

The National Register of Historic Places.

This is the first of 4 columns that Historic Saranac Lake is contributing to the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on the topic of architectural preservation. March, 2012

Historic Saranac Lake was founded over 30 years ago as an architectural preservation organization. While our mission has grown to include many other tasks, such as operating the Saranac Laboratory Museum on Church Street and teaching area school children about our local history, we continue to work for the preservation of Saranac Lake's unique architecture.

Twenty years ago, Historic Saranac Lake nominated and listed approximately 170 village properties to the National Register. Now we are making a renewed effort to pay attention to our National Register buildings and to make new nominations to the National Register. Here are answers to some of the frequently asked questions about the program.

What is the National Register?

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archeological resources.

Why does the National Register matter?

- Now tax credits are available to help subsidize approved rehabilitation projects to National Register properties. Homeowners can receive a 20% tax credit. Commercial property owners may be eligible for credits up to 40% of the project cost.
- Municipal and not-for-profit owners of listed historic properties can receive matching state historic preservation grants. Local churches have received grants to restore their stained glass windows. Little Red, Union Depot and the Saranac Laboratory have benefitted from this program.
- Registered properties receive a measure of protection from the effects of government sponsored, licensed or assisted projects.
- Listing on the National Register is a source of pride, and it helps to raise awareness of the economic and cultural value of historic buildings.

What properties are eligible?

A property must meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. This involves examining the property's age, integrity, and significance.

Many properties in the village of Saranac Lake were listed because of their association with our special history as a center for the treatment and scientific research of tuberculosis. A preliminary survey completed over 20 yrs. ago identified some 900 possible cure cottages in the village. In 1992, 62 were chosen for the nomination under the cure cottage theme and many others were listed as part of 6 different Historic Districts. Historic Saranac Lake is currently assisting homeowners in applying to the National Register under the existing Cure Cottage Thematic Designation.

If you live in a home that once was a cure cottage, where the original architecture is substantially unchanged, and there are architectural features of a cure cottage, namely a cure porch, Historic Saranac Lake can assist you in applying to the National Register.

How can I find out if my home was a cure cottage?

Records in the Adirondack Research Room of the Saranac Lake free library can confirm whether patients cured in your home. A good place to start your research is the Historic Saranac Lake wiki website: hsl.wikispot.org. Type your street name into the search box. Houses are listed by old and new addresses. Photos of the majority of the homes in Saranac Lake can be found on the website. Those that were cure cottages will indicate whether “curing evidence” exists in library records.

How can I find out if my house is on the Register?

Properties on the Register are identified on the hsl wiki site. Links to the National Register forms are found on the site with each National Register property. You can also look up a property on the National Park Service site at nps.gov.

How can I apply to list my property on the National Register?

Forms must be submitted to the New York State Office of Historic Preservation. Historic Saranac Lake can assist you with this process. Call or email us to find out more: 891-4606 or mail@historicsaranaclake.org.

What are the restrictions of being on the Register?

There are no restrictions placed on private owners of registered properties. Private property owners may sell, alter or dispose of their property as they wish.

However we strongly urge all owners of historic properties to research the value of existing historic features of their homes before making alterations. Cure porches and cure porch windows are lovely and irreplaceable features of our community. South facing cure porches serve as solar heat banks, helping to save on heating costs.

Stay tuned to next month's article to find out more about saving our cure porches and historic windows! In the mean time, please contact us with any other questions about how we can work together to preserve the unique architecture of Saranac Lake.