



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Communications
& Public Affairs
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6843 phone
202-219-0910 fax

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Gerry Gaumer: (202) 208-6843

George Price: (508) 349-3785 x 203

Cape Cod Dune Shacks found not to meet criteria for recognition as a Traditional Cultural Property

WASHINGTON, DC –. The National Park Service announced today that the Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District, which is located within the bounds of Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts, does not satisfy National Register of Historic Places requirements for recognition as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). In rendering this decision, the Park Service stressed that the district continues to remain eligible for listing on the National Register based on criteria of significance identified by the Keeper of the National Register in a determination of eligibility dating from May 1989.

“The decision against TCP recognition is the result a long and thoughtful process that included extensive input from as many interested parties as possible, including officials and numerous residents of the Lower Cape community as well as professional ethnographers and historians,” noted Dr. Janet Snyder Matthews, Keeper of the National Register.

National Register Bulletin # 38: *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties*, defines a Traditional Cultural Property as a property associated with the historic cultural practices, beliefs, or customs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community’s history and (b) are important to maintaining the continuing cultural identity of that community. The Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District is not a TCP because the groups that claim traditional associations were (and continue to be) fluid, evolving, and different from one year to the next. Thus, the historic district does not meet one of the important characteristics of a TCP: that the group/community must have existed historically and the same group/community continues to the present.

To ensure adequate opportunity for input regarding whether or not the district satisfies these requirements, the Park Service established a 45-day public comment period ending on March 17, 2007. During the comment period, the National Register office received over 100 letters and other materials from members of the public and interested organizations. The complete record associated with the district's 1989 determination of eligibility was reviewed, as were all other materials received regarding the issue. These materials included a written opinion from the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation

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Officer as well as two detailed studies prepared for the National Park Service by ethnographers Robert J. Wolfe and T.J. Ferguson. All comments and materials were measured against the letter and intent of National Register Bulletin # 38.

In her decision memorandum, Dr. Matthews recommended that a complete National Register nomination for the Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Historic District be prepared and submitted to the Keeper's office in Washington. "While the district is not a TCP, it clearly remains eligible for listing on the National Register. It is an important historic cultural landscape significant for its architecture; its role in the development of American art, literature, and theater; and its association with the life of American poet Harry Kemp," she said.

The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed on or "determined eligible" for listing on the National Register must be given consideration for preservation in the planning for Federal or federally assisted projects.

Acting NPS Northeast Regional Director Chrysandra Walter stated that she, "very much appreciated the thoughtful review, and the time and attention that Dr. Matthews and her staff devoted to this. For the park and many people in Provincetown and the Outer/Lower Cape the Dune Shacks are an important resource. The National Park Service continues its commitment to the preservation of the Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District. I look forward to the efforts of the staff of the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission as they develop a strategy for a long-term, sustainable management plan that will preserve the historic district and recognize the values highlighted in Dr. Wolfe's ethnographic report."

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