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Nominating a structure for the National Register of Historic Places

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Quick Facts

Nominating a structure for the National Register of Historic Places:

- is one method of preserving portions of the built environment and creating a link with the past for present and future generations;
- can help to rejuvenate and revitalize neighborhoods and cities;
- provides eligibility for federal tax benefits and grants for restoration/-renovation work;
- follows a process prescribed by both the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office and the National Register of Historic Places.

Protecting and preserving our built environment is one step toward maintaining our heritage. The National Register of Historic Places is a federal agency maintained by the United States Department of the Interior that recognizes a particular property or structure as important to the nation, state or local community. It is the nation's official list of archaeological, architectural, cultural or historical resources worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides some protection from adverse federal actions and provides eligibility for programs such as federal tax benefits, and preservation grants for restoration or renovation work.

The preservation of our existing buildings has become a significant force of social, economic and aesthetic benefit to communities. Personal endeavors, often aided by federal, state and local preservation programs, have resulted in the rejuvenation and revitalization of neighborhoods and cities. Individuals and families recognizing the charm and spacial advantages of old houses are moving back to older neighborhoods. Merchants are realizing the character, tradition and

craftsmanship of older buildings that cannot be duplicated in new shopping centers. Therefore, the restoration and renovation of existing houses and commercial buildings is occurring throughout Colorado and the nation.

A property nominated to the National Register of Historic Places acknowledges civic and cultural pride—not only in the past but also the present and future.

A nomination for the National Register may be classified as one of the following.

- structure: a man-made structure such as a house, barn, commercial or public building.
- site: a particular piece of property such as a battleground, cemetery or shoreline.
- district: several buildings or sites in one grouping.
- object: an artifact such as pottery, tools or weapons.

Whatever is being considered for nomination must be of either local, state or national importance.

The *nomination of structures* may be based on either significant architectural or historical merit. Architectural merit is determined by:

- a structure having particular characteristics classified as an identifiable style; or
- a structure known to be designed by a particular architect or builder and having the special features used by that person.

Historical merit is determined by:

- the home, place of business, vacation house, or some association with a significant person in local, state or national history; or
- a building where a famous or important historic happening took place.

Nomination forms are available through the State Historic Preservation Office. In Colorado the forms and further information may be obtained from

Colorado Preservation Office
1300 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203
Telephone (303) 866-3392

¹Nancy A. Goodman, instructor, and Connie Marschall, Interior Designer and alumnus, department of consumer sciences and housing (6/1/85)

There are twelve parts to the nomination form which include the entire history of the structure from the actual date of construction to the building's present condition and use. Other information needed to complete the form includes geographical data (acreage and boundary descriptions), location of legal descriptions and surveys of the property (such as the courthouse registry of deeds), name and legal address of the property, and name and address of the present owner. Information sources must be listed and may include city directories, newspapers, city census information, tax records, church records, personal wills, letters, diaries, interviews with people, as well as other available depositories utilized to obtain information concerning a structure's history. Libraries, historical societies, city or county archives, city or county clerks' records, and county commissioner's records are a few of the other places a person may seek information regarding a particular piece of property.

Completed forms should be returned to the State Preservation Office where several steps in the nomination process are taken before forwarding to the National Registry.

The property being nominated for the National Register must first be listed in the state inventory of historic sites. The staff of the Colorado Preservation Office reviews all inventory information to determine eligibility for both lists. A presentation of the nomination is scheduled for the state review board, which meets three to four times each year. This board is appointed by the governor and is an independent body composed of both lay members and professionals that represent the disciplines of archaeology, architecture, architectural history and history. Owners of the properties being nominated are notified 30 days in advance of the review board meeting. This gives the owners time, if they wish, to make any comment regarding the nomination.

Assuming the nomination is approved by the state review board, the nomination form is forwarded to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. A federal staff reviews the forms and acts on the nomination within 45 days of receipt. The keeper of the register makes the final decision concerning a listing and notifies the state historic preservation officer. The state officer then notifies the owner(s) of approval, rejection or the returning of the form for additional information.

It's important to be thorough when researching a structure and filling out the nomination form. Assistance from the state preservation office or by professionals is available for those who may not have time or want to do the research or fill out the national registration forms.

If you have or know of a structure(s) which may warrant a nomination to the state inventory and the National Register of Historic Places, the above information will be helpful in understanding the process and purpose of such listings. Contacting the state preservation office or your local Historical Society may be the first step in adding a building in your community to the state and national lists of important structures.

"When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think ... that a time is to come when men will say, 'See! This our fathers did for us.'"

John Ruskin, 1849

The Seven Lamps of Architecture

Chronology of the National Register of Historic Places

1960—Limited Register of nationally significant landmarks.

1966—National Historic Preservation Act establishes the National Register of Historic Places.

1967—First Keeper of the National Register and State Historic Preservation Officers appointed.

1980—Amendments to National Historic Preservation Act:

- directs federal agencies to nominate and protect federal properties;
- broadens participation of local governments; requires owner consent for National Register listing.

Further Reading

The History of a House: How to Trace It. Linda Ellsworth, 1976. From: American Association for State and Local History, 1400 Eighth Ave., South Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

How to Date a House. David M. Hart, 1975. From: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 141 Cambridge St., Boston, Massachusetts 02114.

A Field Guide to American Houses. Virginia and Lee McAlester, 1984. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Recording Historic Buildings. Harley J. McKee, 1970. From: National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Write for a list of literature available from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1785 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.