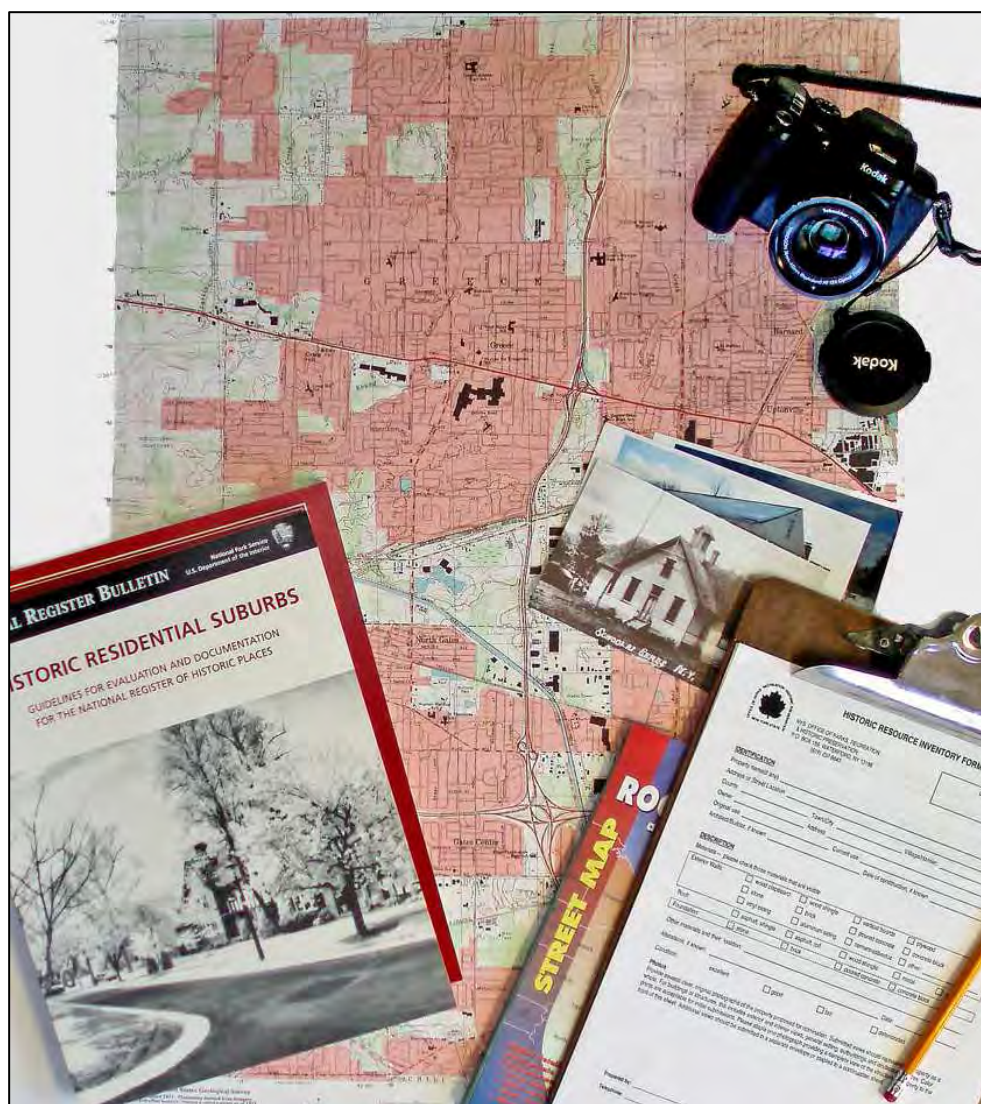




The Local Landmarker

Issue 18, Spring 2011

Historic Resources Surveys: A Community Planning Tool



From the Coordinator

This issue: Survey

Since February, there have been several departmental changes at the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Don't worry, the CLG program is still around, and functioning as always, but a new Survey and Evaluation Unit has been established to help communities and local government agencies to identify and evaluate historic districts, buildings, and other resources that may be worthy of protection or consideration in planning efforts. This development is in direct response to participant feedback at regional meetings for the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan. Kathy Howe is the head of the new Survey Unit and has provided the articles in this issue.

SHPO's newly reinvigorated survey program will build upon work done in the 1970s-80s, and represents a new commitment to the needs of New York State's historic resources and those that care about them.

Surveys are crucial to the life of a local preservation commission, since without that tool the commission is essentially blind to what historic resources exist, where to undertake education and outreach efforts, and prioritize designation efforts to protect potentially endangered resources.

This newsletter will cover the basics of survey, such as:

- What is a Historic Resources Survey?
- Who can sponsor a survey?
- Why conduct a survey?
- What are the types of survey?
- What are the products of a survey?
- What are some sources of funding for surveys?

If you have never had a survey done, have one that is over 20 years old, or don't have all potential historic districts in your community surveyed, this newsletter can help you towards fully understanding your community and how your commission can best do its job.



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Historic Resources Surveys: The Basics

Historic buildings, landscapes, objects, structures, and districts are integral components of communities that create a distinctive character and reflect history and architectural heritage on the local, regional, state and national levels. Surveys are an important first step in identifying properties worthy of preservation. Information provided by a well-planned survey report supports programs and initiatives dedicated to the preservation of New York State's historic built environment.

What is a Historic Resources Survey?

A Historic Resources Survey (HRS) is the principal tool for identifying historic properties and placing them in the local, state and/or national historic context. Through field work, the survey team identifies an area's important historic resources – buildings, parks, structures, neighborhoods, monuments, and archaeological sites – that are located in a defined area such as a neighborhood, village or an agricultural region, or along a transportation route or watershed. Researching the properties' historical background reveals how they are connected with important local history themes, such as industrial development or the growth of residential suburbs. Further assessment leads to an understanding of which properties should be protected and how to incorporate preservation goals into community planning efforts. This knowledge is key to public and private decision-making about the protection and preservation of our heritage.

Who can sponsor a survey?

Anyone can sponsor a survey: local and state governments, historical societies, academic programs, and individuals. Local commissions can also sponsor a survey, and apply for CLG grants to support the work.

Why conduct a survey?

A survey is the foundation for all historic preservation planning. By defining the location and importance of historic resources, a survey enables planners to make decisions about which properties ought to be protected and where development should be directed. Surveys achieve the following objectives:

- Establish priorities for preservation projects;
- Identify historic properties that may benefit from local commission designation and/or National Register listing (which can qualify properties for certain tax credit and grant programs);
- Create a body of background information for local, state and federal project and land-use planning;
- Increase public awareness of and appreciation for properties that reflect local, state and national history, and
- Gather information for educational and promotional purposes, including tourism.

What are the types of surveys?

The essential first step in the survey process is defining the geographic or thematic area of the survey. Subsequent steps include planning, research, fieldwork, data collection and organization, evaluation, and reporting.

Historic resources surveys fall into two general types: reconnaissance-level surveys and intensive-level surveys. A reconnaissance-level survey is the first step that identifies areas and properties worthy of further study. Reconnaissance surveys establish broad historic and architectural contexts that are necessary for understanding an area's past. Because reconnaissance-level surveys do not include detailed information on each property, they generally do not provide sufficient information for making informed evaluations of historic or architectural significance. Intensive-level surveys include historical research that provides the information needed for determining which properties are eligible for historic designation, either individually or as part of historic districts.

What are the products of a survey?

Surveys yield varying amounts of information depending on the level of survey (reconnaissance or intensive) and the intended use. A completed survey generally includes: a written report summarizing the history, development patterns and physical character of the study area; an inventory of historic properties accompanied by maps and photographs; and recommendations. Evaluation results are included in intensive-level surveys.

Recommended Standards for Survey Reports

Before beginning a survey project, please contact your Survey and Evaluation representative in the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at (518) 237-8643. Consultation is required for all projects receiving funding from the SHPO and for projects that lead to nominations to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The following is an outline of how survey reports should be organized. Each component is described in detail below:

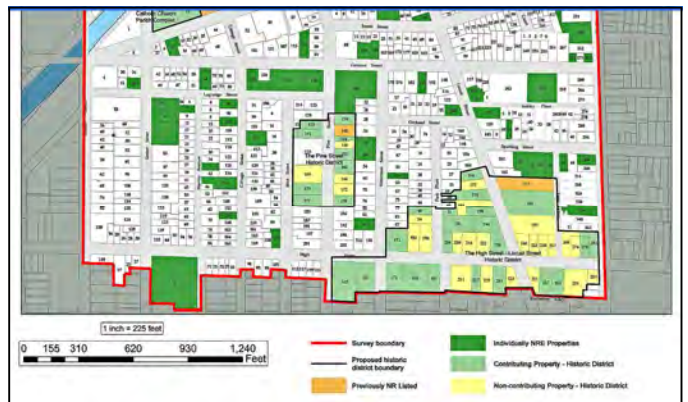
1. Survey Methodology
2. Historic and Architectural Overview
3. Guidelines and Selection Criteria
4. Annotated Properties List
5. Photographs
6. Maps
7. Conclusions and Recommendations
8. Appendices

1. Survey Methodology Surveys are designed to address specific needs and opportunities. The length and complexity of a survey will vary depending upon the scale of the project and available resources. The methodology should be a clear and concise statement of the objectives, scope and depth of the survey and should include the following information:

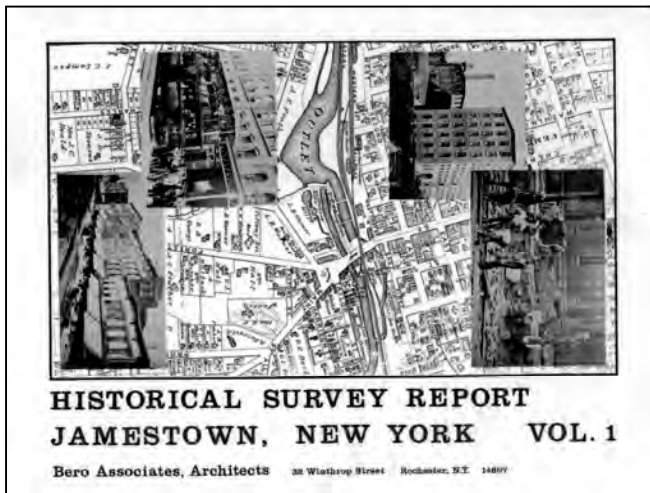
- Survey sponsor(s)
- Survey consultant (if different from sponsor)
- Date(s) of field work
- Survey funding sources
- Intended goals and uses of the survey report
- Definition of the survey area(s) accompanied by a map illustrating the physical boundaries
- Estimate of acreage
- Description of the geographic or contextual scope of the survey
- Summary of any previous survey efforts
- Intended methods of research, fieldwork, photography, mapping and recording survey data
- Community involvement and participation
- Timetable for completing the survey
- Type of format of the final report (bound volume, cd, GIS recording, etc.)



Above: Historic and contemporary views of East Main Street in the Village of Palmyra. Surveys identify historic properties that are eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, which can qualify them for tax credits and some grant programs. The information is also crucial for preservation commissions as they determine which areas should be designated at the local level.



A recently-completed survey of Lockport, Niagara County, will help the preservation commission establish target areas that are priorities for preservation planning. Maps are an important survey product. The Lockport survey map clearly illustrates which properties are contributing, non-contributing, National Register-eligible and previously listed. (Image: Clinton Brown Architects)



The city of Jamestown's Urban Renewal Agency used a survey to identify historic properties in order to streamline reviews for HUD-funded projects (Image: Bero Architects)

2. Historic and Architectural Overview: Overviews should include a narrative account of the study area that combines both research and observation to explain the historic and architectural development as well as present physical conditions. This account should be a written chronological description of the study area's development that identifies associated historical and architectural themes and expected property types with which they are associated. The overview should record the loss of important resources and the presence of modern or extensively altered properties. The account should note the prevalence or absence of particular types of historic properties and discuss patterns of development in adjacent areas in order to establish a context for understanding the significance of the survey area. The overview should be supplemented when possible with historic and current maps and photos that illustrate the study area's evolution from past to present.

3. Guidelines and Selection Criteria Guidelines and selection criteria are derived from the completed historic and architectural overview. **Guidelines** establish a typology based on distribution, period, and relative rarity. They are used to determine which property types will be recorded. **Selection Criteria** are developed for each property type, paying particular attention to integrity and the ability of each property to reflect the significant attributes. Properties selected to be included will require a level of documentation that facilitates an evaluation of significance at the conclusion of the survey. The SHPO strongly

encourages survey sponsors to consult with their Survey and National Register representatives in developing these guidelines and criteria.

- **4. Annotated properties list** This is the portion of the survey that records baseline information about potentially significant historic individual properties and/or historic districts. **The list should only include properties that appear to meet applicable designation criteria. Arrange this list alphabetically by street and numerically by address.** It should be cross-referenced to maps and photographs and should contain:
 - Street address and Unique Site Number* (USN) if applicable
 - Building name (if any)
 - Approximate dates of construction and major alterations
 - Brief, basic description identifying the property and its defining characteristics
 - Applicable National Register criteria or other reasons for inclusion such as historical significance, associations, etc.
 - Color photographs (see photo standard below)
 - Number or other reference to survey map (see map standard below)

*Unique Site Numbers: Consultants preparing surveys should check SHPO's SPHINX database for previously inventoried properties in the survey area and note existing USNs linked to street addresses. Contact the SHPO there are discrepancies or duplicate addresses in the database. You can check the database at www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/online-tools/.



The New York State Lustron Project documented 70 pre-fab, all-steel ranch houses from the 1950s. The survey resulted in several National Register listings in a number of New York State communities.

5. Photographs All properties included in the annotated list should be documented with photographs that are labeled with address or location and keyed to the annotated property list. If possible, insert images directly into the annotated list. Digital images done as JPEGs and taken at no less than 1200 x 1600 pixels at 300 dpi are acceptable.

6. Maps Survey maps should illustrate the boundaries of the study area and must be drawn to a scale sufficient to clearly depict properties included on the annotated list. Extant features important to understanding the historical development of the survey area (such as rivers, canals, and railroads) should be represented on the survey map. Effective survey maps should also include the scale and a north arrow and orient the viewer to the relationship of the survey area within the larger geographic context.

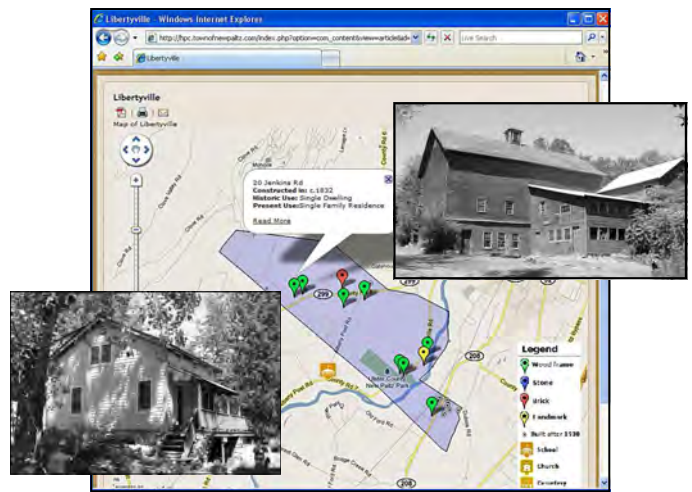
7. Conclusions and recommendations A narrative summary of the survey and recommendations for its use should be prepared at the conclusion of the survey, explaining in general terms what was accomplished and suggesting the logical next steps for historic preservation. It should address:

- any new understandings and changes to existing information resulting from the survey
- areas or topics requiring further investigation
- other historic preservation strategies and opportunities
- recommendations and priorities for National Register listings

8. Appendices Intensive-level surveys result in the preparation of inventory forms to record detailed information about individual buildings and potential historic districts. Contact your Survey representative to receive hard or electronic versions of the forms. Copies of these prepared inventory forms should be included in the appendix. The originals should be filed with the survey project sponsor for local reference and use. All survey reports should include a bibliography of sources consulted during the preparation of the survey and the résumés of consultants and other individual project staff.

Filing the Survey

Submit both a hard copy and two CDs (one in Word and the other as a single PDF) of the survey report to the SHPO. Upon receipt of a completed survey, the



Intensive level surveys support educational and promotional objectives. The preservation commissions in the Town and Village of New Paltz collaborated on a web-based, interactive mapping project which links survey forms, photos, tax maps and other archives to maps of each municipality.

SHPO will review its contents and recommendations. If sufficient information is present, preliminary National Register eligibility findings will be prepared and transmitted to the survey sponsors. The survey report is added to the state's reference file for general use by staff, interested members of the public and historic preservation and archaeological consultants. The SHPO strongly encourages sponsors to prepare and file reference copies of the survey with local libraries, municipal offices and preservation organizations for maximum exposure and use.

Completed surveys should be sent to SHPO using the correct address for the method used for shipping—otherwise, your package will be delayed or returned.

U. S. Mail:

Survey and Evaluation Unit
NYS OPRHP Division for Historic Preservation
Peebles Island
PO Box 189
Waterford, New York 12188-0189
(518) 237-8643

Private carriers such as Fed Ex, UPS, DHL:

Survey and Evaluation Unit
NYS OPRHP Division for Historic Preservation
Delaware Avenue (no # needed)
Cohoes, New York 12047
(518) 237-8643

Featured Websites

Help with historic resources surveys

For technical advice and information on funding sources contact the Survey and Evaluation Unit at the SHPO at 518-237-8643 or visit the website to find your regional staff representative at www.nysparks.com/shpo/contact/. Background information on surveys and direct links to some of the articles listed below can be found at www.nysparks.com/shpo/survey-evaluation/. You can also visit the Preservation Assistance section of our website at www.nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/preservation-assistance/.

The National Park Service has a number of helpful publications on surveying and evaluating a wide variety of historic resources. These are available on its website: www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/. Sample National Register nominations are at: www.nps.gov/history/nr/sample_nominations.htm. Two NPS publications may be particularly useful:

Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning - www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/
Researching a Historic Property www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb39/

The National Trust for Historic Preservation website often has announcements and articles related to survey projects. Go to www.preservationnation.org and search for "historic resources survey."

Funding sources for surveys

Surveys may be funded through local governments, voluntary efforts and contributions, and various grant sources. **Certified Local Governments** in New York State are eligible to apply to the SHPO for CLG grant funds to produce historic resources surveys. For information on CLG grants please contact Lorraine Weiss, Historic Preservation Planner at 518-237-8642 extension 3122 or lorraine.weiss@oprhp.state.ny.us.

In addition, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and the Preservation League of New York State administer the Preserve New York program, which provides modest funding for preservation projects including historic resources surveys. For information on Preserve New York grants contact the League at 518-462-5658 or www.preservenys.org/01_what_grants_presny.html.