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"HISTORIC PRESERVATION" and "HISTORIC PROPERTIES"

Local Preservation is a National Park Service publication series that provides technical information concerning the national historic preservation program established by and administered under the authority of the National Historic Preservation Act (See Local Preservation "What is the National Historic Preservation Act?").

Two terms need to be defined for reference by readers of the Local Preservation Series, because they are used in the Series in ways that, while consistent with the definitions in the National Historic Preservation Act, could be misleading.

The Act defines historic property to mean "any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register." Thus when we refer to "historic properties" we mean to include archeological sites and culturally important places of significance in prehistory-- that is, sites and places used during the thousands of years that American Indians occupied the continent before the coming of Europeans -- as well as properties used during the "historic" period since the arrival of Europeans.

The Act defines historic preservation to mean "identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, curation, acquisition, protection, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance and reconstruction, or any combination of the foregoing activities." Thus when we refer to "historic preservation activities" we have a very wide range of activities in mind. Some kinds of activities may not be possible under some circumstances, however; for example, Congress has not recently permitted use of Historic Preservation Fund monies for acquisition, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance, or reconstruction of historic properties. "Historic preservation" as used in these papers refers to whatever range of the above activities is permitted by the laws and regulations governing the program under discussion.