



NRHP E-Blasts

Electronic blasts from the National Register of Historic Places, sharing news and information with the Historic Preservation Community

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Diversity and the National Register

National Register staff addressed the lack of cultural, ethnic, and identity diversity among National Register listings in a well-attended session at PastForward, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual conference, on November 3, 2021. NRHP Chief Sherry Frear was joined by colleagues Drs. Julie Ernststein and Lisa Davidson in presenting and discussing four issues National Register staff have identified as impacting diversity among listings: evolution of the historic preservation field; misapplication of criteria and integrity; misunderstandings about documentation; and a need for continuing and updated surveys, evaluations, and nominations. The presentation (and related material) is available on the National Register program's website at

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/presentation-at-pastforward-2021-conference.htm> and summarized below.

(1) Evolution of the historic preservation field: Analysis of the information currently available suggests that approximately 10% of properties listed in the National Register reflect association with cultural, ethnic, or identity groups, but accurately characterizing, by count or percentage, National Register-listed properties for association with cultural, ethnic, or identity groups is challenging, because the ways in which this information has been collected by the National Register has evolved over the decades. When the National Register was established in 1966, the nomination form suggested 23 areas of significance; today, there are 51, including 56 cultural, ethnic, and identity sub-areas added just within the past few years. The National Register has launched a project to review older nominations to identify additional areas of significance and capture that information in its internal database to improve the accuracy of identifying listings for properties associated with historically marginalized communities, as well as to identify listings in need of updating to capture the fuller roles and contributions of those communities at those properties.

(2) Misapplication of criteria and/or integrity: Research by National Register staff reveals that both nomination preparers and nominating authorities often assume that all properties, no matter their area of significance, must exhibit "high" integrity and thus they opt not to nominate properties that have been physically altered, as is often the case with

properties associated with marginalized communities. However, determining which aspects of integrity are most important in evaluating a property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. That is, not all seven aspects need be exhibited by a property, and even a physically altered property may retain integrity, especially if that property is nominated not for its architectural merits but for its association with historical events, cultural associations, or a person. National Register staff is updating its guidance, developing targeted trainings, and posting additional nominations examples on the National Register website to better support the critical link between choosing significance criteria and evaluating a property's integrity.

(3) Misunderstandings about documentation: Additional guidance—in the form of Bulletins, theme studies, and examples—demonstrably results in an increase in successful nominations and the National Register staff is working on revising Bulletins, issuing new NHL theme studies (applicable to National Register nominations, too), and making more nomination examples available via the National Register website. For example, nominations posted in the past, and that will continue to be posted, include those that attempt to defuse the “documentation arms race” seen in the past three decades with respect to nomination length. While the earliest nominations were, at three to five pages, woefully short, recent nominations are too often well over a hundred pages and examples of shorter, successful nominations should help right-size documentation.

(4) The need for continuing and updated surveys, evaluations, and nominations: The National Park Service's State, Tribal, Local, Plans & Grants Division (STLPG) has provided preservation assistance through a variety of programs, including, over the past several years, competitive grants specifically to support surveys, evaluations, and nominations for properties associated with cultural, ethnic, and identity communities. That funding has been shown to have increased the number of listings associated with these communities.

Additional information on these grants is available here:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/howtoapply.htm>

As the nation's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture, the National Register should include places of significance to all Americans and the National Register staff is continually working—in Washington and with partners nationwide—to ensure that happens.

Excellent Example of Civil Rights Documentation

A well-constructed and researched context regarding Civil Rights history can be found in the multiple cover documentation for the *African American Civil Rights in Idaho Multiple Property Submission*. The Cover Documentation gives an outstanding account of how the African American Civil Rights movement in Idaho both dovetails with and diverges from the historical periodization of 1941- 1976 provided by the National Park Service (NPS) *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Civil Rights Sites* as well as the traditional narratives of the larger northern and southern Civil Rights movements. Going beyond the NPS framework, the Multiple Documentation Property Form covers a broader period, starting with individual accounts in the late 19th century, to provide context for an expanded period of

review and allows for the listing of properties associated with other significant moments in African American Idahoans' civil rights story.

As SHPOs work to expand the listing of resources associated with underrepresented communities, such multiple property covers offer an excellent avenue for encouraging new nominations and allowing the creation of concise, focused nominations by members of those communities that may not otherwise have the expertise or funding necessary to complete individual consultant-driven nominations. A copy of the National Park Service's African American Civil Rights Grant Program-funded MPS, prepared by Jill K. Gill, PhD, Boise State University, Department of History, can be found on the National Register program's Sample Nominations page at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/sample-nominations.htm>.

Jeff Mansell Begins Detail with National Register Program

Jeff Mansell, currently the Historian at the National Park Service's Natchez National Historical Park, has undertaken a detail with the National Register of Historic Places under the tutelage of retiring National Register and National Historic Landmarks historian Barbara Wyatt. Mr. Mansell possesses extensive historic preservation experience, having been Executive Director of the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc., the city's leading preservation advocacy group from 2008-2011. Previously, Mr. Mansell held the position of Executive Director of the Roslyn Landmark Society in Roslyn, New York (2004-2008), and Executive Director of the Historic Beaufort Foundation, in Beaufort, South Carolina (1999-2004) among other relevant positions during his career. Mr. Marshall is familiar with all aspects of the National Register nomination process, having nominated two Multiple Property Submissions and completed more than 50 National Register nominations from Alabama, Mississippi, New York, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Some Thoughts on Applying Criterion A to Schools

Often "education" is identified as an area of significance for nominated schools without an explanation of the nature of the significance. In such cases, the area of significance may be conflated with the use of the building. If the property were also nominated for its architectural (or any other) significance, the NPS reviewer might overlook the lack of a discussion about educational significance. However, if only educational significance is claimed, reviewers are looking for a strong case for the resource's educational significance under Criterion A as well as a context for same in the nomination or multiple property cover. In small towns, historical significance may be linked to a school's solitary role in educating the community's children over several decades. The greatest barrier to accepting this argument may be a lack of integrity, with the school impacted by additions and remodeling after the period of significance. In cities that have numerous schools, "educational significance" should be tied to a specific realm of significance related to curriculum, achievements of teachers and children, the population served by the school, or one or more historic events. National Register guidance requires a nomination to "identify and provide facts about one or more themes of history to which the property relates through its historic uses, activities, associations, and physical characteristics." Further, with the application of Criterion A, the nomination should "explain how the event or pattern of events made an important contribution to the history of the community, State, or nation, and how related types of properties reflect these events . . ." (National Register Bulletin 16A, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, p. 51). Below are some considerations to keep in mind when evaluating a school under education as an area of significance.

- (1) Schools do not automatically embody significance in the area of Education. A case must be made. Criterion A and Education should not be applied automatically.
- (2) If a convincing case has been made for significance in Architecture under Criterion C, it doesn't mean that Criterion A Education should be entered if it's not developed. It can be dropped instead.
- (3) If the geographic area of significance and area of comparison pertain to a neighborhood (instead of an entire city), "local" significance may be acceptable if the neighborhood (or enrollment area) was associated with a particular community served, such as Hmong or African American.
- (4) When specifying education as an area of significance, the case should be made in a context developed in the nomination or in a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) that pertains to schools in the geographic area.

Select Examples

The following nominations illustrate historical significance under Criterion A, in the area of Education, as it relates to programs, achievements, the population served, or significant events that unfolded at the school. Criterion A and Education have been appropriately applied.

History of Education

- **Quincy Grammar School in Boston, Massachusetts** (MP 100001458) was completed in 1848 and became the first graded school in Boston with twelve "single-head" classrooms, setting a model for the city's educational reform movement of the 19th century. The history of the school is closely associated with the story of immigrants in Boston. A copy of this nomination, prepared by Neil Larson & Kathryn Grover, Larson Fisher and Associates, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission, can be found on the National Register program's Sample Nominations page at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/sample-nominations.htm>.
- **Sanford B. Ladd School, Kansas City, Missouri** (100006918) includes a good explanation of characteristics of Progressive era schools. The nomination was prepared by Rachel Consolloy, Director of Operations, Rosin Preservation, LLC, and a copy can be found on the National Register program's website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/sample-nominations.htm>.

Important Civil Rights Events

- **Macon Co. High School, Alabama** (100005781) is noted for its Civil Rights connections. This Macon Co. National Register nomination was prepared by Paul M. Gettys and is available online on <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/sample-nominations.htm>.

The Only School in Town

- **Rollinsford Grade School, Rollinsford, New Hampshire** (15000670) was constructed in 1936 to consolidate the town's two surviving one-room schoolhouses and a four-room village school.

Rollinsford Grade School continues to serve as the town's only active school building. This National Register nomination was prepared by Peter J. Michaud of the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources and is available online at <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail/650660e9-98a6-4fb6-9327-f5504421b766>.

Schools with Strong Architectural Significance

- **Roosevelt School, La Crosse, Wisconsin** (100000924) is a relatively rare example of Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture in Wisconsin. Criterion A was dropped on the advice of National Register Historian Barbara Wyatt because more research was needed on particular programs or accomplishments of the school. This National Register nomination was prepared by John Cramer, Senior Associate, MacRostie Historic Advisors. It is posted online in the "Sample Nominations" area on the National Register program's website at <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/sample-nominations.htm>.

Schools for Specific Populations

- **Catawba Rosenwald School, York County, South Carolina** (13000465) was built in 1924-1925 to serve the African American community in southeastern York County, South Carolina. This National Register nomination was prepared by Paul M. Gettys. Please and is available online from <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/AssetDetail/f0d09534-b163-41d2-856c-0114aaddafdc>