

APPENDICES: **National Historic Landmark Program (NHL)**

This is the highest status which may be awarded to a historic property. National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture. Key here is *national significance*. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes properties which may be of local, state, or national significance. NHLs are automatically listed in the National Register. For both programs, properties must be fifty years old or older, unless they are of exceptional significance.

Many of the most renowned historic properties in the United States are NHLs: Mount Vernon, Pearl Harbor, the Apollo Mission Control Center, Alcatraz, and the Martin Luther King Birthplace in Atlanta, Georgia are Landmarks that illustrate important contributions to the nation's historical development.

National Historic Landmarks which may be familiar to people in Carbondale are the Pierre Menard House at the Fort Kaskaskia State Historic Site near Ellis Grove, and the Susan Lawrence Dana (Dana-Thomas) House and the Abraham Lincoln Home in Springfield. One example of an exception to the fifty-years old or older rule was the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. Constructed from 1963-68, the arch is the tallest monument in the United States, and has been designated a National Historic Landmark for its innovative engineering.

Potential NHLs are identified mainly through theme studies which are undertaken by the National Park Service. Examples of themes are Labor or Women's History, Greek Revival architecture, or even sports facilities. Ultimately, the Secretary of the Interior designates NHLs, but potential Landmarks are evaluated by the National Park Service and the National Park System Advisory Board twice yearly at meetings that are open to the public. Unlike the National Register process, NHLs do not have an official nomination process in which citizens regularly participate.

Fewer than 2,500 NHLs have been designated in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands as well as in the Pacific Basin. In contrast, the National Register of Historic Places includes over 67,000 listings (with many more properties included within those listings); only 3% of these are additionally recognized as National Historic Landmarks. Owners of National Historic Landmarks include individuals, private for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, and all levels of government, including American Indian tribes. Private property owners may object to their property being designated a National Historic Landmark, thereby preventing its recognition.

National Historic Landmarks receive the highest protection under federal law. While demolition of National Historic Landmarks is not prohibited, when federal money is involved, that action is given great scrutiny by the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. In addition, the National Park Service is required to submit an annual report to Congress on the status of every National Historic Landmark in the United States. The National Park Service also consults with owners of National Historic Landmarks to assist in their preservation efforts. Nevertheless, the protection afforded to local landmarks and historic districts in Carbondale is stronger than any

protection of NHLs. NHL status does not require property maintenance, nor does it restrict the use of private money used to change or even demolish an NHL property. An estimated 16% of NHLs are threatened with destruction and loss. So when you say something is a “landmark,” watch your terminology. Is the property a National Historic Landmark, a local landmark, or listed in the National Register of Historic Places?

For additional information, the National Historic Landmark web site is <http://www2.cr.nps.gov/nhl/qanda/htm>. All National Historic Landmarks are listed on the web site. For additional information, contact the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency or the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative, Heritage Preservation Services, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC330, Washington, D.C. 20240. Additional web site: http://www2.cr.nps.gov/nhl/nhl_p.htm.