

National Park System Advisory Board 2013 Report

Task 2: Recommend National Historic Landmarks

Beginning in 2009 the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) Committee took dramatic steps to open the door to a wide variety of resources and constituencies, offering NPS services to a broader audience. By reviewing nominations of historic sites representing the full spectrum of the nation's past, it is possible for the National Historic Landmarks Program to reach many more people than ever before and to tell a richer, more complex story about American life.

Addressing the Task

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior has called on the NHL Program to consider places associated with Spanish-speaking heritage. This "American Latino Initiative" has resulted in many properties being elevated to national landmark status and many others being nominated. At the same time, the Secretary tasked the NHL Program to identify resources that are significant because of an association with the role of women in the history of the nation. Similarly, the program has increased its effort to address resources in the Intermountain West, a region rich with historical significance, but too often overlooked. In addition, work has been initiated on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community-related properties and on an Asian Pacific-Islander theme study. Responding to a congressional mandate, the program also completed a Cold War theme study, making it possible to address a more recent period of American history.

Progress Report

These efforts add new dimensions to the array of national historic landmarks by representing a fuller range of the entire American story. Thanks to the great effort of NPS staff, combined with the diligent work of the NHL Committee and the NPSAB, the intrinsic nature of the NHL Program has been transformed to recognize the experiences of a diverse nation, whether from the perspective of ethnicity, gender, geography, or economic status.

In all, 85 properties have been nominated to join the list of national historic landmarks since 2009, bringing the total NHLs to 2,500. While the more traditional subjects of prominent political leaders, monumental architecture, and the military and its conflicts continue to be honored with additional listings, the program also recognized many other aspects of the past. With the new NHLs and the many emerging nominations that are currently being processed, the National Park System is in a better position to interpret the rich, diverse range of the nation's past, making the agency and its programs more relevant to more people than ever before. The unfolding list of recent nominations and listings suggest what the future might—and should—hold, informing the NPS about the direction it can take as it seeks additional properties for designation as NHLs.

Priorities Through 2016

Many more properties are being considered, representing a wide spectrum of possibilities. Future work will achieve a balance of listed landmarks that reflects the full diversity of the nation. The story represented by the NHLs will be expanded to be as broad as possible, geographically inclusive, and address more recently developed aspects of American culture, while continuing to honor the nation's more traditional historical topics.

Follow Our Work

Learn more about the National Historic Landmarks Program at www.nps.gov/nhl. Download the National Historic Landmarks Committee report at www.nps.gov/resources/advisoryboardreport.htm.