

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS UPDATE

October, 2004



Beautifully restored and maintained, The Tangier American Legation building in Morocco is now a Study Center. Photo Courtesy of Tangier American Legation Museum.

The National Park Service (NPS) administers the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) program for the Secretary of the Interior. It is a cooperative endeavor of government agencies, professionals, independent organizations and individuals working jointly to identify and preserve America's most important historic places. Currently there are 2,372 NHLs across our country and in the Pacific, the Caribbean and Morocco. More than 80% of all NHLs are open to the public for visitation and reflection upon how we Americans came to be what we are today.

Nearly half of National Historic Landmarks are owned privately, with states owning 18% and local jurisdictions owning a further 15%. The federal government currently owns only 10% of the total, and Native American tribes own fewer than 1%. The rest are in multiple ownership.

The National Park Service commits to assist in the preservation of these irreplaceable properties through technical assistance to their stewards—owners, managers, and friends groups—and education of the general public about the importance of National Historic Landmarks. In recent years stewards of National Historic Landmarks have benefited from the National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share grants as well as targeted grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and to tribes. The Save America's Treasures matching grant program is targeted to nationally significant properties and has made a tremendous difference to many National Historic Landmarks.

Instituted in 1999, the Save America's Treasures program has awarded \$23 million in matching grants to 136 NHLs over the past five years. In 2004, NHLs receiving Save America's Treasures grants include a number that have been listed as threatened on the NPS list for many years. Particularly heartening is the commitment of Howard University and the Le Droit Park neighborhood to the restoration of the Mary Church Terrell House, in the District of Columbia, which has been abandoned and deteriorating for over nine years. An educator and civil rights leader, Mrs. Terrell was the first African American woman to serve on an American school board and the founding president of the National Association of Colored Women. The \$260,000 matching grant will be used to stabilize her home in preparation for a complete restoration.



Mary Church Terrell

The Cheney Brothers Machine Shop, owned by the Manchester Historical Society, in Manchester, Connecticut, has been listed as threatened for eight years because of deterioration. The \$200,000 matching grant from Save America's Treasures will be used to replace the deteriorated roof. The Cheney brothers invented machines and tools that made them a dominant

force in the textile industry. The machine shop is a contributing building in this excellently preserved example of a nineteenth and early twentieth century mill town, which is now a National Historic Landmark District.

The Locke Historic Boarding House, owned by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, Locke, California, received a federal Save America's Treasures matching grant of \$ 450,000 to address the most serious preservation issues in this frame building, which is a pivotal structure in the National Historic Landmark community. Founded in 1915, Locke is the largest and most intact surviving example of an historic rural Chinese-American community in the United States.

For a list of National Historic Landmarks receiving Save America's Treasures grants in 2004, please see table of contents.

A new grant program for the interpretation of central themes in American history illustrated by nationally significant historic sites has been instituted by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The first grants, announced October 13, 2004, range from \$10,000 to \$300,000 and will go to eight applicants. Among the National Historic Landmarks to benefit from these first grants are Hull House, in Chicago, a number of Civil War sites and battlefields in Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, Historic Saint Mary's City, Maryland, Andrew Jackson's Hermitage in Tennessee, and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello in Virginia. To learn more, visit the National Endowment for the Humanities web site at <http://www.neh.gov/grants>. The next deadline for submission of grants is February 1, 2005.

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

The National Park Service awards Certificates of Appreciation to those who do an exceptional job of preserving National Historic Landmarks. Twenty-seven people and organizations will receive Certificates in 2004. For a list of honorees, please see table of contents.

MONITORING

As mandated in our program regulations (36 CFR Part 65.10) the National Park Service (NPS) monitors the condition of National Historic Landmarks and makes recommendations on preserving and protecting them to owners and policy makers. The results help NPS plan its educational and assistance efforts and support Landmark steward's efforts to raise funds and inform policy makers. Every other year, NPS regional offices send letters to owners and managers of National Historic Landmarks asking them to comment on the condition of their property. NPS also contacts State Historic Preservation Officers, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and Federal Preservation Officers for their comments. The NPS evaluates the material submitted and rates the condition of the Landmarks according to the following scale:

Lost: The Landmark has lost its integrity. Designation should be withdrawn.

Emergency: The Landmark has suffered recent catastrophic damage that requires immediate intervention to preserve the resource and prevent withdrawal of designation.

Threatened: The Landmark has suffered or is in imminent danger of suffering a severe loss of integrity.

Watch: The Landmark faces impending actions or circumstances that likely will cause a loss of integrity.

Satisfactory: The Landmark faces no known threats.

The benchmark is the condition of the NHL when it was designated. A Landmark that was an archeological ruin when it was designated is listed as threatened or on the watch list only if it has further deteriorated or is threatened with significantly more deterioration. A Landmark may not be listed if its steward is aware of the problem, actively working to solve the problem in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and has the necessary knowledge, expertise and funding to complete the work.

LANDMARKS IN 2004

In 2004, the NPS contacted owners and State Historic Preservation Offices regarding the condition of their Landmarks. The following update is based on responses received from 652 owners and from SHPOS, as well as site visits and telephone calls with NHL managers. Some regions also work with personnel in National Parks who help monitor nearby NHLs. From all these sources, NPS received updated information on 1016 NHLs, 43% of the total.

Based on this sample, 91% of NHLs (900) were in good condition in 2004. Of these, however, 277, or 27%, were in watch status, meaning that if action were not taken they would face potential threats. Eighty-nine Landmarks, 9% of those responding, were threatened, usually by deterioration, incompatible new construction, demolition, damaging uses, erosion or looting.

EMERGENCY

An NHL in Emergency status has suffered recent catastrophic damage that requires immediate intervention to preserve the resource and prevent withdrawal of designation.

[Elkins Coal and Coke Company Historic District, Bretz, West Virginia](#)

The complex has not been maintained or repaired since operation shut down in early 1980. As a



Elkins Coal and Coke Company Ruins

result, the ovens were severely deteriorated, rail tracks were torn up, and the grounds were overgrown. Despite the desire of the public, the SHPO, and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to preserve the historic features, there were no funds available for stabilization, repairs, restoration or rehabilitation. The majority of the resources were demolished in 2003 as part of a planned reclamation project performed by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. The demolition was considered a necessity due to the hazards that the deteriorated resources presented to visitors to the site. The resources were recorded to HABS/HAER

standards before demolition. As a result of the demolition activities, many of the resources that contributed to the property's historical value have been lost. These impacts have caused serious damage to the resource's national significance. The coke ovens and coke loader are still present. Several local groups are attempting to purchase the land. The remaining resources should be stabilized and repaired, but a study of the Landmark is necessary to determine if enough integrity remains to retain its designation.

[Fort Snelling, Minnesota](#)

Fort Snelling (begun in 1820) was the first American fort in modern Minnesota, an important post on the edge of European-American settlement in the Old Northwest; additionally, it played a significant role in the transformation of the US Army from a small frontier force to that of a major modern army. The buildings at the fort continue to deteriorate rapidly, and require immediate



attention. Past efforts between the NPS and the owners - the Department of Natural Resources - to enact a deed change to a portion of the property had stalled, but stakeholders are now engaged in discussions to develop a solution that may benefit the NHL.

THREATENED

A threatened NHL has suffered or is in imminent danger of suffering a severe loss of integrity.

The number of threatened national historic landmarks fell to 90 in 2004 down from 107 in 2002.

Both the Chilkoot and Dyea Site NHL and the United States Naval Asylum, which were in emergency status in 2002, are now in threatened status. Dyea was eroded by two major floods. The park is carrying out a landscape study, to be completed this year, which will allow it to consider protective treatment for the Dyea townsite. The United States Naval Asylum, which suffered a major fire in 2003, has had its roof replaced. However, the developer who owns the site is not maintaining two of the Strickland-designed buildings that are major contributing parts of the Landmark, and continues to plan to build on most of the Landmark's open space. The third Landmark listed in emergency status in 2003 was the Baltimore and Ohio Transportation Museum whose roof collapsed under a heavy snowfall on February 16-17, 2003. Since then, approximately \$14 million has been expended to replace the entire roof structure, restore the interior and turntable and install code-related upgrades. The Landmark is now in satisfactory condition, although twelve of its historic railroad cars still need repair and preservation.

In 2004, thirty-two Landmarks were added to the threatened list. Deterioration is consistently the single greatest threat to NHLs no matter who owns them, what they are, or where they are located. This long-term trend continued in 2004. Buildings and structures suffer most from deterioration. Demolition and inappropriate new construction are also prevalent threats in historic districts, while erosion, vandalism and looting, and damaging uses such as deep plowing and land leveling for mechanized agriculture threaten historic sites such as battlefields and prehistoric sites such as villages, ceremonial and trading locations.

Threats may or may not be due to action or inaction on the part of the owner or owners of the Landmark. Some threats, such as upstream mining, can damage Landmarks or their setting without actually being within the boundary.

If a threat is due to federal action or permitting, the agency responsible must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment in order to help prevent or mitigate the harm to the Landmark. The Council has an informative web site at www.achp.gov that explains its program and intervention under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

WATCH

A Landmark on the Watch List faces impending actions or circumstances that likely will cause a loss of integrity if not averted.

In 2004, 276 National Historic Landmarks were in the watch category, including seventy-one that were newly added. This list is intended to alert owners and policy makers to potential problems in time to take action to mitigate or avoid them.

SUCCESS STORIES

Of the forty landmarks removed from threat or watch status in 2004, over half (fifteen) had been listed for deterioration, eight for potential incompatible construction, two for potential demolition of contributing buildings, and two for environmental contamination (these were ex military bases). While education, covenants, easements and zoning, among other tools, can be used to control incompatible construction, demolition, vandalism and damaging uses, money is essential for stabilization and repair of deteriorated structures and for erosion control. The availability of Federal grants and the efforts of the National Park Service working with other Federal, State and private preservation professionals to assist owners and managers of NHLs in preserving and protecting their properties also played a role.



Murals on stair walls at MacPheadris-Warner House.

LOST LANDMARKS

In 2004, the Secretary of the Interior withdrew designation of Landmark status for the site of the First Pacific Salmon Cannery. In the 19th century, the cannery had existed on a barge tied in the river opposite Sacramento, California. The barge had disappeared, the river had eroded the bank, and the new city of West Sacramento had



recontoured the shore into a landscaped park, obliterating any remnant of the original site.



The Rocket Engine Test Facility owned by NASA, the National Aeronautics & Space Administration, in Cleveland, Ohio stood in the way of runway expansion at the Cleveland Airport, and was demolished in April, 2003 after being documented to HABS/HAER standards. This Landmark was designated under the Man In Space Theme Study.

NPS AND NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS ASSISTANCE

The NPS works with State, Tribal and Federal Preservation Offices and non-profit preservation groups such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and state-wide preservation groups to educate the public and owners of National Historic Landmarks about the importance of preservation of our country's heritage. NPS regional offices provide training, informational materials, and consultation to owners. The NHL website at www.cr.nps.gov/nhl includes information about the program, how to become an NHL, travel itineraries featuring Landmarks, and other properties on the National Register of Historic Places, governmental and non-governmental sources of assistance, and a searchable NHL database where users can search for NHLs by location, theme, type of resource, use, and other criteria. Many NHLs depend on visitation for revenues for upkeep. Downloadable pages for each NHL give addresses and contact information when an NHL is open to the public.

The National Park Service also administers the federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit program to promote preservation of historic properties being rehabilitated for income producing uses. A great deal of information about correct preservation techniques and the federal tax credit program, as well as about ways to protect historic properties through local zoning laws and Historic District Commissions, is available from the National Park Service at www.cr.nps.gov. Many states also have their own assistance programs for historic preservation that can be found on the state's web sites.

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