

## Historic Preservation Definitions

**Historic Preservation** is the preservation and protection of buildings and landscapes of historical significance.

"Architecture is a direct and substantial representation of history and place. By preserving historic structures, we are able to share the very spaces and environments in which the generations before us lived" (Washington Trust for Historic Preservation). Preservation of historic landscapes and structures helps us to understand the past. Preservation is environmentally sustainable, and builds local economies and community pride.

**1966 National Historic Preservation Act** includes guidelines for historic preservation, and a structure for states and local governments to monitor and encourage historic preservation. It includes:

**Section 106** of the act requires **federal** undertakings (as well as projects receiving **federal funding**) be reviewed by the **State Historic Preservation Officer** for their impact on historic resources.

**State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)** is a federal appointment in each state responsible for implementation of the National Historic Preservation Act. (In Alaska, the position overlaps with the state's Office of History and Archeology director.)

The **National Register of Historic Places**, a list of sites of historical significance, with **National Historic Landmark** status for sites of national significance, is managed by the National Park Service. A property has historical significance, and is at least 50 years old, to be eligible for listing.

**The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties**, revised in 1995, also managed by the National Park Service, includes four Treatments: **Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction**. Rehabilitation is the most common, recognizing the need to modify a property for a new use. **Standards for Rehabilitation** are attached.

**The Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards in Archaeology and Historic Preservation** are for federal contractors in History, Historic Architecture, Archaeology, and Architectural History. *The State Office of History and Archeology maintains a list of qualified professionals, but it includes anyone who asks to be on it, and it is up to users to verify qualifications.*

**A Certified Local Government (CLG)** is a local government certified to participate in federal historic preservation funding and programs. Requirements include having a Historic Preservation Commission and local review of projects that may have an impact on historic resources. In **1994** the **City and Borough of Sitka** became a **Certified Local Government**.

It is a common misperception that federal law restricts what a private property owner can do, but it **does not** unless there are federal funds involved. **Because historic preservation is voluntary, local Historic Preservation Commissions have an important role in educating the public about its value and importance.**

The **Historic Preservation Fund** is federal funding for implementation of the NHPA.

**CLG Grants** are federal **Historic Preservation Fund Grants** that go to Certified Local Governments.

Alaska **Office of History and Archeology** (OHA), part of state government, provides technical resources for historic preservation, and reviews state projects for their impact on historic resources, per state law. The **Alaska Historical Commission** is the citizen review board for state history policy.

The **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, begun in 1949, became an independent nonprofit in 1996. They provide technical resources, expertise, and advocacy, and small grants.

**Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)** began in 1933, documenting historic structures in detail. Drawings are archived at the Library of Congress. Many Sitka buildings are included. A HABS study of St. Michael's Cathedral made its reconstruction possible after the 1966 fire.

**Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives** include a **20% tax credit** for the costs of rehabilitation of commercial buildings that are listed on the National Register which are rehabilitated according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Other incentives include a 10% credit for substantial rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936, and a tax credit for donating a historic preservation easement.