

TO: National Register Applicants

FROM: Thomas Dabney
National Register Assistant Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register of Historic Places

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the National Register of Historic Places. To enable us to make a preliminary evaluation about the eligibility of your property for the National Register, we ask that you complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it along with several photographs to the Historic Preservation Division. This is a preliminary evaluation only and does not require the same level of research and documentation needed for a full-scale National Register nomination.

For buildings, please submit at least two photographs of the exterior and at least two photographs of the interior, illustrating any significant features such as mantelpieces or stairways. Please also submit a copy of a map (Google, Bing, Etc.), with the location of the property clearly marked.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or the National Register program, please contact me at 601-576-6701, or tdabney@mdah.ms.gov.

Enclosures
August, 2024

The National Register of Historic Places: What It Is and How It Works

By Richard J. Cawthon
Former Chief Architectural Historian, MDAH

The Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History frequently gets calls and letters from people all over Mississippi asking how they can have their homes officially designated as historic buildings. Others inquire how they can qualify for tax credits for restoring old buildings, and many ask what we would recommend as the first step in seeking to protect a historic property from a threat of demolition. All of these concerns are related to a federal program called the National Register of Historic Places.

Established by Congress under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register of Historic Places is a list of buildings, districts, historic sites, archaeological sites, and other properties that are officially recognized by the United States government as being especially worthy of protection and preservation. Its primary purpose is to help federal, state, and local governments identify historically significant properties so that they can be protected from the effects of federal government activities. This is especially important in the planning of large construction projects, such as highways or reservoirs, but it is applicable to many other kinds of federally-sponsored or federally-funded projects as well. Additionally, National Register listing can make some kinds of properties eligible for certain tax benefits or grant assistance. Although the National Register was originally intended as a planning tool, it has come to be regarded by the public at large as an honor roll of historic properties, providing national recognition of their significance.

The listing of a property on the National Register does not restrict a private owner's use or disposition of the property in any way, unless development of the property involves federal funding, federal rehabilitation tax credits, or participation in some other federal program. There are no requirements for public accessibility; indeed, information about sensitive sites can be restricted from the public.

There are many different kinds of properties listed on or eligible for the National Register, including archaeological sites, battlefields, bridges, cemeteries, forts, and historic districts, but most of the inquiries we receive are for buildings, most typically houses. Properties may be proposed for the National Register in several ways. Some are identified in surveys conducted by or funded by our office, but these are usually districts or large groups of properties. Because of the small size of our staff and the large workload we handle, our office normally does not prepare nominations for individual buildings on request from the public. Instead, we rely on the public to submit nominations to us.

Anyone may sponsor a property for nomination to the National Register. One need not be the owner, but federal regulations do allow private property owners the right to block the listing of their own properties.

Typically, the nomination process for an individual, privately-owned building begins when a person contacts our office to make an initial inquiry. We will respond by asking that person to fill out a questionnaire that asks some basic questions about the property and why it is thought to be important. The questionnaire is then returned to our office along with some recent photographs of the building. On the basis of the information provided to us, we will evaluate the building to determine if it appears to meet the criteria of eligibility for the National Register. If the building does not appear eligible, we will send a letter explaining why not. If the building does appear to be eligible, we will then send the sponsor a packet containing a nomination form and instructions.

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to see that the nomination is completed. Some sponsors choose to prepare the nomination themselves, but because the requirements for writing a nomination are quite rigorous and can be very daunting to the layman, many sponsors prefer to seek assistance from consultants who specialize in preparing National Register nominations. A list of consultants is included with the nomination packet.

A National Register nomination is a formal document that includes a detailed description of the property and any changes it has undergone, a statement explaining why the property is significant and briefly summarizing its history, a precise statement of boundaries or a legal description, several large black-and-white photographs, and a topographic map indicating the location. In Mississippi, individual building nominations must also include a sketch of the floor plan.

When the nomination is complete, it will be scheduled for presentation to the Mississippi Historic Preservation Professional Review Board, an appointed committee that meets three times each year to consider proposed nominations for approval. Before consideration by the Review Board we will notify both the owner of the property and local government within whose jurisdiction it is located. We will follow that with another letter advising them of the Review Board's decision. If the nomination is approved by the Review Board, the staff insures that the documentation is completed and ready for submission. Upon finalization the nomination is sent to the National Register office of US Department of the Interior in Washington, DC, for final approval. After several weeks the National Register office will either notify us of their decision or return the nomination to us for additional work. When we receive notification that the property has been listed, we will notify the owner and the local government. The whole process usually takes about six months after we receive the nomination, but can take longer, especially if additional information or revisions are needed.

In order for a building to qualify for the National Register, it must meet certain criteria. These are rather complex, but essentially boil down to two factors, **significance** and **integrity**.

Significance is the capacity of a property to embody, represent, or help us understand some important aspect of the history of the nation, state, or local community. An eligible property may represent an important event or development, the contributions of a notable person, an important type of building or architectural style, or some other historical theme. In essence, it must have **historical meaning**. As a general rule, a property must have acquired significance from historical events or development at least fifty years ago, unless it can be documented to be exceptionally important.

Integrity is the degree to which a property retains its historical identity and authenticity, in such characteristics as appearance, materials, and location. For example, a house that is significant because it was the home of a very prominent person should look about like it did when that person lived there. If it has changed too much, it is not eligible.

A building or any other kind of historic site or structure that possesses a high degree of both significance and integrity is very likely to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

For more information about the National Register of Historic Places, write to the Historic Preservation Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, Mississippi, 39205, or call us at (601) 576-6940.

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is intended to provide preliminary information to the Division of Historic Preservation to assist in evaluating a property's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. **It is not a nomination form.** If, on the basis of this information, the property appears to meet the criteria for the National Register, a nomination form will be sent to you. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, contact the Division of Historic Preservation at (601) 576- 6940.

Please, be sure to include several photographs, with views of the interior, exterior, and any historic outbuildings. In answering these questions, you may use additional pages as necessary. Return the questionnaire to:

Historic Preservation Division
Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Post Office Box 571
Jackson, MS 39205

<p>1. Name of Property – Street & Number – City & Zip Code – County –</p>
<p>2. Original Use – Present Use –</p>
<p>3. Date(s) of Construction & Of Any Major Changes –</p>
<p>4. Name & Address of Owner –</p>
<p>5. Original of Other Historically Notable Owner/Occupant –</p>

6. Architect and/or Builder (if known) –

7. Why is the property historically or architecturally important?

8. Briefly describe the Property –

(Describe the original form and any major changes, inside and out, that may have occurred. Be sure to point out any notable features. If the property includes outbuildings or notable landscape features, mention them also. **Enclose photographs showing any notable exterior, interior, and landscape features.**)

9. Are there plans for the rehabilitation or renovation of the property in the near future? If so, please describe them.

10. Is the property endangered? If so, explain.

11. Is Register listing being sought for grant eligibility or tax benefits? If so, explain.

12. Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Person Submitting Questionnaire –

Date Questionnaire Submitted –

13. If the person submitting this form is not the property owner, has the owner been contacted, and does the owner consent to the consideration of the property for nomination to the National Register?

Contacted – Yes No

Consents – Yes No

Submitter's Interest in the Property (e.g. owner, renter, relative of owner, local historian, etc.) –

Revised May, 2021