

From the

LOUISIANA

State Historic Preservation Office

Office of Cultural Development,
Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

National Register 101

Evaluating Integrity

By Patricia L. Duncan
National Register Coordinator, Division of Historic Preservation

THE MARCH INSTALLMENT of National Register 101 provided a basic introduction to integrity as a requirement for National Register listing. It also defined the seven aspects that contribute to integrity. This month's article will discuss how to apply what might seem like an abstract concept to the real world.

The term "integrity" is a shortcut for saying that a property retains its historic appearance, completeness, and ability to convey its importance. The factors that contribute to integrity are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Ideally, each of these elements should display a high degree of integrity. However, this is often not the case; and the Register can sometimes adapt to the circumstances.

How do you know the amount of flexibility the Register will allow in evaluating integrity? The answer lies in the candidate's significance. In fact, the National Park Service

recommends that importance be understood clearly and four related concerns be examined before integrity is evaluated. Those issues are:

What physical characteristics are necessary for the property to illustrate its importance?

According to NPS, "The essential physical features are those ... that define both *why* a property is significant ...and *when* it was significant...." If these characteristics are absent, the candidate's identity has been lost. Defining a candidate's fundamental physical features depends upon which of the National Register eligibility criteria reflects its significance. These criteria are explained in the February 2011 issue of *Preservation in Print*.

For properties to be nominated under Criterion A (event/trend) or B (association with a significant individual), the necessary physical features are those that existed



Photo by Patricia L. Duncan

One only has to imagine this house in Thibodaux without its textured shingles, Eastlake columns, brackets and grills, and its Stick Style trim to understand how important original materials are to National Register integrity.

at the time of the event, trend or person's contribution. To simplify things, the National Register staff sometimes tells applicants that someone from the past would need to be able to recognize the candidate should he or she return to the property today. Candidates proposed for listing under Criterion C (design) could have experienced some loss of elements but must retain the most important components of their design.

An archaeological site (Criterion D) that has been buried for hundreds or thousands of years will almost always have experienced some integrity losses. Addition-

Are the necessary physical features present and visible enough to convey that importance?

Sometimes the historic characteristics needed to illustrate significance are present but are enveloped by later construction or hidden by modern materials. However, if these features are not visible, they do not contribute to the candidate's identity and integrity.

Should the property be compared to similar properties?

Occasionally the physical features necessary to illustrate a property's significance are not readily identifiable. This can occur when no scholarly studies exist and/or if examples of



A visitor to the 3V Tourist Court in St. Francisville feels as if he has been transported back to the early days of the automobile age. Thus, the property easily meets the integrity qualification of feeling.

Photo by Patricia L. Duncan



Photo by Patricia L. Duncan

The French Creole style Aillet House, moved from its original River Road location to the grounds of the West Baton Rouge Museum in Port Allen, is an example of a National Register property whose integrity of design is more important than its integrity of location.

ally, the landscape above such sites is expected to have changed over time. Nevertheless, archaeologists can obtain valuable information from these deposits. Thus, the physical features that must exist at an archaeological site are those that "...have [a] direct bearing on the property's ability to yield [that] important information."

the building type or style are rare. In these cases, comparisons with similar resources (if available) can help define the physical features that absolutely must be present to reflect the candidate's significance. If all the examples exhibit a certain physical feature, then one might safely conclude that this feature is essential to the identity and significance of the resource.

Based upon the reason for the candidate's importance and the physical features needed to convey it, which of the seven aspects of integrity are most important to this property and are they present?

In other words, which aspects of integrity must remain intact (or have experienced little change) and for which might losses be viewed more leniently? The factors contributing to integrity for one kind of candidate might not be as important to a different type of resource. Again,

- For candidates to be nominated under Criterion C, NPS officials believe that “retention of design, workmanship, and materials will usually be more important than location, setting, feeling and association.”
- If the candidate is a rare example and the other survivors are in poor condition, the Register may accept a greater degree of alteration or the presence of fewer defining features. However, enough of the property must survive so that it can be identified as a significant resource.
- Integrity of materials helps to



Photo by Loree Horman

The Register listed the Mansfield Battlefield in DeSoto Parish because it was the actual location of the Confederate victory that stopped the Federal campaign to take Shreveport and invade Texas. This site best conveys that important story.

the National Register would prefer that all seven aspects of integrity be somewhat present in a candidate. However, there are some helpful guidelines for identifying which factors are the most important.

- A property nominated under Criterion A or B might stress location, setting, materials, feeling and association more than design and workmanship.
- If the candidate is a site rather than a building, structure or object, the survival of its historic setting is vital.
- A candidate under Criterion B must have a direct association with the significant person. Ideally, the candidate should be the actual building in which the contribution occurred. But if that building no longer exists, it is possible to nominate another candidate closely associated with the contributor. Sometimes it is possible to nominate multiple buildings because they are associated with different aspects of a person's career. To evaluate integrity of association, one must determine what resources related to the person (both within and outside Louisiana) survive, what role each played in his career, and which is most closely associated with the person and contribution.

guarantee that a historic resource is genuine, so the materials used to rehabilitate candidates should be examined carefully. Even if materials similar to the original are used to replace damaged or lost elements, multiple replacements may make a candidate more modern than historic. There is no hard and fast rule, i.e., no identified percentage of materials, defining when a resource loses its integrity of materials and becomes a replica.

- Interior and exterior integrity should be evaluated separately. In many cases, a candidate with a remodeled or gutted interior may retain a large amount of exterior integrity and retain enough of its defining physical features to qualify for the Register. However, in some types of buildings, interior integrity is key. It all depends upon the interior's function. For example, a theater whose façade survives intact but whose interior has been lost lacks integrity of design, materials, workmanship and feeling because all of its interior character-defining physical features are gone.
- The integrity factors that must survive at an archaeological site are usually location, design, materials



Photo by W. Ryan Smith

The surviving park-like setting of Winn Parish's now closed Gum Springs Recreation Area is critical to its National Register integrity and eligibility.

and (sometimes) workmanship.

As I wrote in last month's article, integrity is the most complicated aspect of National Register eligibility. It takes careful thought, familiarity with the seven underlying factors and knowledge of the resource type to accurately evaluate a candidate's ability to portray its significance.

Much of this article is based upon the National Register Bulletin entitled How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, which is available at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/pdfs/nrb15.pdf>.



Photo by Patricia L. Duncan

Louisiana has listed three of politician Huey Long's homes on the Register because each has an association with a different period of his career. This house in Shreveport (above) represents the culmination of his successful campaign for Governor in 1928. The mansion shown below was his New Orleans home during his years in the United States Senate.



Photo courtesy of Division of Historic Preservation