

## Funding for Historic Places: The California Heritage Fund

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Many local communities up and down the state have old homes, commercial structures, governmental buildings or entire districts, and other historic buildings that may have local or regional importance, and possibly statewide or national significance but are not aware of how to get them officially listed as historic sites of significance. These communities may also be unaware that funding is available for the improvement of these historic properties. For example, in mushrooming communities, where former agricultural lands are rapidly being developed, the acquisition of a deteriorating, turn-of-the-century farm house can draw several responses, from “what in the world do I do with this *now*,” to “this site is great, but where do I get funds to restore it?” Or...in the downtown core of your community you are aware of a rare opportunity to acquire an old theater, home of a locally famous person or a store that even your grandparents remembered while growing up. And, you are wondering, what advantages are there to registering the historic place on the state register?

If this sounds like you, you are not alone. The intent of this article is to point you in the right direction with methods of getting the site registered in one of the four categories (California Historical Landmarks, California Point of Historical Interest, California Register of Historical Resources and the National Register of Historic Places) and a identifying source of funding that may help in its acquisition or restoration.

The Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), in the California Department of Parks and Recreation, is the state agency primarily responsible for administration of historic preservation programs throughout California. OHP’s mission is to “*preserve and enhance California’s irreplaceable historic heritage as a matter of public interest so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, recreational, aesthetic, economic, social, and environmental benefits will be maintained and enriched for present and future generations.*” (For more information, view their web site at <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov> or call 916 653-6624).

Historic preservation typically embraces four activities: Identification, Evaluation, Registration, and Protection. As noted here, registration is a key activity and is integral to any request for funding assistance under the programs listed later in this article.

### Registration Programs

There are four programs under which an historic property may be listed:

- National Register of Historic Places: This program is the *official* list of the nation’s cultural resources worthy of recognition and preservation. It is a federal program maintained by the National Park Service though the nomination process is administered by OHP. The National Register confers the highest level of stature on an historic property. Properties qualify for the National Register when they are associated with events that have made a

significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; represent the work of a master; possess high artistic values; or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction and have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

- California Historical Landmarks – Recognizes those resources of statewide significance in California’s rich history:

Criteria for approval: The first, last, only or most significant of its type in a region or statewide. It’s associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of California and/or is a prototype of, or an outstanding example of, a period, style, architectural movement or construction or is one of the more notable works of the architect, designer or master builder.

- California Points of Historical Interest – criteria is the same as those for State Historical Landmarks, but directed to local (city or county) regions. This program was established in 1965 to accommodate an increased interest in recognizing local historic properties not able to meet the restrictive criteria of the State Historical Landmarks program. This program has successfully generated interest in local history by requiring that supporters of historic properties secure the approval of the chief-elected municipal official or the chairperson of the Board of Supervisors before an application is submitted to the OHP.
- California Register of Historical Resources – Associated with significant historical events that have made a major contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; associated with the lives of persons important to local, California or national history. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values and has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

The California Register of Historical Resources, enacted in 1992, is an authoritative guide to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the state’s historical resources. The program encourages public recognition of resources of architectural, historical, archaeological, and cultural significance; identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes; and defines threshold eligibility for state historical preservation grant funding.

If a resource meets the criteria for registration, you may nominate it to an appropriate registration program. However, please be advised that all nominations for unregistered resources must be submitted to the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC). The SHRC only meets four times a year. Applications can be downloaded from the OHP’s web site, <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov> or you may call (916) 653-6624 for assistance.

### Funding Opportunities:

Proposition 12, the Park Bond Act of 2000 provides \$8,506,000 for its statewide competitive grant funds program, California Heritage Fund Grant Program. Grants are available for the stewardship and preservation of California's historical and archeological resources. Those agencies or organizations eligible to apply for funding are cities, counties, districts, local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and federally recognized California Indian tribes. Projects need to be listed in the National Register or the California Register, or designated as a Historical Landmark or Point of Historical Interest.

Under the recently passed Proposition 40, \$267.5 million is available for historical and cultural resources. At the time this article is being written, many of the specific elements related to this grant program are largely unknown. Check the OHP for program funding updates.

The California Heritage Fund Grant Program is a competitive statewide program aimed at preserving a historical resource that is listed, or formally determined eligible for listing in one of the four categories mentioned above. Projects eligible for funding are those that require acquisition, development (rehabilitation and restoration) and interpretation. A minimum grant amount is \$10,000 for a \$20,000 project. A grant may not exceed \$1,000,000 or 50 percent of the total cost of the project. Suitable grant matches are federal and private funds, in-kind resources, local, and state funding sources (with restrictions). There are two application deadlines for 2002, March 1, 2002 and August 2, 2002. An unlimited number of applications may be submitted; however, applications with the greatest preservation urgency and with the highest significance that would benefit the public should be submitted for consideration.

## Nomination Process

Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Parks and Recreation  
P.O. Box 942896  
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001  
Fax (916) 653-9824  
Email: [calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov](mailto:calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov)  
Website at <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov>

### California Register

1. Obtain nomination packet from the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP).
2. Complete application, including all necessary supplemental forms, according to instructions.
3. Notify the clerk of the local government in whose jurisdiction the resource is located by certified mail that an application will be filed with OHP and request that the local government provide written comments. The notification must include a copy of the application.
4. Upon receiving written comments from the local government or ninety days after sending notification to the local government (whichever is sooner), the applicant forwards the completed application and any comments to OHP.
5. Within 30 days, OHP staff will ensure that the application is complete and will send notification to the property owner (if the applicant is not the property owner.) When the application is complete and the property owner has been notified, the application will be scheduled on an agenda of the SHRC for action. Note: A nomination does not require owner consent in order for the resource to be listed, but it cannot be listed over an owner's objections. The SHRC can, however, formally determine a property eligible for the California Register if the resource owner objects.

### National Register

1. Obtain nomination packet from OHP. Read National Register criteria and *How to Complete the National Register Forms* (Bulletin 16A) and follow these guidelines exactly when preparing the application form.
2. If you are not the owner of the property you are submitting for registration, please inform the owner of your intention to apply for registration. The property or district may not be listed over the objection of the owner or majority of owners.
3. If the area is proposed for registration as an historic district, please follow the SHRC district policy prior to submission of the application. OHP staff is available to assist applicants and should be contacted in the early stages of the process.
4. Submit completed forms, photographs and maps to OHP for review. If the property is endangered or the applicant is requesting rehabilitation incentives under the Tax Reform Act or Revenue Act of 1978, this must be stated clearly in the cover letter.
5. Applications will be reviewed by the OHP. Those, which are inadequate or are not prepared in accordance with the guidelines published in Bulletin 16A will be returned to the applicant for further work.
6. OHP notifies all applicants, property owners, and appropriate governmental jurisdictions of the time and place of the SHRC meeting.
7. If approved by the SHRC, the

application is sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer who will submit to the keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C. for nomination to the National Register. The Keeper of the National Register makes the final determination 45 days after receipt.

