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Finding a Place for the Commonplace: Hurricane Katrina, Communities, and Preservation Law

ABSTRACT The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina drew attention to commonplace landscape markers that create for a community a *sense of place*—that connection between people and places crucial to a sense of corporate and individual identity and heritage. There is a legal context for sense of place within extant federal preservation legislation. Nevertheless, many such markers with special meanings for residents have been overlooked in federal documentation, the cornerstone of which is the National Register of Historic Places. Grassroots efforts and national media coverage have helped forge a niche for sense of place within the recovery plans and policy emerging in the affected region. However, it is unclear whether this will carry over into practice. In terms of long-term policy shifts, remedying the shortcomings highlighted by Katrina may require changes to the National Historic Preservation Act and its associated guidelines and regulations, or it may entail a new approach altogether. [Keywords: heritage law, historic preservation, Hurricane Katrina, National Register of Historic Places, sense of place]

HURRICANE KATRINA has brought to public view some of the social inequities that seem to be historically rooted in our national system of heritage preservation.¹ Demonstrating that such inequities exist and discussing how to overcome them have been central themes in academic and bureaucratic debates over the past 20 years. The media attention focused on the hurricane tragedy—particularly in tandem with accusations of institutional racism targeted on the New Orleans evacuation debacle—has for the first time thrown the debate into a national forum, with ordinary citizens, politicians, and urban planners raising the issues that heritage resource professionals and anthropologists have voiced to date mostly among themselves.

The historic preservation movement in the United States, including the way preservation legislation is enacted in daily practice, often preferences properties whose contemporary stewards are relatively prosperous and well educated.² This excludes many, if not most, places that give particular communities, however so self-defined, their particular identity. It excludes the commonplace and the seemingly inconsequential markers on the landscape that anchor people to what they call home and to what they identify as their heritage.³ This connection between people and the places they repetitively use, in which they dwell, in

which their memories are made, and to which they ascribe a unique feeling has broadly been called *sense of place* (e.g., Feld and Basso 1996; Jackson 1984, 1994; James 2001; King 2003; Ryden 1993; Stokes et al. 1997).

The concepts of space, place, and landscape have always existed in anthropology, but until recently anthropologists neglected a focused consideration of sense of place. This began to change in the 1990s, with the publication of such volumes as *The Anthropology of Landscape* (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995) and *Senses of Place* (Feld and Basso 1996). In the latter volume, Clifford Geertz (1996:259) pointed out that the category of "place" is uniformly absent from the tables of contents of ethnographies and the indexes of standard anthropological textbooks. Other basic categories of human experience—kinship, family, gender, economy, language, religion, and various additional staples of anthropological analysis—are readily found in such contexts. Regardless, place—one of the basic dimensions of human existence—"passes by anonymous and unremarked" (Geertz 1996:259). Geertz went on to emphasize the absurdity of this absence, because "no one lives in the world in general" (1996:262). Now there is a growing body of both anthropological and cultural resource management literature devoted to explaining sense of place and exploring how people render space culturally and historically significant

(e.g., Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Birnbaum 1994; Evans et al. 2001; Goetteus 2002; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; King 2003; Mitchell and Lacy 1997; Parker 1993; Sebastian 1993; Shull 1993; Stoffle et al. 2000; U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service n.d.; Winthrop 1998b).

The media coverage of Katrina's impact on New Orleans and the central Gulf Coast brought national attention to the importance of sense of place. From CNN to National Public Radio, from the *New York Times* to the *Times-Picayune*, members of the press corps and those they interviewed discussed the importance of the relationship between people and place and the interweaving of cultural tradition and environment. The media highlighted how the hurricane devastated the built environment, and how that impact, in turn, radically affected people's lives, livelihoods, and communities.

When local, state, and federal officials and the non-profit preservation sector first sought to calculate the hurricane's impact on heritage resources, they initially turned to the inventories of historic properties maintained by the states and the federal government. It quickly became apparent that the majority of places the hurricane damaged or destroyed were not included in such inventories and, in fact, had never been considered for placement in them. There simply was no record of many of the common places whose loss people mourned, whose loss threatened that most intangible and critical sense of place tying people to their community and to the landscape.

This realization has created a unique situation for urban and regional planning and heritage resource management as the recovery and rebuilding process unfolds. Through the popular media and with extensive stakeholder involvement, community leaders and the general public are attempting to translate their concern over sense of place into policy. This is clear from the rhetoric emerging as part of the recovery and rebuilding processes. Whether sense of place will be maintained—perhaps even regenerated or reinvented—will be apparent only in hindsight.

SENSE OF PLACE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Although many people believe that where they live is a special place, the number of such locations in the United States that have the distinction of being recognized as "special places" by the outside world are rare. New Orleans specifically and the Gulf Coast in general are among those places. More often the challenge for government agencies and others who are charged with preserving historic values through assistance or regulation is to identify and evaluate those places that have historic significance or importance. Around the world, international conventions and national governments have established formal documentation schemes to describe and classify heritage and other values.

The best-known international evaluation standard is the World Heritage List. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an organization of professionals that serves as an advisor to UNESCO (United

Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) on World Heritage listings for historic places (ICOMOS 2005). World Heritage listings or proposed listings are usually individual historic sites or historic districts. Recognizing the World Heritage status of cultural landscapes was first proposed in 1992. Cultural landscapes are now considered in three categories: (1) clearly defined landscapes designed or created intentionally by humans, such as gardens or parks, (2) organically evolved landscapes, which can be both relict (fossil) or continuing to evolve, and (3) associative landscapes valued for the powerful religious, artistic, or cultural associations with a natural element rather than material culture evidence. A number of Category 2 landscapes are living places reflecting the combined interaction of humans and nature, but most are rural, primarily agricultural landscapes (Fowler 2003).

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the organization that advises UNESCO on natural heritage listings, has attempted to bring order to the wide variety of protected areas that are found across the globe.⁴ These range from natural and wilderness areas that are strictly managed for environmental and ecosystem values (Category Ia and Ib) to protected landscapes and seascapes (Category V) that recognize the importance of the interaction of people and the land in creating a valuable resource. Category V landscapes have the virtue of recognizing the importance of places "where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character" and incorporating in their recommended management objectives the need to support the social and cultural fabric of communities (IUCN 1994). However, this landscape category is by definition focused on areas of high scenic value, a value certainly more in the eye of the beholder than reflective of the living community's sense of place.

In France, special places where people live are recognized as *Les Parcs Naturel Régionaux* (Natural Regional Parks). These areas are managed to protect natural and cultural heritage, encourage economic and social community development, and raise public awareness of the region. The program was established in 1967 and today recognizes 44 parks in France as well as in Corsica, Martinique, and French Guiana (Fédération des Parcs Naturels Régionaux de France 2005). In describing the value of the program, Francois Le Blanc, then president of ICOMOS Canada, described the parks as preserving precious heritage resources that had escaped the adverse impacts of the modern economic system because the resources they represent are intangibles. He stated, "Nevertheless we cannot live without them [the intangible resources] anymore. We need solid roots to draw the force and the wisdom to build our future as much as we need clean air and pure water. These roots draw their sap in history, culture, know-how and way-of-life of our various regions" (Le Blanc 1993:113).

The French Natural Regional Parks were an early expression of the managed landscape approach as defined by the ICOMOS Cultural Landscape Category 2 and the IUCN Category V protected area. They were also an early example

of a protected area that was managed at the grassroots level by the people who live in the landscape. This trend of management with communities, not from communities, is part of an international shift in thinking about protected areas. Adrian Phillips (2003), Senior Advisor to IUCN on World Heritage, has tracked this emerging philosophical approach to protected areas, describing the change from management through top-down regulations to one of an inclusive vision with shared management and multiple objectives that include those of the community.

This new model of shared or even local management of a region's heritage is becoming more common around the globe. Brent Mitchell (2003) recently calculated that approximately one-quarter of all protected areas are landscapes that could be classified as Category V protected areas and noted the growing importance of this approach to the larger ecosystem and ecoregion management. These efforts recognize that the people who live in a particular place are a critical part of the equation, if not as part of the designation process then at least as part of maintaining the place's value.

LEGISLATING SENSE OF PLACE IN THE UNITED STATES

At times community concepts of place diverge widely from the way place is considered in the legal framework of historic preservation in the United States. This divergence largely is a consequence of the political and historical factors shaping the framework's development. The history of the preservation movement in the United States, the pivotal laws that ultimately emerged from it in the 1960s, and the consequential development of cultural resource management as a profession and philosophy are well documented (e.g., King 1998; Murtagh 1997; Rains and Henderson 1966; Smith and Ehrenhard 1991; Stipe 2003; Tyler 2000). What began as a wealthy women's grassroots movement intended to enshrine colonial patrons soon became the domain of private entrepreneurs and wealthy philanthropists, the Antiquities Act of 1906 notwithstanding. In later years preservation concerns became far more historically and culturally inclusive, but the socioeconomic context of the movement's progenitors in the United States clearly influenced the development of the field.

The Great Depression changed preservation's course. As the federal government became increasingly involved largely through the U.S. National Park Service (USNPS), the preservation movement came to span public and private concerns. The interests of these two sectors became thoroughly entwined after World War II and remain so today. Ironically it was the destructive force of two new federal programs created in the 1960s—the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development—that ushered in the various protective laws that are the foundation of today's cultural resource management field. Today there are a number of mandates in the United States that give legislative expression to sense of place and that form the cornerstone of historic preserva-

tion and cultural resource management in federal contexts (Table 1).⁵ The most important of these mandates in terms of fiscal resources and land management impacts include the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA; PL 89–665) and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; PL 91–190).

The central goal of the NHPA is to recognize and preserve remnants of the nation's "irreplaceable historical and cultural heritage . . . so that its vital legacy of cultural, educational, aesthetic, inspirational, economic, and energy benefits will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans" (16 USC 470[b][4]). Here we present only a cursory overview of what has been one of the most influential preservation laws of the last four decades, but it is this law and its associated regulations and guidelines that discuss the notion of a sense of place most extensively. The NHPA was created in recognition of the fact that "the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life," because "historic properties significant to the Nation's heritage are being lost or substantially altered, often inadvertently, with increasing frequency" (16 USC 470[b]). "Place" is expressed most explicitly in the law at 16 USC 470(w)(5) when *historic property* and *historic resource* are defined together as "any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion on the National Register [of Historic Places], including artifacts, records, and material remains related to such a property or resource."

The NHPA's implementing regulations go on to provide what has been the dominant federal view of the historical and cultural significance of space. The code of federal regulations define properties eligible for inclusion on the National Register as only those with a "quality of significance" expressed in tangible places exhibiting "integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association" (36 CFR 60[4]). Furthermore, they also must be places that (1) are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; (2) are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; (3) 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; or (4) have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history (36 CFR 60[4]).⁶

The basic premise of the NHPA and its regulations is that the government should not use public funds to damage or destroy places significant to U.S. heritage, unless they have considered the matter in consultation with those affected by their actions and decided the impact is in the public's best interest. The consequence is that listing properties on the National Register has become a major concern and endeavor in the realm of historic preservation. Its importance stems from the fact that only those properties on the National Register or dubbed eligible for listing receive consideration in advance of any kind of federal action.

TABLE 1. Pertinent legal mandates discussed in the text

Year	Title	Topic
1906	Antiquities Act	created National Monuments, first criminal sanctions for looting, and permit system for investigations
1935	Historic Sites Act	created National Historic Landmark and Historic American Building Survey lists; first call for federal protection, preservation, and maintenance of cultural resources
1966	National Historic Preservation Act	created the National Register of Historic Places, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and a State Historic Preservation Officer who would administer a State Historic Preservation Program
1969	National Environmental Policy Act	created the Council on Environmental Quality; called for formal review process to ensure the federal government considers the impact of every activity they conduct upon all aspects of the natural and physical environment and upon the relationships of the people who live within it
1978	40 CFR 1500–1508	regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality that dictate how the National Environmental Policy Act is to be executed, with a focus on the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements
1986	36 CFR 800: Protection of Historic Properties	regulations issued by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation governing implementation of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to consider the impact of their actions on historic properties
1987	National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes	set of guidelines authored by J. Timothy and Genevieve Keller that help people identify and nominate historic landscapes to the National Register; the focus is on landscapes that were consciously laid out by important architects, that have artistic merit, or that have architectural merit
1989	National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes	set of guidelines authored by Linda McLelland, J. Timothy, Genevieve Keller, and Robert Melnick that help people identify and nominate properties to the National Register that are significant because of the cultural values associated with landscapes shaped by centuries of use and occupation
1990	National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties	set of guidelines authored by Thomas King and Patricia Parker that help people identify and nominate properties to the National Register that are significant because of their often intangible cultural and religious associations to a community
1992	Section 101(d)(6) Amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act	amendment stating that properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to an Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization may be eligible for the National Register; federal agencies must consult about it as part of Section 106 compliance
1994	Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes	set of guidelines authored by Charles Birnbaum that recognizes the interdependence of landscapes and the natural and historic environments; it offers recommendations on how to document, treat, maintain, and plan around cultural landscapes
1994	Executive Order 12898	requires federal agencies to identify and address situations where their programs, policies, and activities cause disproportionately high/adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations
1996	Executive Order 13007	designed to facilitate the implementation of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 by requiring federal agencies to accommodate Native American access to and use of sacred sites

The law placed the National Register in the administrative domain of the USNPS, and in the years after 1966 the USNPS developed guidelines for the public and other governmental agencies on how to evaluate different resource types that would qualify for listing in the National Register. Of the properties that demonstrate the intersection of people and place, the agency focused on two in particular: *cultural landscapes* and *traditional cultural properties*. The former type of resource was discussed in the late 1980s in the published guidelines on how to document rural and designed historic landscapes and how to evaluate their National Register eligibility (Keller and Keller 1987; McClelland et al. 1989). Later, at about the same time landscapes were receiving global recognition, the USNPS published a more encompassing Preservation Brief on landscapes in general (Birnbaum 1994). Brief 36 defined *cultural landscapes* as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibit-

ing other cultural or aesthetic values” (Birnbaum 1994). This became the official term covering the following categories: (1) historic sites, (2) historic designed landscapes, (3) historic vernacular landscapes, and (4) ethnographic landscapes. These divisions were intended to parallel the four National Register consideration criteria listed above (see 36 CFR 60[4]). Of these, it is the ethnographic landscape that leaves the most conceptual room for sense of place, as ethnographic landscapes are those “that associated people define as heritage resources” (Birnbaum 1994).⁷

Although the landscape documents were promulgated only as guidelines, consideration of traditional cultural properties also began as guidelines but ultimately resulted in a change to the law itself. The importance of sense of place became a much more prominent and specific feature of the NHPA after a 1992 amendment to Section 101(d)(6). The amendment codified consideration of “properties of traditional religious and cultural importance” to Native Americans or Native Hawaiians, reinforcing what already

had been expressed in 1990 with far less ethnic specificity through the USNPS's Bulletin 38 ("Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties"; Parker and King 1990).

Bulletin 38 defined traditional cultural properties, or *TCPs*, as places eligible for the National Register by virtue of their "association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (1) are rooted in that community's history and (2) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community" (Parker and King 1990:1). The term *traditional* refers to "those beliefs, customs, and practices of a living community of people that have been passed down through the generations, usually orally or through practice," and the significance of traditional properties stems from the role they play in sustaining "a community's historically rooted beliefs, customs, and practices" (Parker and King 1990:1). Of the extant mandates, those dealing with *TCPs* create the broadest context for legislating sense of place. Provided they meet National Register criteria, *TCPs* can include archaeological sites and historic buildings—the "usual" property on the National Register—but they also can vary in scale from an individual object to a vast landscape. Traditional cultural properties essentially are whatever the community defines them to be. The authors of Bulletin 38 set *TCPs* apart from other kinds of historic properties "by locating their significance in the minds of ordinary people" (Haley 2004:226).

The language concerning *TCPs* in Bulletin 38 and the legal amendment to the NHPA has created an interpretive dilemma. Although the NHPA and Bulletin 38 create a context for sense of place in heritage legislation, there is debate about whose *TCPs* are eligible for the National Register. Bulletin 38 was designed with broad inclusivity in mind: Any community with places it holds dear could have them considered for listing on the National Register (King 1998:98, 2002:115–116, 2003:5, 35–36, and 129–130; Parker and King 1990). By specifying that Native American and Native Hawaiian properties may be determined to be eligible, however, the law clouds the issue. The law does not prohibit the inclusivity the guidelines advocate, but every federal agency has a finite annual budget, often with relatively modest funds set aside for cultural resource management, so deciding how it gets spent is a high priority issue. How funds are spent often is a question of how funds must—by law—be spent. Thus, the precise wording of Section 101(d)(6) becomes very important, and most funds have been directed at Native American *TCPs*. This targeted funding also reflects, to some degree, the active and sophisticated lobbying efforts of some Native American nations. The narrow interpretation of the law becomes a self-perpetuating cycle that may explain why so few nonindigenous resources are identified for National Register listing as *TCPs*.⁸

Turning to NEPA, some 50,000 environmental assessments and about 675 environmental impact studies are carried out annually by federal agencies in compliance with NEPA's implementing regulations (Caldwell et al. 1998: see table 1; King 1998:44). The latter require agencies to con-

sider the impact of all their activities on all aspects of the natural and physical environment, and on the relationships of the people who live within it (40 CFR 1508[14]), giving special attention to important "cultural aspects . . . of our national heritage" (42 USC 4331[b][4]) and "unquantified environmental amenities and values" (16 USC 4332[b]). In particular, one of the requisite considerations is the degree to which federal actions might adversely affect properties on or eligible for listing on the National Register or how they might cause loss or destruction of significant cultural resources (40 CFR 1508[27][b][8]). In other words, proposed federal actions should be assessed according to how they affect the environment in tangible terms—money and technology—as well as in intangible terms such as public values, perceptions, and aesthetics. Consideration must be given to the usual suspects that find their way on to the National Register—archaeological sites and historic buildings—in addition to what the public identifies as culturally important to them. One could argue that sense of place is exactly the type of intangible resource entailed in NEPA's required consideration of "the human environment" (cf. King 1998:47).

One can also see how sense of place subtly informs all manner of other cultural resource legislation, such as the February 11, 1994 Executive Order 12898 (59 FR 7629) on environmental justice for disproportionately impacted low-income and minority groups, and the May 29, 1996 Executive Order 13007 (61 FR 26771) on Native American and Native Hawaiian sacred sites. The latter, for instance, comes fairly close to discussing sense of place directly, as it enjoins federal agencies to recognize and protect certain places on the landscape that are sacred to contemporary native populations for reasons that only their cultural authorities can recognize.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

All of the cultural resource preservation mandates that entail sense of place—most especially Bulletin 38—are entwined with a parallel concept: stakeholder involvement. Regardless of whose *TCPs* can be present on the National Register, it follows logically that ordinary people are of extraordinary importance in identifying such places. Indeed, one of the major points of Bulletin 38 is that the arbiters of the National Register should judge a property to be significant and to possess integrity if the traditional community perceives this to be the case. From this awareness it also follows logically that consultation must involve input from traditional communities, however defined (cf. Haley 2004:227), to identify places of significance for federal agencies.

One of the legacies of the guidelines and the 1992 amendment to the NHPA thus should be greater involvement of communities in determining which places on the landscape are important. This is not always the case. Thomas King, in his overview of NEPA, points out that for many federal agencies public review and consultation

“in the real world” is commonly “thought of as a pro forma exercise in public relations” sometimes better characterized as “the rent-a-gym syndrome” or “the ‘Triple-I’ approach: ‘Inform, seek Input, and Ignore’ ” (1998:557). Ironically, part of the blame for similar lack of stakeholder involvement in NHPA matters, at least in terms of TCPs, can be laid at some of the phrasing of the guidelines. To King’s regret, Bulletin 38 advocated hiring a cultural anthropologist to consult extensively with those “who have special knowledge about and interests in the area to be studied” (King 2003:37, 139; Parker and King 1990:7). Federal land managers, sometimes having little background in heritage resources or anthropology, rely heavily on the prescriptions of the guidelines of the NHPA, especially when moving into a “fuzzy” cultural realm for which old buildings, artifacts, and other items are, to some degree, only symbolic referents. The cultural resource contract firms the managers hire to do inventories and evaluations follow suit, knowing the adequacy of their work will be measured in terms of the formal guidelines. Thus, by simultaneously championing stakeholders as the TCP experts and making them subject to evaluation by outside academics, one of the unintended consequences of Bulletin 38 has been to highlight issues of authenticity, authority, and cultural legitimacy.

These issues became most visible in the context of a highly controversial debate over a Native American TCP in the late 1990s, which catapulted cultural resource law from the contract realm into academia, where its broader implications about anthropological inquiry quickly came to the fore (e.g., Brown 1997; Erlandson 1998; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Kelley 1997; O’Meara 1998; Ruyle 1998; Trigger 1998). When, in short, do the informants become the experts? Who has the authority to so deem them? Against what and how does the National Register measure veracity? What emerged from the debates of the late 1990s was a series of critiques leveled against Bulletin 38, the most overt consideration of sense of place in federal cultural resources legislation. Most damning was the recognition that the federal guidelines foster the notion of a static past that is incompatible with the anthropological notion that change, fluidity, and situational boundaries are the sine qua non of culture (e.g., Brown 1997; Haley and Wilcoxon 1997; Kelley 1997; Winthrop 1998a, 1998b).

Equally troubling was the even earlier recognition that the National Register and indigenous TCPs in particular may not go well together. As Patricia Parker, coauthor of Bulletin 38, put it the year after the 1992 amendment, the linear chronology and cause–effect relationship that the National Register entails and uses to judge membership eligibility “simply are not applicable when dealing with many traditional cultural properties” (1993:4). That Bulletin 38 may indeed be a rickety bridge between two fundamentally different philosophies—that of heritage resource professionals operating under federal mandates and that of the stakeholders living in a cultural landscape—has been highlighted by the fate of the built environment and communities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Besides more philosophical issues of authority, authenticity, and veracity, there are two points at which very practical socioeconomic inequities in the National Register process become apparent. First, the vast majority of the built environment is in the hands of private individuals. It is their choice to pursue a nomination to the National Register. Those who do are often involved, or at least modestly familiar, with the historic preservation movement, meaning education and wealth tend to be social filters for preservation from the beginning. Second, historic properties that people, groups, or agencies would like to elevate to the National Register must pass muster with the professional staff at the state and federal levels. The standards of significance and integrity by which historic resources are evaluated are easier to apply to properties of accepted architectural importance; to well-recognized, hence mainstream, historical events; and to those properties that are unique and exceptional. As William J. Murtagh, first Keeper of the National Register, points out, it becomes abundantly clear in these contexts that “the National Register is essentially a humanistic program functioning in the nonhumanistic political and economic arenas of American society” (1997:73). Limited resources dictate that only some potentially eligible properties can be shepherded through the nomination process, and it is unavoidable that political and economic factors shape those choices. In the words of King, “It’s hard to escape the conclusion that a centrally defined and maintained register is a rather undemocratic . . . institution” (2002:19–20).

In terms of its protective utility, the National Register is largely a commemorative list (cf. King 1998:93–95, 2002:19–25), but it is supposed to be an honor roll of properties especially significant at even the local and state levels. In the aftermath of the hurricane, after immediate health and safety issues were addressed, land managers sought to assess the extent of damage to the cultural resources for which they were responsible. They sought out the National Register as a centralized, easily accessed database, and maps of National Register districts and properties were critical in the assessments. However, the extent of the crisis threw into stark relief the fact that the National Register is a very select list of properties that a very narrow segment of the U.S. public chose or had the wherewithal and interest to honor. What about the empty spaces between individual dots and district blocks on the National Register maps? As land managers grappled with the cartographic gaps, the press and the public filled those spaces volubly.

PRESERVATION: PRESS AND POLITICS

When Hurricane Katrina came ashore on August 29, 2005, the central Gulf Coast was directly in its path. The center of the storm passed over Biloxi, Gulfport, Pass Christian, Waveland, and many other coastal communities in Mississippi and Louisiana. Although the city of New Orleans did not receive the brunt of the storm, the failure of the levee system resulted in catastrophic flooding. Almost

110,000 households—more than half the city—were submerged beneath more than a meter of water (Bring New Orleans Back Commission 2006:5). By January 2006, less than 40 percent of the population had returned (based on population estimate in Stone et al. 2006:2). Damage to property and the destruction of infrastructure along the Mississippi coast also was immense. Estimates four months after the storm counted 65,000 housing units lost and over 90,000 damaged (Costa 2005).

In the early days after the hurricane's passage, however, even as the extent of the human toll was still unclear, the notion that sense of place was threatened or lost began to surface in the media. In one of his first aerial assessments of the city, New Orleans's Mayor Ray Nagin—whose past priorities have not emphasized preservation—looked down on the submerged Ninth Ward neighborhoods and proclaimed on CNN his new understanding that it was the people and the buildings that made New Orleans feel like New Orleans. This expression of sense of place appeared in print in the *New York Times* more cogently the third day after the hurricane's landfall:

Louisiana, especially South Louisiana, is a living archive of American social and cultural history, and not just in its buildings. In no other state is the proportion of people born and raised within its borders so high. As a consequence, they are something that is ever more rare in a homogenized and suburbanized America: the living bearers and transmitters of their own history and culture. Katrina, and those fateful levee breaks in New Orleans, put this all at risk. [Starr 2005]

Over the coming weeks, preservation professionals would echo this sentiment in the popular press. For instance, *USA Today* quoted Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as calling the hurricane "the greatest cultural catastrophe America has ever experienced" (Puente 2005). Under the same article's "sense of place and heritage" subheading, Richard Cawthon, Chief Architectural Historian for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, is quoted as saying, "Preservation of historic places is a matter of re-establishing a community's identity and its sense of place and heritage" (Puente 2005).

The same sentiment, the same concern for sense of place, was expressed by the nonpreservation public, too. Creoles across the country raised fears that the impact of the hurricane would sever their cultural ties to an ancestral homeland (e.g., Flaccus 2005; Saulny 2005).⁹ Jackie Sardie, a member of the Creole community transplanted to Houston, explained, "We're just sick, suffering so bad over, not the loss of our houses, but the loss of our home, our culture, the things we did" (Saulny 2005). Susan Saulny, a reporter for the *New York Times*, pointed out that

The Creoles have been more distinctly connected to a place—New Orleans—than perhaps any other American ethnic group but their rural Louisiana neighbors, the Cajuns. But unlike the Cajuns, who settled in Louisiana after

being expelled from Canada by the British, the Creoles lived in the birthplace of their culture.

And now, after the recent storms and the blows they dealt to Creole communities around New Orleans, scattering them to states from coast to coast, many Creoles fear that without a geographical base, their already fragile culture and their very identity could be lost. [Saulny 2005]

How does one assess the loss of sense of place? Whether you call it *consultation*, *scoping*, or any of several buzzwords in the professional parlance, this sample of popular news articles shows one effective way: Ask people. However, in the chaos of the hurricane's destruction, with limited resources, damaged infrastructure, and few residents to ask, cultural resource managers fell back on well-established measures of cultural and historic significance when they began to assess and mitigate the damage: official state and federal registers of important properties.

Cultural resource managers' response to the impact on historic resources had to take second position to the pressing human needs in the region, but within a week some assessment of the damage had already begun. For instance, in Mississippi the State Historic Preservation Office worked with the Mississippi Heritage Trust to provide preliminary reports and post on the Trust's website some early pictures of the damage. Across the region as a whole, however, assessment teams from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) moved into the region only to find their work hampered by the lack of information on the historic resources and the scope of the destruction. In some areas, the hurricane had swept away almost every standing structure (Cherilyn Widell, FEMA contractor in Mississippi, personal communication with authors, December 13, 2005). To address the lack of data, FEMA is partnering with the USNPS in a geographic information systems survey to assess the hurricane's impact on the resources on the National Register and on the list of National Historic Landmarks (Sean Clifford, USNPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, personal communication with authors, January 12, 2006).

The lack of adequate baseline historic documentation is a problem that is not unique to the historic preservation programs in the hurricane-affected region. Few states have adequately surveyed, recorded, and evaluated their historic and archaeological properties in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (USNPS 2005). This was the case in Mississippi, where only 33 properties in the state's six coastal counties were on the National Register, and in three of those counties only one property was listed (National Register of Historic Places 2005).¹⁰ In Louisiana there were more, with the 22 parishes in the FEMA disaster area averaging 25.0 listings (individual properties or entire districts). Orleans Parish, in which most of New Orleans is situated, boasts 132 listings, including 18 districts and two National Historic Landmark districts, all with multiple properties (Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation 2006). Removing Orleans Parish from the equation drops

the average number of listings by parish to 19.9 listings. As in many states, this quantity of officially recognized properties is simply too low for the National Register to serve as a balanced representation of the region's past.

The lack of a comprehensive historic inventory was particularly challenging in assessing vernacular resources, especially those associated with minority groups. Take, for example, the African Americans and the more recent immigrant groups who settled the Mississippi Gulf Coast to work in the seafood industry and who now constitute a significant portion of the region's populace. Most of these people lived in modest neighborhoods of insignificant architecture, at least according to the National Register's measures. They faced a double obstacle: first, gaining direct assistance to recover from the impact of the hurricane, and second, having their community places recognized in the recovery efforts as locales of special significance to the people that lived there.

The tensions in assisting these less-visible communities or places are illustrated by the Turkey Creek neighborhood in Gulfport, Mississippi. Thanks to a community action organization, the Turkey Creek Community Initiatives, steps had already been taken before the catastrophe to gain historical recognition for this community, which was originally established in 1866 by freed African Americans. Prior to the hurricane, the community group had been able to list only one of the houses in the neighborhood on the National Register. Questions about integrity of the other buildings in the neighborhood hampered the listing of the whole community (Mississippi Heritage Trust 2005).

Testifying at a November 1, 2005, Congressional hearing on the role of historic preservation in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Derrick Evans, the leader of the Turkey Creek Community Initiatives, noted that historic patterns of race, class, and segregation had placed minority communities away from the direct impact of past storm events on the coast. African American communities historically were situated further inland from the coast than many of the larger homes on the shore. Evans stated that consequently many of the region's surviving heritage resources are now to be found in places that have been overlooked and undervalued in the past. He spoke of the importance of saving as many remaining historic properties in the Gulf Coast region "so as to retain cultural memory, continuity of culture and a sense of place in this devastated area of our state and nation" (Historic Preservation vs. Katrina 2005a).

At the same hearing H. T. Holmes, Mississippi's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), agreed, saying that although the Turkey Creek community may fall short of National Register standards in the eyes of governmental reviewers, those sites that have survived Katrina may now be seen as all the "more precious" (Historic Preservation vs. Katrina 2005b). As part of the recovery assessment, the Mississippi SHPO determined the Turkey Creek community to be eligible for the National Register and began working with Derrick Evans and other community leaders to identify

other underreported African American communities in the impact area that might also be eligible (Cherilyn Widell, FEMA contractor in Mississippi, personal communication with authors, December 13, 2005).

Turkey Creek represents a good effort to use the National Register to recognize historic resources associated with underrepresented communities. It is perhaps telling that when the Chair of the Congressional Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, Mike Turner (R-OH), posed the closing question of why historic preservation matters in the face of a national disaster, many panelists replied that preservation both shapes our sense of place and defines our concept of community (Preservation Action 2005). How will the sense of place for Turkey Creek and other Gulf Coast communities fare in the rush to reinvest and reconstruct? Furthermore, how does the extant federal preservation system do more than ensure that undervalued, underreported communities are now represented simply because everything else is gone? How do such places and the feelings they engender find representation in regions where other resources remain that match ingrained interpretations of National Register eligibility? These are some of the major issues that the media brought into national view in the first five months after the storm.

PRESERVATION: POLICY AND PLANNING

As the debris removal proceeds in hurricane damaged areas, the issues that were poignantly expressed in the national media and cast into the political arena are now filtering into policy generation and into the logistics of rebuilding. However, this filtering process is not happening uniformly, despite the attention given to sense of place in national press coverage, as is evident when one compares the rhetoric of the recovery and rebuilding plans in Mississippi and Louisiana.

In Mississippi, Governor Haley Barbour established the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal. One of the commission's first acts was to set into motion a team of architects and planners lead by the "new urbanist" Andres Duany to envision the future of the Gulf Coast. The report of the group, the "Mississippi Renewal Forum," recommended many smart growth principles and sketched rebuilding plans for many of the communities fronting the Gulf Coast (Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal 2005). It recognized the diverse communities of the coast and the need for citizen involvement, but the recommendations for preservation of historic resources are tied to the canonic architecture typical of the National Register, especially architectural style. Very little of the planning language addresses the historic and cultural connection that people of the Mississippi Gulf Coast feel for their communities. Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that the Turkey Creek Community Initiatives felt compelled to take their grievances to Congress.

In Louisiana, planning began with Governor Kathleen Blanco's creation on October 17, 2005, of the Louisiana

Recovery Authority (LRA), a state-level entity whose task is to craft a series of short- and long-term plans to rebuild the state. One of the LRA's top agenda items was convening a three-day recovery and rebuilding "visioning conference" in New Orleans in mid-November, 2005. The conference was sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, the American Planning Association, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the American Society of Civil Engineers (American Institute of Architects 2005a, 2005b).

One of the keystones of the Louisiana conference was its emphasis on stakeholder involvement. Local community leaders, civic leaders, business leaders, and public officials at all levels were invited to participate in the conference; moreover, members of the public were encouraged to submit comments before and after the conference, all of which became part of the meeting's official record. In the call for participation, Norman Koonce, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Institute of Architects, declared that rebuilding would succeed only if it was "a collaborative, inclusive, and open process driven by local Louisiana citizens" (American Institute of Architects 2005a). Indeed, one of the presenters, Michael Willis, a California architect, wryly offered the observation that planners should not "pass over collaboration as self-evident," because "you never know where that spark of wisdom is going to come from—we're not smart enough to exclude anyone" (American Institute of Architects 2005c).

Some 650 people attended the conference, and in the six principle themes they discussed sense of place was mentioned obliquely in two. Part of the "preserve" theme included the enjoinder that if the state was to recover, then its "unique architecture, history, cultural heritage, and diversity must be preserved," despite pressure to rebuild (American Institute of Architects 2005b:7). In the "plan and design communities that advance livability" theme, the participants declared that it was essential to preserve "the best of the past as the core for rebuilding" (American Institute of Architects 2005b:10). At the podium, however, sense of place had a more vivid presence. Willis, for example, implored the audience to consider during the planning process the feelings and experiences of the residents connected to the landscape: Rebuilding "depends on the storytellers who cherish the memory of place to help the professionals get it right" (American Institute of Architects 2005c).

Perhaps paralleling the fundamental issue at hand, it is only at the local level that sense of place becomes far more recognizable and overt in the formal planning language. In New Orleans, Mayor Nagin has placed the task of planning the city's massive recovery effort in the hands of the *Bring New Orleans Back Commission*. The commission's *Urban Planning Committee* released their blueprint for the city's resurrection—"Action Plan for New Orleans: The New American City"—on January 11, 2006. In an introductory section entitled "Why Rebuild?" the city listed only two rea-

sons: national economic importance and national historic and cultural importance (2006:9). The commission's vision statement went further:

New Orleans will be a sustainable, environmentally safe, socially equitable community with a vibrant economy. Its neighborhoods will be planned with its citizens and connect to jobs and the region. Each will preserve and celebrate its heritage of culture, landscape, and architecture (2006:12).

To summarize, the vision of how the city is to reemerge from the flood is centered on stakeholder involvement and recognition of a strong sense of place. This philosophy was further elucidated in the commission's presentation of what they feel makes a successful neighborhood. The top three elements of a great neighborhood were "family, friends and neighbors; built on neighborhood history and culture; [and] respectful of historic block patterns, architecture, and landscape" (Bring New Orleans Back Commission 2006:34). The ideal neighborhood, in other words, is one that emphasizes the connection of people to a very particular place over time (Bring New Orleans Back Commission 2006).

In terms of implementation, the commission declared it was forming "neighborhood planning teams for each Neighborhood Planning District" (Bring New Orleans Back Commission 2006:44) whose work would commence by February 20, 2006. Each planning team included representatives of nine sets of stakeholders, the first listed of which were neighborhood residents. Among others, the team members are to include a planner/urban designer, a historic preservation expert, and a local government representative. These teams have been given the directive to ensure that "history and culture" guide the planning of these ideal neighborhoods (Bring New Orleans Back Commission 2006).

Policy and planning for the recovery and rebuilding efforts in Louisiana, and to a lesser degree in Mississippi, include the importance of sense of place as defined by the residents of the impacted areas. Now, more than a year after the hurricane, however, translating policy and planning into practice remains slow to begin. In New Orleans, the *Times-Picayune* discussed the frustration of local residents, quoting former Secretary of State George C. Marshall's strong metaphor for conditions in Europe after World War II: "As the doctors deliberated, the patient lay dying" (Warner 2005). As a New Orleans resident put it in early December 2005, "While the government vacillates, people are gutting and rebuilding, just to be doing something positive" (Crorey Lawton, Tulane University graduate student, personal communication with authors, December 5, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservationists are fond of hearkening back to a quote Gertrude Stein once made when she was asked why she lived abroad instead of in the United States. Using her hometown of Oakland, California, as an example, she said

simply, “There is no *there* there” (Stein 1937, emphasis added). Preservationists have used this as a rallying cry against the homogenization and urban sprawl characteristic of much of the development of the United States that began in the first half of the 20th century. When the places where we spend our daily lives become indistinguishable from any other place in the country, we come to value especially those communities that are, in Stein’s words, still there. New Orleans, with its distinctive architecture and vibrant multicultural atmosphere, is an iconic example of a place with a lot of “there” in U.S. society. That Hurricane Katrina threatened a place of such presence not only horrified local residents but also alarmed the nation and riveted citizens’ attention to the events that unfolded on their televisions. Places to which we can connect our identity, our culture, our heritage, and our experiential lives take on special meaning to the U.S. public, whether the places are national icons like New Orleans’s French Quarter, or more local icons like tiny juke joints bursting with brass band music. Specific places can be crucial to community identity and cohesion, on whatever scale, community to country, and the hurricane has taught us that it is important to recognize those places before they vanish.

Hurricane Katrina made us reconsider exactly what it is that our preservation system documents and how effective it is at helping communities preserve the places important to them. The reality is that U.S. society is pluralistic, being both multiclass and multicultural. How communities identify themselves is fluid and situational, as is the way in which community constituents define the relationship between themselves and the places they inhabit. Seemingly ordinary places underrepresented in the federal documentation process can be as important to the people who live in them as the properties that outside preservationists deem worthy of the National Register. As people began to assess the toll of the hurricane on their communities, residents, government officials, and preservation professionals grappled with the issue of how to mitigate hurricane damage in coastal and urban regions never before even considered for recognition in the federal system. This lacuna reflects an institutional misunderstanding of what makes the places we inhabit important.

The misunderstanding has its roots in the 19th century, with the founding of the preservation movement in the United States by affluent philanthropists. It is important to recognize that their interests obviously were those of a very narrow segment of U.S. society. The way in which we implement preservation law is predicated in part on the interests of 200 years ago, despite considerable efforts since the civil activism of the 1960s to make legislation more sensitive to and reflective of the wider concerns of our citizens. The National Register highlights both the successes and failures of the U.S. system. It works well as a commemorative list of patrimonial icons. It has the capacity to include tangible symbols of subaltern histories, too. In practice, however, economic and political factors seem to have given preference to the former, and the stakeholder involvement nec-

essary to identify the subtle but vital markers of community identity has been cultivated poorly.

In the long term, Hurricane Katrina may change how people in the United States understand their connection to the landscapes they inhabit. Will it also change how we document and manage these commonplace and seemingly inconsequential markers on the landscape that anchor people to what they call home? Perhaps one way to achieve this shift is to suggest a reexamination of how well the process of evaluating properties for the National Register meets the original goals of the National Historic Preservation Act. Does the National Register truly preserve “the historical and cultural foundations of the nation as a living part of our community life and development,” so that U.S. citizens have a “sense of orientation” founded on its heritage, as the act enjoins us to do (16 USC 1470[b][2])? At the same time, better integration of NEPA and its regulations with the National Register programs may provide more scope for considering community values, because NEPA already requires consideration of all historic properties on or eligible for listing on the National Register, in addition to other cultural and historical resources comprising the “human environment.” Hurricane Katrina showed clearly that calling for consideration of culturally imbued geography is not enough. That sense of place is not better represented in federal documentation implies a change is needed in either documenters’ education or in the implementing regulations and guidance.

Another step might be a reappraisal of the role of Bulletin 38 in evaluating properties for the National Register. How can the guidelines be better applied or revised to assist communities that now seem divorced from or underrepresented in our preservation system? How can we insure that TCPs are considered during the NHPA and NEPA assessments? As discussed previously, the 1992 amendments to the NHPA state that TCPs “may” be—not “must” be—considered, and there is some debate about whose TCPs are addressed by the law. Is the directive to consult with indigenous people merely a Congressional reminder to federal agencies, as King (1998:98) has opined, or does it indeed exclude other people, as some insist? At a minimum these ambiguities should be clarified. At the end of the day, the statutory scheme and the language that implements it must reflect in some way that which the citizens of this country believe is important.

Will it be possible to revitalize the historic documentation process to better include the stakeholders who live in an area? Residents have strong ideas about what makes their community special, as the Turkey Creek activists have demonstrated and as is reflected in the Louisiana planning language. Stakeholders deserve to be taken seriously, especially because it is the stakeholders’ tax dollars ostensibly being spent to plan around and protect their important places. A corollary of this emphasis on stakeholder involvement is that today’s reliance on outside professionals as the final decision makers in historic preservation practice should be diminished. The public should be engaged in a discussion

about what is important to their cultural identity and their heritage, and what they have to say should be recorded in such a way that it can assist decision makers. Will it be possible for SHPOs and governmental officials to accommodate such input in their business practices?

Already some alternate strategies for stakeholder involvement are available. The international shift toward shared regional management has its analog in the United States with the growth of the National Heritage Area movement. The 27 regions Congress has designated as National Heritage Areas all are large-scale living landscapes, the preservation of which is organized by local leaders and residents around a concept of their shared heritage (Barrett 2003; Barrett and Carlino 2003; Barrett et al. 2006; Daly 2003). Congress passed legislation designating six coastal counties of Mississippi as the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area on December 8, 2004 (PL 108-447). The legislation required the preparation of a management plan, which was under development when Katrina hit the coast, changing the landscape forever. Despite the setback, they may yet play a significant role in documenting and telling the tale of the coast's unique natural and cultural heritage.

Ultimately sense of place and the significance people attribute to special places "is in people's heads" (King 1998:99). Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that when it comes to preserving and rebuilding a community or a region after a crisis, that which is "in people's heads" must be considered. The national media picked up on this issue, and grassroots power threw it into the political arena. Eventually, the rhetoric surrounding this issue made its way into recovery and rebuilding policy for Louisiana and Mississippi. It will be months, perhaps years, before we see if the rhetoric made its way into practice.

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NOTES

1. Hurricane Katrina had a serious impact on the entire Gulf Coast, including Florida and Alabama, and was but one of several destructive storms to make landfall in the 2005 hurricane season. In this article, however, we have focused solely on Hurricane Katrina because of its unprecedented impact on cultural resources in Louisiana and Mississippi.

2. The USNPS National Register programs have tried to rebalance the equation with a number of cultural diversity initiatives including internships, research, and publications (see <http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/>). A rich source of all the known resources and program is collected in one place at http://www.cr.nps.gov/crdi/places/nps_placeslist.htm.

3. This phrase was eloquently expressed by Dr. Carroll Van West, Director, Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, in a letter of September 14, 2005, to National Heritage Area colleagues. He exhorted them to

focus attention and resources not just on landmarks but on people, cultural traditions, the commonplace and the seemingly inconsequential markers on the landscape. As anchors for the region's sense of place and identity, they are just as important—if not more so—than the museum landmarks that have been lost. There will be much to do, no doubt, but the people, the culture, the sense of place and the sense of family of the Mississippi Gulf Coast has only been temporarily dislodged—not destroyed. Those intangibles are the building blocks upon which our colleagues will once again invigorate their region and their neighbors. [e-mail to authors, September 14, 2005]

4. The organization was founded in 1956 as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. As of 1990, the organization has used the name the World Conservation Union. However, it is still commonly referred to as the IUCN. It represents 82 states, 111 government agencies, and over 800 NGOs (<http://www.iucn.org/gen>).

5. There are dozens of laws, regulations, guidelines, executive orders, and other mandates that form the legal framework for historic preservation in the United States. For further information, many of these may be found on the Internet at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/linklaws.htm>. Alternately, the USNPS and National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers have collaborated to produce a printed handbook of 23 federal laws and portions of laws relevant to historic preservation (USNPS 2002).

6. Additionally, properties are eligible for the National Register only if they do not meet any of seven "exclusion criteria" also listed at 36 CFR 60(4). These include—with a number of specific caveats—religious properties, cemeteries, graves and birthplaces, properties achieving significance in the last 50 years, relocated structures, reconstructed structures, and commemorative properties.

7. See the article by Michael Evans and colleagues (2001) for a critique of the USNPS approach to cultural geography.

8. Louisiana provides a good example of the failure of agencies to recognize the utility of TCPs as a way of understanding the significance of the human-space relationship. Although the state has over one thousand properties listed on the National Register, prior to Hurricane Katrina only one was nominated to the National Register as a TCP. After the hurricane Shannon Dawdy, the State Historic Preservation Office's archaeological liaison to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, recommended that entire sections of New Orleans be considered eligible for the National Register as TCPs. Strangely, her recommendation is currently considered classified information by the Department of Homeland Security, and she fears it will go overlooked during the rebuilding and recovery process (Dawdy, personal communication, March 10, 2006).

9. In colonial Louisiana, the term *creole* was used to indicate New World products derived from Old World stock, and it could be applied to people, produce, or livestock. In reference to people, *creole* historically referred to those born in Louisiana during the French and Spanish colonial periods, regardless of ethnicity. Today, as in the past, the term *creole* transcends racial boundaries. It connects people to their colonial roots, be they descendants of European settlers, free or enslaved Africans, or those of mixed heritage, which may include African, French, Spanish, and American Indian inheritances.

10. Sampling problems aside, the mix of properties in the listed coastal historic districts did represent multiple stories from the region. Based on the USNPS Index by Theme of National Register resources, the six counties had four properties related to African American historic places. Of those four, three were historic districts with multiple properties and multiple themes.

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