



# NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN

Technical information on the the National Register of Historic Places:  
survey, evaluation, registration, and preservation of cultural resources



U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
Cultural Resources  
National Register, History and Education

## Researching a Historic Property



The mission of the Department of the Interior is to protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage and honor our trust responsibilities to tribes.

This material is partially based upon work conducted under a cooperative agreement with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

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***Cover photos, clockwise from top left:***

*House at 2437 Fifteenth Street, N.W.*

*The house at 2437 Fifteenth Street, N.W. in Washington, DC is significant for its architectural design of 1927, a product of the prominent Washington architect of the early 20th century, George Oakley Totten, Jr. In addition, the house is significant for its role in the development of the thoroughfare along and parallel to 16th Street north of the White House with large, elegant embassies and private homes. Documentary sources for this property include building permits, deeds, and interviews. (Gary Griffin, Washington, DC)*

*Garden Homes Historic District*

*This historical view of the Garden Homes development in Milwaukee, Wisconsin shows the early years of what is considered to be the nation's first municipally-sponsored, community-owned housing project. Constructed between 1921 and 1923, it was based on the "garden city" model of Letchworth, England. The collection of simple, two-story cottages was documented through daily newspapers, periodicals, building permits, and city directories. (Milwaukee Public Library)*

*Dr. Samuel D. Risley House*

*Located in Media, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, the 1877 Dr. Samuel D. Risley House combines elements of the Gothic Revival and the Norman styles. The house is significant for its architecture, described as "a strikingly impressive eclectic house, combining themes from several popular 19th century picturesque styles." The house was documented through local histories, local daily newspapers, family genealogies and Philadelphia city directories. (Leslie B. Potter, Glen Mills, PA)*

*Ritzville Historic District*

*This commercial street in Ritzville, Adams County, Washington represents the period in the community's history when it was the world's greatest wheat entrepot. Developed during the late 19th/early 20th century, Ritzville was a booming agricultural trade center in the heart of a fertile wheat growing belt. The surviving commercial thoroughfare, a coherent group of buildings from that specific era in history, forms the National Register-listed Ritzville Historic District. The documentary sources for this nomination include county histories, local magazines and local daily newspapers, and insurance maps. (Leonard Garfield, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, State of Washington)*


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## RESEARCHING A HISTORIC PROPERTY

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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# I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this bulletin is to introduce the beginner to some basic sources and techniques for the collection of data for nominating a historic property to the National Register of Historic Places. This guide is to be used with the bulletin entitled *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, which explains terminology, and how the information gathered through research is incorporated in a National Register nomination. While the National Register lists buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects, this bulletin focuses on individual buildings. It may be applicable to other resource types—especially structures—and districts composed mainly of buildings.

Before you begin your research, contact the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of the State in which the property is located. The State will provide you with the appropriate forms, instructions, and guidance about the State's procedures for nominating properties to the National Register. The SHPO will also provide a copy of the State's inventory documentation if the property has already been surveyed. The SHPO is an important source of information about significant historic contexts and documentation that may be useful to you for researching your historic property. Finally, that office will be able to tell you if your community has a preservation official or office that you should contact. A complete list of

State Historic Preservation Officers is located in Appendix IX of *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*.

Additional information may be available from local landmarks and historic district commissions, particularly if the community in which your property is located is a Certified Local Government (CLG). Local governments frequently collect information about landmark properties, historic districts, and archeological sites. If the property being researched is owned by the U.S. Government, the Federal Preservation Officer (FPO) should be contacted for information as well. The SHPO can refer you to the relevant FPO for the agency involved.



*Hyde Park Historic District*

*This view of the Hyde Park Historic District illustrates a street scene from one of the earliest suburban subdivisions in Austin, Travis County, Texas. Established in 1891, the subdivision developed well into the first decades of the 20th century with bungalow houses. The bungalow reflected the progressive aspirations of the middle class and the availability of pattern books and mail-order house plans. This National Register historic district was documented through Sanborn Maps, real estate records, and estate records. (Daniel Hardy, Austin, Texas)*



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## II. RESEARCH AND THE NATIONAL REGISTER FORM

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Researching a historic property for National Register nomination differs from researching a property for other purposes. Information collected must be directed at determining the property's historical significance. When evaluating a property against National Register criteria, significance is defined as the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of a community, a State, or the nation. Significance may be based on association with historical events (Criterion A); association with a significant person (Criterion B); distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction, or form (Criterion C); and potential to yield important information (Criterion D).

Every National Register nomination must place a property in its **historic context** to support that property's significance. Historic context means information about the period, the place, and the events that created, influenced, or formed the backdrop to the historic resources. The discussion of historic context should describe the history of the community where the property is located as it relates to the history of the property.

Two other considerations affect evaluation of significance: **association** and **period of significance**. **Association** refers to the direct connection between the property and the area of significance for which it is nominated. For a property to be significant under historic events (Criterion A), the physical structure must have been there to "witness" the event or series of events; they must have actually occurred on the nominated property. For a property to be significant for an association with an individual (Criterion B), the individual should have lived, worked, or been on the premises during the pe-

riod in which the person accomplished the activities for which the individual is considered significant. Period of significance refers to the span of time during which significant events and activities occurred. Events and associations with historic properties are finite; most properties have a clearly definable period of significance.

Lastly, a property is evaluated for its **integrity**: the authenticity of physical characteristics from which properties obtain their significance. When properties retain historic material and

form, they are able to convey their association with events, people, and designs from the past. All buildings change over time. Changes do not necessarily mean that a building is not eligible; but, if it has radical changes, it may no longer retain enough historic fabric, and may not be eligible for the National Register. Historic integrity is the composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The National Register nomination form records the property at the time



*Panhorst Feed Store*

*The Panhorst Feed Store in St. Clair, Franklin County, Missouri was constructed in 1917-18. It is significant as "emblematic of a type of construction common among small towns in the 19th and early 20th century." This vernacular commercial building developed in the community, whose economy was based on mining, lumber, and agriculture. It was documented through local newspapers and personal interviews. (James Evans, Department of Natural Resources, State of Missouri)*



of its listing and justifies how the property qualifies for National Register listing. In addition, the form contains other data elements that should be reviewed before research is initiated. They include the location, size, and boundaries of the property; category and numbers of contributing resources; historic and current functions; architectural classification and materials; area and period of significance; and bibliography.

One of the most challenging tasks of research is knowing when you have gathered enough material. You are ready to complete the National Register nomination form when the following questions can be answered:

- What was the property called at the time it was associated with the important events or persons, or took on its important physical character that gave it importance?
- How many buildings, structures, and other resources make up the property?
- When was the property constructed and when did it attain its current form?
- What are the property's historic characteristics?
- What changes have been made over time and when? How have these affected its historic integrity?
- What is the current condition of the property, including the exterior, grounds, setting, and interior?
- How was the property used during its period of significance and how is it used today?
- Who occupied or used the property historically? Did they individually make any important contributions to history? Who is its current owner?
- Was it associated with important events, activities, or persons?
- Which National Register criteria apply to the property? In what areas of history is the property significant?
- How does the property relate to the history of the community where it is located?
- How does the property illustrate any themes or trends important to the history of its community, State, or nation?
- How large is the property, where is it located, or what are its boundaries?
- Would this property more appropriately be nominated as part of a historic district?

# III. RESEARCH HINTS

Organize research tasks in an efficient and logical fashion. Decide what you need to know and where you can find it. Make a list of the questions you must answer. Make a list of specific tasks, noting where you need to go, to whom you need to speak, and what you expect to find, and the order in which you intend to proceed. Determine your possibilities and limitations. You can save yourself time and effort by defining the parameters of your project in advance. You can alter, discard, or add questions to tasks as you proceed. Once you know exactly what you need to find, and have a good idea where to find it, you are well on your way to accomplishing your goal.

Remember that the property itself is a primary source of information. Walk through the property and gather information that describes it, noting distinctive features and obvious alterations and changes. Examine all buildings and structures, inside as well as out. Examine the grounds, noting any signs of previous buildings or activities (foundations, wells, etc.), and roadways, paths, vegetation, fences, and other features.

Identify what historic information is readily available, perhaps in the collections of the owners, a neighbor, or the community. As early as possible, establish the construction date for the property. This date may help establish an earliest beginning date for your period of significance. In addition, try to discover the names of the persons who owned or lived in the property, or for a business or institution, the names by which the property has been known through its history. With this information, you are less likely to overlook information under an unfamiliar name. Examine your property in relation to the historic events and development of the community of which it is a part to determine the context in which it is significant. Gather and record this general information as you gather the specific facts about your property.

Contact all organizations and institutions holding source materials well

in advance of the time of your visit. Organize and write down the questions you want to ask before you make your initial contact. Keep notes of all conversations. Explain exactly what you wish to accomplish. Determine the hours and procedures for using special collections, archives, and other records. Make arrangements with the person most knowledgeable about the collection you wish to use, so that you do not arrive at the facility to discover the person you need to see is unavailable.

Explain to the research facility personnel exactly when you wish to arrive, how long you will be able to stay, and exactly what you wish to see. In this way, the material will be ready for you. In addition, you may be pleasantly surprised to discover the material you need can be sent on interlibrary loan to your local library. Talk to the staff, especially reference people, archivists, and librarians. They may have fresh ideas or leads to suggest, and may be able to resolve confusion. Bear in mind that they will guide your efforts but will not do your research for you.

Identify and follow any special rules and requirements for using a

collection beforehand, e.g., no photographs, no photocopying, no tape recording, note-taking with a soft pencil only, photocopy costs, what you may or may not be allowed to bring, hours for special staff, etc.

Examine information thoroughly before reading it. Review table of contents, indices, and any accompanying research guides or "finding aids" prepared by staff. Do you need to go through every piece of paper? Can you skip some sections of the book? Is this publication really what you thought it was when you requested it? Did you get everything you requested? Learn how to use the directories, guides, indices, files, catalogs, and publications lists for various collections. Explore general guides to archival materials, manuscript collections, dissertations, and photographic collections for additional sources that may help you in your research.

Record consistently the documentation and sources of information from your research. Use a standard bibliographical style such as that found in *A Manual of Style or A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian, both published by the University of Chicago Press.



*Kehlbeck Farmstead*

*The Kehlbeck Farmstead in rural Cass County, Nebraska represents a rare surviving cluster of domestic agricultural buildings and structures associated with the farming history of southeast Nebraska of the late 19th/early 20th century. Its domestic character is enhanced by a rare allée of pruned cedar trees that form part of the decorative and functional landscaping of the homestead. This property was documented largely through college and university research papers. (Joni Gilkerson, Nebraska State Historical Society)*

# IV. GENERAL GUIDE TO SOURCES

When researching a property, both primary (original and archival) and secondary sources should be used. The following list includes both primary and secondary sources.

Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
ABSTRACT OF TITLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner</li> <li>• Office of attorney who did title search</li> <li>• Title company files</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of relevant deeds, mortgages, wills, litigation, tax sales</li> <li>• Names of owners</li> <li>• Dates when property changed hands</li> <li>• Descriptions of legal boundaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible establishment of "association" with significant individuals</li> <li>• Establishment of built dates and alterations</li> <li>• Boundary descriptions</li> <li>• Historic names of properties</li> </ul>
ARCHITECTURAL/ CONSTRUCTION DRAWINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owner</li> <li>• Architectural/ engineering firm or successor firm</li> <li>• Headquarters of organization or firm that built the structure</li> <li>• Recent tax assessor's records</li> <li>• Newspaper references</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architect/builder</li> <li>• Plans</li> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Built dates and alterations</li> <li>• General construction information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearance of original building and any major additions</li> <li>• Integrity of property</li> <li>• Period of significance and significant dates if nominated under Criterion C</li> </ul>
ARCHITECTURAL JOURNALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialized fine arts libraries</li> <li>• Original architectural publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architectural articles from historic period</li> <li>• Architectural biographies</li> <li>• Architectural drawings and photographs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architectural description</li> <li>• Statement of significance</li> </ul>
BUILDING PERMITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal building inspector</li> <li>• City/county records office</li> <li>• City/county/State archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architect</li> <li>• Existence of architectural drawings</li> <li>• Client</li> <li>• Contractor</li> <li>• Cost and date of work</li> <li>• Alterations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information for Criterion C: significant style or type of design</li> <li>• Identification of the architect or builder</li> <li>• Material for description</li> <li>• Establishment of integrity</li> <li>• Built dates</li> </ul>
CEMETERY RECORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cemetery administrators</li> <li>• Cemetery offices</li> <li>• Churches, rectories, and diocesan offices</li> <li>• City hall and courthouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family relationships</li> <li>• Birth and death dates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical details of individuals associated with property</li> </ul>



Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
<b>CENSUS RECORDS<sup>1</sup></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Agricultural</li> <li>• Manufacturing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State archives</li> <li>• Federal Records Center, Suitland, MD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents of property for years census taken</li> <li>• Property ownership</li> <li>• Acreage, crops, and livestock</li> <li>• Types and locations of manufacturers</li> <li>• Ethnic backgrounds of residents, ages, and education levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names of family members</li> <li>• Proven association of individual with property</li> <li>• Occupations</li> <li>• Under agricultural and manufacturing data, potential documentation and justification for Criteria A and D</li> <li>• Historic context</li> </ul>
<b>CHURCH RECORDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish churches</li> <li>• Diocesan offices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth</li> <li>• Death</li> <li>• Baptism</li> <li>• Marriages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical details of individuals associated with property</li> </ul>
<b>CITY COUNCIL OR COUNTY MINUTES, ORDINANCES, ETC.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City clerk</li> <li>• Clerk of superior court or county courthouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordinances of resolution affecting a property, subdivision, etc.</li> <li>• Dates</li> <li>• Description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information pertaining to area of significance, e.g., community planning and development</li> </ul>
<b>COMMERCIAL HISTORIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head offices of companies</li> <li>• Local or regional libraries</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• Corporate records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Histories of local industries and businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information pertaining to area of significance, e.g., commerce, economics, and industry</li> <li>• Justification for significance of industrial and commercial properties and downtown historic districts</li> </ul>
<b>COMMUNITY / COUNTY HISTORIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• Fraternal organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about structures, people, and events: pertinent dates, locations, activities, biographical sketches, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about events, activities, and individuals for Criteria A, B, and C</li> <li>• Association: information that may tie events and activities directly to the property</li> <li>• Leads to other sources of information</li> <li>• Historic context</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Federal census records generally are released to the public seventy-five years after the census is taken.

• The earliest Federal census available is 1790.

• Most Federal census records prior to 1880 do not contain house addresses.

• The regular 1890 census was destroyed by fire. However, some special census schedules are available, including information on surviving Union veterans of the Civil War for certain states.

• Check the availability of State censuses. More recent and detailed data are available for some states.



Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
<b>CORPORATE/ BUSINESS RECORDS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ledger Books</li> <li>• Client Files</li> <li>• Advertisements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate/business archives</li> <li>• Specialized libraries</li> <li>• Present corporation/business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature and source of items sold</li> <li>• Economic base of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information pertaining to area of significance, e.g., commerce, economics, and industry</li> </ul>
<b>COURT DOCUMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courthouses</li> <li>• State archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil and criminal indices: civil and criminal court actions, divorces, property suits, etc.</li> <li>• Voting rolls (may be more easily obtained in smaller communities)</li> <li>• Probate records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical details of individuals associated with property</li> </ul>
<b>DEEDS<sup>2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clerk of superior court, county courthouse</li> <li>• State archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership or title</li> <li>• Property value (noticeable change in value could indicate construction, additions, change in makeup of neighborhood, and change in fortunes of the community)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven association of individual with property</li> <li>• Dates of original construction and any additions</li> </ul>
<b>DIRECTORIES<sup>3</sup> AND GAZETTEERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City directories: occupants of dwelling by alphabetical listing, addresses, and businesses</li> <li>• Business directories: lists of merchants, addresses, and advertisements</li> <li>• Social directories: names of community's social elite listed alphabetically and by streets; hotel occupants</li> <li>• Gazetteers: information on rural areas, businesses, and towns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria A and B</li> <li>• Association of property with individual</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> One caution about deed information: when the deed goes back to the 1700s or early 1800s, you cannot automatically assume that the structure you are investigating is the same one referred to in the earliest deed. The original structure may have been destroyed, and you may be investigating a replacement built at a later date.

<sup>3</sup> City Directories: During the later 1800s and the early 1900s, many cities had directories that listed people at their home addresses, and often included occupational information. These directories—if compiled for your community—should be available in your public library or historical society. Having obtained a list of owners from the deed records, you can try find the people in these city directories. In cases where occupations and titles are given, you can see the rise (or fall) in the fortunes of the past owners by noting the changes in their occupational descriptions from year to year.

Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
<b>ESTATE RECORDS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wills</li> <li>• Inventories and appraisals</li> <li>• Administration of estates</li> <li>• Annual returns and sales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of the judge of probate/ county courthouse/ town hall</li> <li>• State archives (prior to 1900)</li> <li>• Private records</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value and apparent wealth and size of dwelling</li> <li>• Property changes</li> <li>• Ownership changes</li> <li>• Rental information</li> <li>• Sales of land that may never have been recorded by deeds</li> <li>• Family relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant events</li> <li>• Clues to other sources</li> <li>• Information about building</li> </ul>
<b>FAMILY/ PERSONAL PAPERS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters</li> <li>• Diaries</li> <li>• Ledger books, etc.</li> <li>• Bibles</li> <li>• Published family histories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present owners</li> <li>• Past owners</li> <li>• State archives</li> <li>• Descendants</li> <li>• Genealogical libraries and bibliographies</li> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• State/Federal archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ownership</li> <li>• Descriptions</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Architectural Plans</li> <li>• History/events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family relationships</li> <li>• Record of significant events</li> <li>• Information on significant persons</li> <li>• Appearance of original building</li> </ul>
<b>GENEALOGICAL RECORDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• State and national archives</li> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• Biographical publications</li> <li>• Genealogical publications and libraries</li> <li>• "Vanity press" county histories and family histories</li> <li>• Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Genealogical Society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographies of individuals</li> <li>• Family histories</li> <li>• Photographs and drawings of home and family members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about family homes</li> <li>• Criteria A, B, C, and D</li> <li>• Association of individuals with property and events</li> </ul>
<b>HOMESTEAD RECORDS</b> (for some Western States)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Records Center, Suitland, MD</li> <li>• Bureau of Land Management, State offices (for patent numbers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application indices: When and where buildings and structures were located on homestead, marital status, children, ages, and national origin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven association of individual with property</li> <li>• Information pertaining to area of significance, e.g., agriculture</li> </ul>
<b>INSURANCE RECORDS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners (past and present)</li> <li>• Insurance company offices (sometimes only main or regional offices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor plans</li> <li>• Dates of construction</li> <li>• Increases in premiums that may indicate when a change was made to the structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearance of original building and any additions</li> </ul>

Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current or former owners, occupants, and observers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal recollections about property: its original appearance, evolution, and uses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads about verification of appearance of original building and any additions</li> <li>• Significance of owner and property</li> </ul>
LAND RECORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Land Management, Washington, DC 20240 (contact for general material and addresses of State offices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information concerning properties and people, dates, locations, events, activities, and biographies associated with them</li> <li>• Former General Land Office (GLO) holdings, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Homestead patents</li> <li>- Mining district and patented claim records</li> <li>- GLO maps and plats</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proven association of individuals or Federal agency with property</li> <li>• Information pertaining to area of significance, e.g., agriculture, conservation, and exploration/settlement</li> </ul>
MAPS AND PLATS <sup>4</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town maps</li> <li>• Property plats</li> <li>• Private and family maps</li> <li>• Land ownership maps</li> <li>• "Bird's Eye View" maps</li> <li>• Developer's town layouts</li> <li>• Tourist maps</li> <li>• Landscaping firm layouts</li> <li>• Sanborn or Baist Insurance maps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County courthouse</li> <li>• City hall</li> <li>• Printed books</li> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• University/college collections</li> <li>• Surveyor general</li> <li>• Library of Congress</li> <li>• Architect's/landscape architect's firm records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Boundaries</li> <li>• Uses</li> <li>• Outbuildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary information</li> <li>• Criterion C</li> <li>• Integrity of property</li> </ul>
MILITARY RECORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Archives: Prior to World War I</li> <li>• Federal Resources Center, St. Louis, MO: From World War I</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pension records, addresses, and status</li> <li>• Various materials, including personal letters, family bibles, and marriage certificates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biographical details of individuals associated with property</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Old maps are important sources of information about the location of a structure and its immediate surroundings at a given date. They are useful for dating buildings and additions. Some city atlases (e.g. Sanborn or Baist) are at a scale to indicate approximate dimensions. They often show the position of utilities, grade levels, types of construction, and the height of buildings. The accuracy of maps varies, and sometimes they depict proposed improvements that were never built, or that were built in a different manner. Even recent maps may contain significant facts about historic properties.

Material	Sources	Potential Information Yielded	Possible Application to National Register Nomination
NEWSPAPERS/ SUNDAY SUPPLEMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• State/Federal archives</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• Newspaper morgues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements: names of occupant/owner, address of property, and use of structure</li> <li>• Society pages: gossip columns; articles pertaining to local social events, ceremonies, weddings, births, and meetings</li> <li>• Obituaries: information about owners and architects</li> <li>• Articles about local building efforts, architecture, etc.</li> <li>• Birth, death, and wedding announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criteria A, B, and C</li> <li>• Function</li> <li>• Description of property</li> <li>• Building dates</li> <li>• Significance of property and owner</li> </ul>
PHOTOGRAPHS AND POSTCARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owners</li> <li>• Historical societies</li> <li>• Local antique shops and flea markets</li> <li>• Local/regional libraries</li> <li>• State archives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architectural and landscape features</li> <li>• Alterations</li> <li>• Associated structures</li> <li>• Associated with persons and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appearance of original building and any additions</li> <li>• Integrity of property</li> </ul>
TAX RECORDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judge of probate: city/county courts</li> <li>• Tax assessor</li> <li>• State archives</li> <li>• City/county clerk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of structures</li> <li>• Dates</li> <li>• Evolution of property in relation to city limits or county development</li> <li>• Drawings and plans</li> <li>• Increases in valuation may suggest new improvements or construction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relative value of property</li> <li>• Proven association of individual with property</li> <li>• Integrity of property</li> </ul>



# V. ADDITIONAL SOURCES

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**Local, regional, and State libraries** with collections pertaining to local and regional history, city directories, genealogical collections, photograph collections, and newspapers on microfilm. Inquire about interlibrary loans from distant libraries.

**Local and regional branches of the National Archives:** census data, Federal survey maps, and guides to collections.

**Museums; local, regional, county, and State historical societies and museum associations,** for valuable publications, files, tours, photograph collections, architectural history collections, local histories, and ephemera.

**State Archives and Records Management Offices** sometimes contain county assessor's property tax records, as well as other information.

**Statewide or nationwide historical and genealogical societies.**

**Statewide historic preservation organizations.**

**Universities and colleges:** photograph collections, architectural history collections, map and periodical collections, and manuscripts and archives collections. Some universities and colleges have preservation or architecture programs. Frequently, their students will have done surveys of local resources and local history as class projects. They may also be a good source of suggestions about further research possibilities for your specific property.



*Osgood Family House*

*Constructed circa 1810, the Osgood Family House is an excellent example of a Federal style house in Fryeburg, Oxford County, Maine. The house was documented through a county historic resource survey. (Kirk F. Mahney, Maine Historic Preservation Commission)*

It should be stressed that much of what is known is still in private ownership. Interviewing past or present property owners, long-time residents, or former staff or employees is often one of the best means of locating information. Very often historical soci-

eties, museums, genealogical societies, and pioneer associations can be helpful in locating previous owners or their descendants. Manuscripts, papers, scrapbooks, diaries, and private photograph albums are often the most valuable sources you can investigate.

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# VI. ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS

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**Cooperative Preservation of Architectural Records (COPAR)**  
Prints and Photographs Division  
Library of Congress  
Washington, DC 20540

A national center for information on architectural records throughout the United States. COPAR directs researchers to repositories in all states.

**Historic American Buildings Survey/  
Historic American Engineering  
Record (HABS/HAER)**  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
1849 "C" Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Records for more than 25,000 historic buildings and structures. The HABS/HAER collection is reproducible and copyright free. Records are accessible at, and may be ordered from, the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC, 20540.

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# VII. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE GUIDES AND DICTIONARIES

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These standard architectural guides may indicate if the property you are researching is an example of a recognizable architectural style.

Blumenson, John J.G. *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide for Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981.

Fleming, John, et al. *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1966.

Foley, Mary Mix. *The American House*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940*. New York: Van Norstrand Reinhold, 1985.

Gowans, Alan. *Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Education and Cultural Expression*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.

Harris, Cyril M. *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Historic Architecture Sourcebook*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977.

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

Pevsner, Nicholas et al. *A Dictionary of Architecture*. New York: Overlook Press, 1976.

Phillips, Steven J. *Old House Dictionary*. Lakewood, CO: American Source Books, 1989.

Poppeliers, John C.S., et al. *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture*. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1983.

Saylor, H.H. *Dictionary of Architecture*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1952.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture: A Guide to Styles*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969.

Whiffen, Marcus and Frederick Koeper. *American Architecture, 1607-1976*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981. 2 vols.

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Norton, Mary Beth, ed. *The American Historical Association's Guide to Historical Literature, Third Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 2 vols.

Rath, Frederick L., Jr. and Marilyn Rogers O'Connell, ed. *Historic Preservation: A Bibliography on Historical Organization Practices*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1975.

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# VIII. INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSES

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**American Antiquarian Society,**  
185 Salisbury Street,  
Worcester, MA 01609

The largest collection of printed materials on the history and culture of the first 250 years of the country.

**American Association for State and Local History,**

530 Church Street, Suite 600,  
Nashville, TN 37219

A leading source of aid for local history research. AASLH helps individuals, museums, and historical societies through books, a Technical Leaflet series, a magazine, videotapes, seminars, and related programs.

**Catalogue of Landscape Records in the United States, Wave Hill,**

675 West 252nd Street,  
Bronx, NY 10471

Provides information on the location of historical landscape documentation, and collections helpful in researching the work of landscape architects.

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Genealogical Society,**  
50 East North Temple Street,  
Salt Lake City, UT 84105

Maintains the largest genealogical repository in the country. Of interest and use for non-Mormons through 200 branch libraries.

**Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories.** Washington, DC: National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 1978. 905 pp. index. Information about 3,250 institutions, arranged alphabetically by State and town. Information about documents, photographs, architectural drawings, oral history, collections, and other source materials, with lists of institutions by type (corporate archives, religious archives, etc.) and descriptions of local public records programs in each State.

**Directory of Historical Societies and Agencies in the United States and Canada.** Mary Bray Wheeler, ed.

1990. 14th ed. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History. Describes about 6,000 historical societies' library and research capacity and special emphases. Includes Federal records centers.

**National Archives, Correspondence Branch,**

Washington, DC 20408

Genealogical and other records. Issues a free kit describing what is available at the National Archives. Regional depositories are in Boston; New York; Philadelphia; Atlanta; Chicago; Fort Worth; Denver; San Francisco; Laguna Niguel, CA; and Kansas City, MO.

**National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections.** Washington, DC:

Library of Congress, Cataloguing Distribution Service Building 159, Navy Yard Annex, Washington, DC 20541. 1959-93. 29 vols. The complete series describes more than 40,000 collections in 1,000 repositories, arranged by name of collection within each volume. The listings are indexed by topical subjects and personal, family, corporate, and geographical names.



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# IX. MAPS

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**Fire Insurance Maps in the Library of Congress: Plans of North American Cities and Towns Produced by the Sanborn Map Company.** Geography and Map Division. Introduced by Walter W. Ristow. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1981. GPO Stock no. 030-004-00018-3.

**Historic Urban Plans,**  
Box 276, Ithaca, NY 14851  
Sells reproductions of old maps and urban views useful in research. A catalogue is available.

**Library of Congress,  
Geography and Map Division,**  
Washington, DC 20541  
In addition to its Sanborn Map Collection, and its comprehensive selection of historical and current maps, the Library maintains some 3,000 19th and early-20th century commercially produced atlases of U.S. counties and cities, illustrated with views of buildings.

**National Cartographic Information Center,**  
Geological Survey,  
U.S. Department of the Interior,  
Reston, VA 22091  
The primary public source for cartographic information. NCIC collects data from Federal, State, and local governments and private companies; sells maps; provides related information; and conducts searches. Aerial views, topographic maps, and out-of-print editions are available.

# X. GENERAL SOURCES

- Baum, Willa K. *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.
- Burns, John A., ed. *Recording Historic Structures*. Washington, DC: The AIA Press, 1989.
- Colket, Meredith B., Jr. and Frank E. Bridgers. *Guide to Genealogical Records in the National Archives*. Washington, DC: The National Archives and Records Service, 1964.
- Hale, R.W., Jr. *Methods of Research for the Amateur Historian*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1969.
- Hart, David M. "How to Date an Old House." Handout distributed by Old House Journal, Brooklyn, NY, October 1976.
- How to Research the History of a House. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, n.d.
- Howe, Barbara, et al. *House and Homes: Exploring Their Histories*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987.
- Kyvig, David E. and Myron A. Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982.
- Maddex, Diane, ed. *All About Old Buildings: The Whole Preservation Catalog*. Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1985.
- McDonald, Travis C., Jr. *Preservation Briefs 35: Understanding Old Buildings: the Process of Architectural Investigation*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, 1994.
- McKee, Harley J. *Amateur's Guide to Terms Commonly Used in Describing Historic Buildings*. Rochester, NY: Landmarks Society of Western New York, 1970.
- Summers, Lydia B. *Researching the Old House*. Portland, ME: Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc., 1981.
- Thompson, Paul. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Weitzman, David. *Underfoot: An Everyday Guide to Exploring America's Past*. New York: Scribner's, 1976.
- Porter, Charles W., III, "Documenting Research Methods Applied to Historic Sites and Buildings," *The American Archivist*, n.c., on file at the National Trust for Historic Preservation Library Collection at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
- "Researching Your Historic Resource," Technical Paper No. 5, Historic Preservation Program, King County Cultural Resources Division, King County, WA.
- Thomas, Kenneth H., Jr., "Documenting a Structure in Georgia," Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, GA, September, 1986.
- Travers, Jean, "Guide to Resources Used in Historic Preservation Research," National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, DC, 1978.
- Some of the information presented in this bulletin was adapted from the following sources:
- Campbell, Susan H., "National Register Research Guide," Ellaville, GA.
- Hart, David M. "How to Date an Old House." Handout distributed by Old House Journal, Brooklyn, NY, October 1976.
- "How to Prepare Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places." State Historic Preservation Office, Parks and Recreation Division, Oregon Department of Transportation, Salem, OR, 1988.
- Assistance in preparing this publication was provided by Ronald J. Bernier, Genealogist, Washington, DC; Claudette Stager, National Register Coordinator, Tennessee Historical Commission; and Sally Sims Stokes, Curator of the National Trust for Historic Preservation Library Collection at the University of Maryland at College Park, MD.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# XI. LIST OF NATIONAL REGISTER PUBLICATIONS

	DATE DUE	
<b>The Basics</b>		
How to Apply National Register		
Guidelines for Completing National Register		
Part A: How to Complete the		
Part B: How to Complete the		ation Form
Researching a Historic Property		
<b>Property Types</b>		
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting		
Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Documenting		fields
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting		
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting		
How to Evaluate and Nominate		
Guidelines for Identifying, Evaluating, and Documenting		
How to Apply National Register Criteria		
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting		t Persons
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting	DEMCO, INC. 38-2931	Significance Within the Last Fifty Years
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes *		
Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties *		
Nominating Historic Vessels and Shipwrecks to the National Register of Historic Places		
<b>Technical Assistance</b>		
Contribution of Moved Buildings to Historic Districts; Tax Treatments for Moved Buildings; and Use of Nomination Documentation in the Part I Certification Process		
Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*		
Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning *		
How to Improve the Quality of Photographs for National Register Nominations		
National Register Casebook: Examples of Documentation *		
Using the UTM Grid System to Record Historic Sites		

The above publications may be obtained by writing to the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240. Publications marked with an asterisk (\*) are also available in electronic form on the World Wide Web at [www.cr.nps.gov/nr](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr), or send your request by e-mail to [nr\\_reference@nps.gov](mailto:nr_reference@nps.gov).

