

NATIONAL REGISTER BULLETIN

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING AND DOCUMENTING TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES

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The National Register of Historic Places contains a wide range of historic property types, reflecting the diversity of the nation's history and culture. Buildings, structures, and sites; groups of buildings, structures or sites forming historic districts, landscapes; and individual objects are all included in the Register if they meet the criteria specified in the National Register's Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.4). Such properties reflect many kinds of significance in architecture, history, archeology, engineering, and culture.

There are many definitions of the word "culture," but in the National Register programs the word is understood to mean the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community, be it an Indian tribe, a local ethnic group, or the people of the nation as a whole.¹

through the generations, usually orally or through practice. The traditional cultural significance of a historic property, then, is significance derived from the role the property plays in a community's historically rooted beliefs, systems, and practices. Examples of properties possessing such significance include:

- a location associated with the traditional beliefs of a Native American group about its origins, its cultural history, or the nature of the world;
- a rural community whose organization, buildings and structures, or patterns of land use reflect the cultural traditions valued by its long-term residents;
- an urban neighborhood that is the traditional home of a particular cultural group, and that reflects its beliefs and practices;

- a location where a community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining its historic identity.

A traditional cultural property, then, can be defined generally as one that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. Various kinds of traditional cultural properties will be discussed, illustrated, and related specifically to the National Register Criteria later in this bulletin.

¹ For a detailed definition, see Appendix I.



Numerous African Americans left the South to migrate to the Midwest. The A.M.E. Church (on left) and District No. 1 School remain in Nicodemus Historic District in Nicodemus, Kansas, which was declared a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior in 1976. (Clayton B. Fraser for the Historic American Buildings Survey)