follows was developed to address issues of national significance, yet it recognizes that region, community, and other dimensions of place are relevant. This framework acknowledges the richness of local and regional experiences and recognizes difference in place—particularly regional difference—as an important factor in a fuller understanding of both the origins of national change and the impact of national trends and events.

Because place is the concrete context in which our history unfolds, a richer reconstruction of the past must include local and regional experience to help build appreciation for our national experience.

People, time, and place reach across all eight themes and contribute to the interconnections among the themes. One example that can be used to illustrate this interconnectedness is a Southern plantation dating from the 1830s. A quick survey suggests that the significance of this site cuts across every category of the outline. The move of a planter, his family, and his sizable household of slaves from Tidewater Virginia to land purchased from the Choctaws in Alabama would fall obviously under “Peopling Places,” but the economic imperatives and agricultural develop-

ments that triggered the move and the adaptation of the plantation system to the new environment would fit under “Developing the American Economy,” “Expanding Science and Technology,” and “Transforming the Environment.” While the lives of the plantation’s white and black, male and female inhabitants fall under “Peopling Places” and “Creating Social Institutions and Movements,” the design and construction of the distinctive “big house” and other plantation architecture illustrates the theme of “Expressing Cultural Values.” The transfer of the planter’s political power from Virginia to Alabama and the role of the planter class in antebellum Alabama falls under “Shaping the Political Landscape.” Finally, the planter’s dependence on the cotton economy and his influential role in international trade on the eve of the Civil War tie directly into “Developing the American Economy” and “Changing Role of the U.S. in the World.” The outline suggests that users think broadly, not narrowly, that they look beyond traditional categories of historical significance in an effort to recapture the larger meaning and depth of past experience.

This conceptualization assists the National Park Service in deepening and broadening its identification and interpretation of sites. It suggests fresh opportunities to assess the significance of sites from new perspectives and at regional and local as well as national levels.

The framework rests on the assumption that, just as our understanding of the past has been reshaped in recent decades, so it will continue to evolve in the future. It should not be viewed as a final document or definitive statement. It is a part of an ongoing effort to ensure that the preservation and interpretation of our nation’s historic and prehistoric resources continue to be informed by the best scholarship available.

The Revised Thematic Framework

I. PEOPLING PLACES

This theme examines human population movement and change through prehistoric and historic times. It also looks at family formation, at different concepts of gender, family, and sexual division of labor, and at how they have been expressed in the American past. While patterns of daily life—birth, marriage, childrearing—are often taken for granted, they have a profound influence on public life.

Life in America began with migrations many thousands of years ago. Centuries of migrations and encounters have resulted in diverse forms of individual and group interaction, from peaceful accommodation to warfare and extermination through exposure to new diseases.

Communities, too, have evolved according to cultural norms, historical circumstances, and environmental contingencies. The nature of communities is varied, dynamic, and complex. Ethnic homelands are a special type of community that existed before incorporation into the political entity known as the United States. For example, many Indian sites, such as Canyon de Chelly National Monument in Arizona, are on tribal lands occupied by Indians for centuries. Similarly, Hispanic communities, such as those represented by San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, had their origins in Spanish and Mexican history. Distinctive and important regional patterns join together to create microcosms of America's history and to form the "national experience."

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. family and the life cycle
2. health, nutrition, and disease
3. migration from outside and within
4. community and neighborhood
5. ethnic homelands
6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization

II. CREATING SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND MOVEMENTS

This theme focuses upon the diverse formal and informal structures such as schools or voluntary associations through which people express values and live their lives. Americans generate temporary movements and create enduring institutions in order to define, sustain, or reform these values. Why people organize to transform their institutions is as important to understand as how they choose to do so. Thus, both the diverse motivations people act on and the strategies they employ are critical concerns of social history.

Sites such as Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York, and the Eugene V. Debs National Historic Landmark in Indiana illustrate the diversity and changeable nature of social institutions. Hancock Shaker Village, a National Historic Landmark, and Touro Synagogue, a National Historic Site, reflect religious diversity. This category will also encompass temporary movements that influenced American history but did not produce permanent institutions.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. clubs and organizations
2. reform movements
3. religious institutions
4. recreational activities

III. EXPRESSING CULTURAL VALUES

This theme covers expressions of culture—people's beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit. For example, Boston African American Historic Site reflects the role of ordinary Americans and the diversity of the American cultural landscape. Ivy Green, the birthplace of Helen Keller in Alabama, and the rural Kentucky Pine Mountain Settlement School illustrate educational currents. Walnut Street Theater in Pennsylvania, Louis Armstrong's house in New York City, the Chautauqua Historic District in New York, and the Cincinnati Music Hall—all National Historic Landmarks—reflect diverse aspects of the performing arts.

This theme also encompasses the ways that people communicate their moral and aesthetic values. The gardens and studio in New Hampshire of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, one of America's most eminent sculptors, and Connemara, the farm in North Carolina of the noted poet Carl Sandburg, both National Historic Sites, illustrate this theme.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. educational and intellectual currents
2. visual and performing arts
3. literature
4. mass media
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
6. popular and traditional culture

IV. SHAPING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

This theme encompasses tribal, local, state, and federal political and governmental institutions that create public policy and those groups that seek to shape both policies and institutions. Sites associated with political leaders, theorists, organizations, movements, campaigns, and grassroots political activities all illustrate aspects of the political environment. Independence Hall is an example of democratic aspirations and reflects political ideas.

Places associated with this theme include battlefields and forts, such as Saratoga National Historical Park in New York and Fort Sumter National Monument in South Carolina, as well as sites such as Appomattox Court House National Historical Park in Virginia that commemorate watershed events in the life of the nation.

The political landscape has been shaped by military events and decisions, by transitory movements and protests, as well as by political parties. Places associated with leaders in the development of the American constitutional system such as Abraham Lincoln's home in Illinois and the birthplace of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Atlanta—both National Historic Sites—embody key aspects of the political landscape.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. parties, protests, and movements
2. governmental institutions
3. military institutions and activities
4. political ideas, cultures, and theories

V. DEVELOPING THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

This theme reflects the ways Americans have worked, including slavery, servitude, and non-wage as well as paid labor. It also reflects the ways they have materially sustained themselves by the processes of extraction, agriculture, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Vital aspects of economic history are frequently manifested in regional centers, for example, ranching on the Great Plains illustrated by Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in Montana. Individual economic sites, such as Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts, may be distinctive in representing both the lives of workers and technological innovations.

In examining the diverse working experiences of the American people, this theme encompasses the activities of farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, and managers, as well as the technology around them. It also takes into account the historical “layering” of economic society, including class formation and changing standards of living in diverse sectors of the nation. Knowledge of both the Irish laborer and the banker, for example, are important in understanding the economy of the 1840s.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. extraction and production
2. distribution and consumption
3. transportation and communication
4. workers and work culture
5. labor organizations and protests
6. exchange and trade
7. governmental policies and practices
8. economic theory

VI. EXPANDING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

This theme focuses on science, which is modern civilization's way of organizing and conceptualizing knowledge about the world and the universe beyond. This is done through the physical sciences, the social sciences, and medicine. Technology is the application of human ingenuity to modification of the environment in both modern and traditional cultures. Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument in Texas reflects pre-Columbian innovations while Edison National Historic Site in New Jersey reflects technological advancement in historic times. Technologies can be particular to certain regions and cultures.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. experimentation and invention
2. technological applications
3. scientific thought and theory
4. effects on lifestyle and health

VII. TRANSFORMING THE ENVIRONMENT

This theme examines the variable and changing relationships between people and their environment, which continuously interact. The environment is where people live, the place that supports and sustains life. The American environment today is largely a human artifact, so thoroughly has human occupation affected all its features. Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, which includes portions of the Ohio and Erie Canal, for example, is a cultural landscape that links natural and human systems, including cities, suburbs, towns, countryside, forest, wilderness, and water bodies.

This theme acknowledges that the use and development of the physical setting is rooted in evolving perceptions and attitudes. Sites such as John Muir National Historic Site in California and Sagamore Hill National Historic Site in New York, the home of President Theodore Roosevelt, reflect the contributions of leading conservationists. While conservation represents a portion of this theme, the focus here is on recognizing the interplay between human activity and the environment as reflected in particular places, such as Hoover Dam, a National Historic Landmark.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. manipulating the environment and its resources
2. adverse consequences and stresses on the environment
3. protecting and preserving the environment

VIII. CHANGING ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY

This theme explores diplomacy, trade, cultural exchange, security and defense, expansionism—and, at times, imperialism. The interactions among indigenous peoples, between this nation and native peoples, and this nation and the world have all contributed to American history. Additionally, this theme addresses regional variations, since, for example, in the eighteenth century, the Spanish southwest, French and Canadian middle west, and British eastern seaboard had different diplomatic histories.

America has never existed in isolation. While the United States, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has left an *imprint on the world community*, other nations and immigrants to the United States have had a profound influence on the course of American history.

The emphasis in this category is on people and institutions—from the principals who define and formulate diplomatic policy, such as presidents, secretaries of state, and labor and immigrant leaders, to the private institutions, such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, that influence America's diplomatic, cultural, social, and economic affairs. Monticello, the Virginia home of Thomas Jefferson, a National Historic Landmark, reflects the diplomatic aspirations of the early nation.

Topics that help define this theme include:

1. international relations
2. commerce
3. expansionism and imperialism
4. immigration and emigration policies

Using the Revised Thematic Framework

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 1994 REVISION

What is different about this new framework?

This revision presents a larger and more integrated view of history. It emphasizes the process of how to study history but does not identify what to study. It allows flexibility for identifying appropriate time periods and region. It stresses the interplay of race, ethnicity, class, and gender within and among the framework's broadened topics. Indigenous Americans and their activities are now considered under all themes rather than under a separate theme.

The thematic framework is less restrictive as a tool for evaluating historic sites for National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation or for addition to the National Park System. Evaluation is a professional process that involves analysis based on the best of current scholarship. Such evaluation will continue to be the responsibility of CRM specialists who blend the requirements of the NHL program or Service's management policies with the new thematic framework and make their best professional judgments.

Earlier versions of the thematic framework provided chronological or topical "boxes" into which properties could be dropped for comparative purposes when assessing them for NHL designation or additions to the National Park System. The new framework, by contrast, invites thoughtful consideration of larger trends and broader contexts. It should foster discussion of the fundamental social and economic structures related to a property. The larger implications and research possibilities of a place or site can then emerge more readily, and produce better answers to the question "so what?"

Given the broad, conceptual nature of the framework, it will often need to be supplemented, on a case by case basis, by more detailed outlines as particular topics are addressed. Researchers, planners, interpreters and others engaged in thematic studies will need to provide logical, coherent, detailed outlines for their own use. Studies of properties may be on specific topics—jazz history, for example—but should consider the holistic framework.

The revised Thematic Framework makes it easier to incorporate the insights of social and cultural history, which seeks to tell the stories of broad social trends and ordinary people. Unique and notable events, of course, still are included in the framework's goals, but they are more likely to be placed firmly within the broader contexts of their time.

When studied under a single framework, some properties may be appreciated for only part of their historical significance. Lowell National Historical Park, for instance, was listed as an NHL in 1977 for its national significance in industry. The nomination form focused almost exclusively on the mills, machine shops, and canals and locks that provided the necessary power source for converting raw cotton into finished cloth. Yet, such documentation ignored an important part of the story: that young unmarried women from rural New England operated the looms and provided the critical skilled labor force for the textile companies.

How does the 1994 revision of the Thematic Framework coincide with other NPS initiatives?

This revised framework will facilitate the use of current historical scholarship in research, interpretation, management and planning. It is integral to the direction of the Report, "Humanities and the National Parks: Adapting to Change."

The framework lends itself to the initiative within NPS to connect parks into historic pathways or corridors in order to emphasize that American history did not occur as isolated events. The revised Thematic Framework helps interpret the many layers of history that occurred at a particular place.

The revised thematic framework is useful for conceptualizing an approach to thematically connecting nationally significant places, including not only units of the National Park System, but also NHLs, heritage areas, and state and local parks and museums. "The areas managed by the NPS are only one part of a national inventory of special and protected areas managed by innumerable federal, state, and local agencies and the private sector." [Management Policies, Chapter 2:1, 1988]

This framework encourages the expanded representation within the National Park System of historical themes by including and expanding themes for which individual parks were not originally specifically designated. It therefore allows more connections to be made among significant places and invites the interpretation of a wider variety of themes to visitors.

The new thematic framework should be of assistance in addressing the issue of expanded representation, particularly for long-range planning and in writing General Management Plans (GMPs) and Comprehensive Interpretive Plans (CIPs). The thematic framework is used as a tool for analyzing knowledge about historic resources and for developing more complete (or holistic) stories about a particular place. The new framework is broad and is meant to encourage integration of topics and inclusive historic contexts.

The Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) requires that parks examine their missions, purpose, and significance. The thematic framework can be used as a tool for exploring the breadth of a park's mission, purpose and significance. Significance may be defined by including themes not specifically mentioned in a park's enabling legislation. The NPS is charged with the protection of all significant resources within park boundaries.

What is the relationship of the three historical building blocks of people, place, and time to the themes and topics in this new revision?

In using the new thematic framework, one should remember that it covers human history in what is now the United States whether it

occurred 10,000 or 50 years ago. “American” refers to both prehistory and history, to the discoveries of archeology, oral tradition, and documentary history.

The new thematic framework makes the lives of the majority of Americans more visible and, rather than simply categorizing incidents, enhances our understanding of the connections between people through time and across space.

The logo on page 4 is an important visual mnemonic symbolizing the intent of the revision: it represents interlocking spheres of American life. The user will find that vision is further enriched by remembering that the context in which these spheres are suspended is the setting created by People, Place and Time. Each of these elements is vital to consider in researching and interpreting the history of the American people. To tie these elements together, it may be useful to think about people as active users of a “tool kit” of ideas, perceptions, skills, and objects in a particular place and time.

People: “People” provide one of the over-arching contexts within which to study the past. Issues such as gender and ethnicity are not confined to any particular place or time or topic in history. Nor are they the only issues; culture provides continuity and a perspective from which to view events. Such an approach may help to avoid the “balkanization” of American history into limited categories which seems counterproductive to many historians.

Place: The relationship of people to place is central to evaluating particular properties for national significance. Relationship to place permeates each of the topics and broad spheres of human activity. For example, the topic of settlement patterns and land use is clearly connected to many topics concerning the relationship of indigenous peoples to their ethnic homelands.

Places give us tangible evidence of past human activities. That evidence can document major trends in society as a whole and in smaller communities; it can illuminate things that have not been revealed, or have only partly been captured, in written documenta-

tion; it can fundamentally shape the kinds of questions we ask about the past; and it can undermine misconceptions and stereotyped visions of history. For such reasons, the preservation of places is a fundamental mission of the National Park System.

Time: The human actions represented by the interlocking spheres of the logo develop through time; however, relevant chronological dates vary greatly and it is cumbersome to attempt to include each possible relevant time period. Therefore it is most efficient to define time periods according to whatever study is being undertaken. An obvious example of variable dates for a similar “event” is the timing of contact between indigenous people and European explorers or homesteaders.

How will needs for new theme studies be identified?

The current revision provides guidance in approaching a topic once it has been identified. It emphasizes the process of how to study history but does not identify what to study.

The topics for theme studies will continue to be identified through many of the same sources as before: Congressional mandates; planning needs of the NPS; and the professional judgements by NPS cultural resource specialists, State Historic Preservation Offices, specially convened boards or committees of scholars, other federal agencies, and other sources. The example of the “Earliest Americans” provided below is a topic identified by a committee of scholars based on the research interests of their discipline.

How will potential new park units be judged for suitability?

NPS planning guidance specifies comparative analysis of potential new units. An area will be suitable if it represents a theme or type of resource

“ not already adequately represented in the national park system, [or protected by another land-managing entity].
...Adequacy of representation will be determined on a case-

by-case basis by comparing the proposed addition to other units in the national park system, considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resources and opportunities for public enjoyment.”

[Management Policies, Chapter 2:4, 1988]

One method of comparing potential sites is to convene a group of recognized experts who are well versed in a particular type of resource and can offer their professional opinion.

What classification systems are available for organizing the topics and stories significant in NHLs and NPS units?

The National Register Information System (NRIS) is available for keyword searches to aid in researching different themes. The NPS National Register, History, and Education Program has designed a relational database to expand that research tool, through listings of parks assigned to categories based on the National Register’s areas of significance.

USING THE NEW FRAMEWORK IN INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Interpretive planning is a vital component of all General Management Plan efforts, Development Concept Plans, Special Resource Studies, and Statements for Management as well as Comprehensive Interpretive Plans. One of the basic principles guiding interpretive planning is that it is based on current research so that recommendations may be rooted in solid subject matter expertise [NPS-6, Chapter 3, 1996].

The new thematic framework is used as a conceptual tool to develop a knowledge of the resources and therefore to be able to evaluate what stories there are to be told about a particular NPS unit. Understanding the holistic and interconnected story of the resource contributes to the goal of telling compelling stories which represent the greater meaning or significance of the resources.

An interpreter working with the thematic framework to identify stories will find that the circles of the framework's logo are a first step, but it is not necessarily the case that each circle will have a story or even a component of a story told at a particular park. The framework is not a cookbook, but an interpreter who works with it will find a tool there to promote good interpretation.

The thematic framework may also be helpful as an interpreter evaluates the stories that are available for telling. The key to successfully using the framework to organize knowledge of the resources is to start broadly and then narrow down the stories to the most compelling ones. The most compelling stories are those whose outcomes promote visitors' understanding of a park's purpose and significance. These often are holistic stories that lead the visitor to understanding a park's mission, purpose and the significance of park resources.

There are several advantages to using the new framework for interpretation. One is the encouragement of interdisciplinary dialogue between interpretive and resource divisions in a park. A second advantage is that using the framework increases the opportunity to tell integrated, compelling stories that enrich each park's visitor experience. A third is that holistic stories may be used to connect significant events and activities in one park with those in other parks, thereby enriching visitor experience of the whole park system.

The thematic framework is one of the tools available to help interpreters develop stories about people, place, and time. It is a natural companion to the Compelling Stories workbook. An interpreter can use the thematic framework as a conceptual tool to identify themes, make tangible-intangible links, apply Freeman Tilden's principles of interpretation, and get to the "knowledge of the resources," which is the first part of the Interpretive Equation: (knowledge of resources + knowledge of audience) + appropriate technique = Interpretation: an effective linking between audience and the resource.

EXAMPLES OF USING THE REVISED FRAMEWORK

Example 1: The Earliest Americans

The Earliest Americans theme study represents a topic chosen by scholars who recognize the topic as important within the profession of archeology. The use of the thematic framework is shaped by scholarly understandings within a discipline, as this example illustrates.

These questions represent the way a historian might approach a theme study or an interpreter might begin developing an interpretive program or writing a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

Earliest Americans National Historic Landmark Theme Study
Nation-Wide Framework (Draft:7/95). Research Questions:

Peopling Places

- Major Issues: Demography, Geography
- Key Questions:
 - When did people arrive?
 - Who were they?
 - Where did they come from?
 - Where did they move?
 - How did they live?

Creation of Social Institutions

- Major Issues: Emerging Cultural Traditions, Cultural Differentiation
- Key Questions:
 - How are cultural traditions identified?
 - When and where do they emerge?
 - How is cultural change identified?
 - When and where do cultural traditions change?

Expressing Cultural Values

- Major Issues: Belief Representation
- Key Questions:
 - What were the belief systems of the Earliest Americans?

What is the evidence for them?
How is the evidence interpreted?

Shaping the Political Landscape

- Major Issues: Territoriality and Identity, Interaction
- Key Questions:
 - How did the Earliest Americans organize political life?
 - What is the evidence for territoriality, identity, and interaction?

Developing the American Economy

- Major Issues: Extraction and Production, Distribution and Consumption
- Key Questions:
 - What materials were used?
 - Where were they found?
 - How were they modified and distributed?
 - How were they used and discarded?

Expanding Science and Technology

- Major Issues: Material Culture and Technology, Technological Organization
- Key Questions:
 - What was the nature of the Earliest American tool kit?
 - How was their technology organized?

Transforming the Environment

- Major Issues: Impacts, Responses
- Key Questions:
 - What was the impact of people on the environment?
 - How did environment affect the Earliest Americans?

Changing Role of the United States in the World Community

- Major Issues: Major Contributions to Knowledge, Comparative Perspectives
- Key Questions:
 - How have Earliest American archeological studies contributed to major intellectual developments?

How do Earliest American resources contribute to development of broad intercontinental comparative perspectives?

Example 2: The Lower Mississippi Delta Heritage Study

The Lower Mississippi Delta Heritage Study represents the use of the framework in studying a new area and customizing regional themes based on the new framework.

At a brainstorming symposium held in June 1996 experts identified key stories and some sites which make the Lower Mississippi Delta worthy of national recognition. The symposium was a first step in a comprehensive regional heritage study. The themes developed were intended to provide the context for site identification and analysis.

The next steps were to be data collection and analysis of integrity and level of significance. The final step is a report of findings and recommendations for planning.

The thematic framework was used to structure discussion of Delta stories in a series of “expert workgroups.” Under the broad, “circle” themes, important stories were developed and organized within time frames and according to particular topics. The number of stories came from participants’ knowledge of the area and therefore not every broad theme or every topic was used; only the stories significant to experts on the region were identified.

This example should be read not as a final or comprehensive product, but as the result of an initial brainstorming symposium.

The theme “Peopling Places” was ultimately organized into relevant chronological categories as follows:

Peopling Places

- Early Inhabitants and Native Americans 3500 BC–AD 1600
- European Exploration and Settlement 1600–1800
- U.S. Western Expansion and Antebellum Period 1800–1860
- Civil War, Reconstruction, Populism 1860–1900

-
- Process of Change: Progressivism, World Wars I&II
 - Great Depression 1900–1950
 - Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, 1950–Present

Within each of these time periods various topics were identified. Some of these topics were those specifically suggested in the thematic framework; some expressed the “People” and “Place” contexts identified in the first part of the framework; all were identified by workgroup participants because important stories were connected to them. This flexibility which is encouraged by the revised framework allows any important story to be identified.

For example, participants identified the following themes under the time period of “Civil War, Reconstruction, Populism 1860–1900:” Intercultural Relations; Gender Roles; Working Life; and Migration. Under the topic of migration there are stories such as the first great migration of African Americans out of the Mississippi River Delta, the recruitment of Chinese sharecroppers and laborers in the 1870s, and the immigration to the Delta in the 1880s of many Sicilian, Jewish, and Lebanese people.



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National Park Service Thematic Framework**

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