

# HERITAGE BULLETIN

Tips, Ideas & More to Help Preserve Oregon's Heritage

4

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

NOVEMBER 2011

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture. The records are maintained in Washington, D.C. by the National Park Service, and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Over 1,800 properties located in all 36 counties of Oregon are listed in the National Register. Oregon listings presently include 111 historic districts.

## The State Historic Preservation Office

Each state has a designated State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). In Oregon, the State Historic Preservation Office operates within the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department. A nine-member governor-appointed State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation (SACHP) is responsible for reviewing and approving all nominations to the National Register. Academic disciplines represented by the SHPO staff and the SACHP include history, archaeology, architecture, architectural history, related fields, and a Native American representative.



*Hayden Bridge, Benton County*

## How are properties listed in the National Register?

Properties are listed in the National Register through a public nomination process. The property owner often initiates a nomination,



but any individual, local historical society, other community group, or even the state of Oregon may propose a nomination. The first step is a phone call to the SHPO to get a preliminary eligibility evaluation of the property from National Register staff. The next step is completion of the nomination form that describes the property and documents its significance. The property owner decides whether to prepare the form independently or engage a consultant to conduct the research and assemble the materials required to complete the form. About 50 percent of applicants conduct their own research and prepare their own nomination forms.

When a technically complete nomination form is received by the SHPO, it is placed on the calendar for review by the SACHP during one of three public meetings each year. The SACHP decides whether the property proposed for nomination meets the National Register criteria and makes its recommendations to the SHPO accordingly. If approved by the SACHP and the SHPO, the form is sent to Washington, D.C. The Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places decides whether to accept the nomination and list the property. The majority of properties nominated to the National Register are accepted for listing. Sometimes a nomination is returned for correction and resubmitted to the Keeper.



*James Grant Watts House, Columbia County*

### **What are the benefits of listing a property in the National Register?**

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places honors the property and recognizes its importance to the community, the state, or the nation. Owners of listed properties may apply for Preserving Oregon grants when funds are available, usually in November. The SHPO administers a federal tax credit program that can save building owners 20 percent of the cost of rehabilitating their listed commercial, industrial, or rental residential building. In addition, Oregon has a

property tax benefit that freezes the assessed value of a listed property for a 15-year period. As conditions of the property tax benefit, the owner must produce a preservation plan and open the property to the public once a year for the period of the benefit.

### **Are properties listed in the National Register subject to restrictions and regulations?**

No restrictions are imposed by the state or federal governments provided the property is not benefiting from state or federal grants or tax incentive programs. However, state law in Oregon requires local governments to offer some level of protection to National Register properties. Restrictions will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, so contact your local planning bureau to determine the level of regulation in your community.

Private owners of National Register properties have no obligation to admit the public to their properties or restore them unless they have voluntarily agreed to as a condition of receiving federal, state, or local economic benefits.

Listing a property in the National Register does not prevent the owner from selling the property or adapting it to a compatible new use. In making changes to a listed property, owners are advised to follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Listed properties can be removed from the Register only under specific circumstances: If the decision regarding eligibility for listing was made in error, or was based on information subsequently proven incorrect or if a procedural error was made in the nomination process, or if the qualities which made the property eligible for listing in the National Register no longer exist.

### **Can a property be listed without permission of the owner?**

Private property: A property in private ownership that is proposed for nomination as an individual listing in the National Register cannot be listed if the owner has formally objected to the listing. If a historic district is being proposed for nomination, the district cannot be listed if

*No restrictions are imposed by the state or federal governments provided the property is not benefiting from state or federal grants or tax incentive programs.*

the majority of owners of private property within the proposed district boundary object to the listing.

Publicly owned property: Although the Keeper of the National Register will take the agency's comments into consideration, a public owner's objection does not preclude the listing of a property in public ownership.

### **How difficult is it to prepare a nomination to the National Register?**

One should expect to spend between 100 and 150 hours preparing a nomination for an individual property. If the property is a historic district or a complex of several buildings, it will take longer. The narrative of the nomination form is divided into two sections: a description of the property, and a discussion of why it is significant. The key to preparing a successful nomination form is staying focused on the applicable criteria and demonstrating how the property meets those criteria. Appendices include maps and photographs. The process for an individual listing takes approximately one year from start to finish.

*One should expect to spend between 100 and 150 hours preparing a nomination for an individual property.*

### **What determines whether a property qualifies for listing in the National Register?**

The National Park Service provides excellent guidance on applying the National Register criteria for evaluation. While there can be exceptions, properties likely to meet the criteria of the National Register are at least 50 years old, are well preserved and distinctive examples of an architectural or engineering type or style. Also, the property may be associated with persons, events, or broad patterns in local, state, or national history; or, in the case of archaeological sites, they have the potential to yield significant information in American history or prehistory.



*Kam Wah Chung, Grant County*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

State Historic Preservation Office  
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department  
725 Summer Street NE, Suite C  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Oregon Heritage Programs website: [www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org)  
National Register website: [www.nps.gov/nr](http://www.nps.gov/nr)

For general information about the National Register of Historic Places,  
contact Tracy Zeller, Heritage Programs Administrative Specialist, at  
503-986-0690 or [tracy.zeller@state.or.us](mailto:tracy.zeller@state.or.us)

National Register Program Staff:

Ian Johnson, Historian  
503-986-0678  
[ian.johnson@state.or.us](mailto:ian.johnson@state.or.us)