

COVID-19 Response

Following guidance from the White House, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and state and local public health authorities, we are increasing access and services in a phased approach across all units of the National Park System. Before visiting a park, please check the [park website](#) to determine its operating status. Updates about the overall NPS response to COVID-19, including safety information, are posted on www.nps.gov/coronavirus.

National Park Service

Cultural Landscapes

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Understand Cultural Landscapes



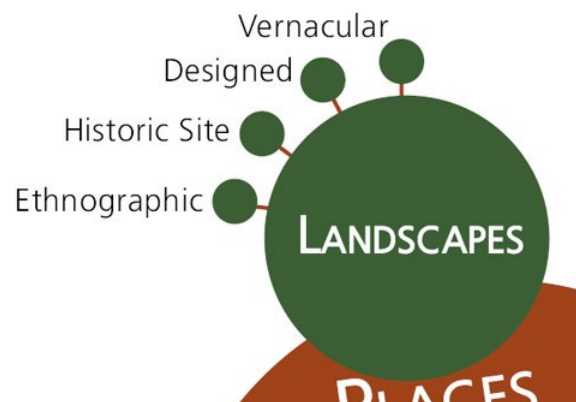
Defining Cultural Landscapes

Put simply, a cultural landscape is a historically significant property that shows evidence of human interaction with the physical environment

The **National Park Service defines a cultural landscape** as a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

There are four non-mutually exclusive types of cultural landscapes.

Here are just some examples of each of the landscape types in the National Park System. For a more in-depth look, click each image to access a Cultural Landscape Inventory report, Cultural Landscape Report, or park website.



Historic Designed Landscape

A landscape significant as a design or work of art; was consciously designed and laid out either by a master gardener, landscape architect, architect, or horticulturalist to a design principle, or by an owner or other amateur according to a recognized style or tradition; has a historical association with a significant person, trend, or movement in landscape gardening or architecture, or a significant relationship to the theory or practice of landscape architecture.



Historic Site

A landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person.



Historic Vernacular Landscape

A landscape whose use, construction, or physical layout reflects endemic traditions, customs, beliefs, or values; in which the expression of cultural values, social behavior, and individual actions over time is manifested in physical features and materials and their interrelationships, including patterns of spatial organization, land use, circulation, vegetation, structures, and objects; in which the physical, biological, and cultural features reflect the customs and everyday lives of people.



Ethnographic Landscape

A landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources. Examples are contemporary communities such as that at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Site, New Orleans neighborhoods, the Timbisha Shoshone community at Death Valley, and massive geological structures such as Devils Tower. Small plant communities, animals, subsistence, and ceremonial grounds are included.



Other definitions of cultural landscapes come from:

UNESCO - "Combined works of nature and of man" that illustrate the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment, and of successive social, economic, and cultural forces, both external and internal.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation - "Cultural landscapes provide a sense of place and identity; they map our relationship with the land over time; and they are part of our national heritage and each of our lives."

The NPS Preservation Mission

The role of the Park Cultural Landscapes Program supports the historic preservation efforts of the National Park Service, which is governed by federal law, federal regulations, presidential executive orders, and orders of the Director of the National Park Service. Many of these have recently been reorganized under Title 54 of United States Code.

The legal responsibility for preservation has its origins in the **National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 (formerly 16 U.S.C. 1, amended to two sections in Title 54)**, which officially defined the agency and its mission.



In 1966, the **National Historic Preservation Act (former citation 16 U.S.C. 470, amended to 54 U.S.C. 300101)** outlined a vision for a more unified nationwide program of historic preservation among federal, tribal, and state governments; local municipalities; and private and non-profit organizations. This vision stated:

"The spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic heritage; this historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people...the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans."

With the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the NPS became the leading federal historic preservation agency. Fifty years later, the role of the NPS in historic preservation continues to be directed by these legal foundations; aiming to protect the resources of parks, as stated in the Organic Act, and providing leadership in the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage, as envisioned by the NHPA.

- **Introduction to Federal Preservation Laws:** Learn more about the legal standards and guidelines shaping NPS preservation practices.



A VISUAL INTRODUCTION

Cultural Landscapes 101

Your introduction to cultural landscapes of the National Park Service.



LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION HISTORY

A Preservation Timeline

Explore 165 years of cultural landscape preservation in the United States.



PROTECTING CULTURAL RESOURCES

Preservation Guidance

Research, Planning, and Stewardship

About Cultural Landscapes in the National Park System

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Cultural Landscapes in the National Park Service: Good Root Stock



Cultural landscapes are found throughout the national park system, where they are preserved for the benefit of present and future generations. Most have only been recognized since the 1980s, when the NPS first defined "cultural landscape" as a type of cultural resource. As the maturation of the concept reaches its fourth decade and we look ahead to the future, we pause to reflect on the history of the Park Cultural Landscapes Program and acknowledge our underpinnings.

The Founding of a Preservation Agency



When the Organic Act was signed on August 25, 1916, it created an agency responsible for managing and promoting the areas that had been set aside to protect their scenic, natural, and historic values for the enjoyment of future generations. Over a century later, while the NPS mission continues to reflect these founding ideals, the agency has developed over time to become what we know it as today. How did the NPS shape its role in historic preservation?

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