Cultural landscapes are identified by two qualifiers: 1) “significance” in American history, and 2) “integrity” or authenticity to a specific time period. Places that are cultural landscapes convey their integrity through historic character. Landscape characteristics are unique qualities used to evaluate and understand human influence and measure historic integrity.

The thirteen landscape characteristics illustrated here have the potential to exist in any place, though are not all necessarily found everywhere. When a landscape characteristic is present, it existed historically and is therefore a measure of authenticity.

You’ll notice the characteristics include intangible processes (above) and tangible patterns (below). These processes and patterns are interwoven into a complete system. Although we often separate these to develop understanding, preservation depends on the holistic management and sustainable practices.