



National Historic Landmarks (NHLs)

A Quick Guide for Preserving Native American Cultural Resources

What are National Historic Landmarks (NHLs)?

National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are nationally significant historic places with a high degree of integrity and are designated as such by the Secretary of the Interior. NHLs possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. They may be found in any type of community, but all of them possess a special quality that makes them historically significant to the nation as a whole.

What can be nominated as an NHL?

Any building, site, structure, object, or district that that is nationally significant, has a high degree of historic integrity, and represents a direct and exceptional contribution to American history or culture can be nominated an NHL.

What is a nationally significant historic place?

A nationally significant historic place can be:

- anything associated with an event that had a significant impact on American history overall
- anything associated with an outstanding illustration of a broad theme or trend in American history overall
- a place that outstandingly commemorates or illustrates a culture or way of life
- the property most strongly associated with an important figure in American history
- the best example of an architectural style or significant development in engineering
- a site that can provide nationally significant archeological information

Not every property associated with a national event, person, architectural style, engineering development, or broad theme is eligible to be an NHL. The criteria for evaluating the national significance of a property for possible designation as an NHL are outlined in *36 CFR 65.4 – National Historic Landmark Criteria*

How are NHLs identified?

NHLs are generally identified through theme studies. A theme study is a researched document that helps provide national historic context, so that national significance can be evaluated for potential NHLs. Theme studies are either mandated by Congress or prepared by the National Park Service based on an evaluation of need.

Who may produce an NHL nomination?

Anyone may produce an NHL nomination to include individuals, consultants working for state or tribal governments or organizations, Federal, state, or tribal preservation officers (FPOs, SHPOs, THPOs), or National Park Service staff.

Are there any restrictions, rules, or regulations that apply to an NHL?

An NHL designation does not regulate or place restrictions on private property or private property owners. If there is a Federal interest attached to an NHL (through Federal, federally licensed, or federally assisted projects or Federal ownership) then any proposed changes to or projects on the property must follow *Section 106* (see *Quick Guide – Section 106*) and *Section 110* (see *Quick Guide – Laws and Regulations*) of the National Historic Preservation Act. This includes consultation with affected Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations.



What are the processes for nominating and designating an NHL?

Nomination Process

1. Contact the National Park Service's NHL Program and either your THPO or your state's SHPO. Write a Letter of Inquiry.
2. NHL Program determines if the property possesses the potential for national significance.
3. Undertake historical and/or archeological research of the property.
4. Draft an NHL nomination.
5. Submit the draft NHL nomination to the National Park Service's NHL Program for editorial and peer review.
6. Revise and edit the nomination according to recommendations from NHL Program staff.

Designation Process

1. The edited and reviewed NHL nomination is presented to the National Historic Landmarks Committee.
2. The National Historic Landmarks Committee reviews the nomination and votes on whether or not to recommend the property to the National Park System Advisory Board for further consideration.
3. The National Park System Advisory Board votes on whether or not to recommend the property for designation to the Secretary of the Interior or to return the nomination to the Landmarks Committee for further review.
4. The Secretary of the Interior reviews the nomination and designates the property as an NHL.

What are some examples of NHLs associated with Indian tribes and Native Hawaiians?

Many places have been designated as NHLs due to their association with the history and culture of Indian tribes and Native Hawaiians. Some examples include:

- Medicine Wheel, in Big Horn, Wyoming, which represents an ongoing spiritual and cultural connection between Indian tribes and the land they inhabit.
- Mo'okini Heiau, in Hawi, Hawaii, which highlights the importance of traditional religious practices to Native Hawaiians.
- The Birnirk Site in Alaska which has helped provide a better understanding of the early history of the Eskimo culture in North America.
- Sequoyah's Cabin in Oklahoma, which honors the importance of the inventor of the Cherokee syllabary.
- Bear River Massacre Site near Preston, Idaho where, in 1863, California Volunteers under the command of Col. Patrick Edward Conner attacked a Northwestern Shoshone camp, killing over 380 men, women, and children.

What are the benefits of NHL designation?

Benefits of NHL designation include access to Federal, state, and nonprofit grants; assistance with preservation from Federal and state agencies; and review of Federal or federally funded projects that might affect an NHL (see *Quick Guide – Section 106*). For more information about NHLs, theme studies, the nomination process, or designation visit the National Historic Landmarks Program on the National Park Service website at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/>