

Amending the Boundaries of Historic Districts

A National Register White Paper

Barbara Wyatt, 9-3-08

This paper is not intended to replace information in the National Register Bulletins and other NPS publications. It is intended as a supplement, and if discrepancies are found between this paper and other NPS publications, the existing publications should be considered correct.

This white paper concerns boundary changes to historic districts already listed in the National Register. A clarification of this issue is offered, because some SHPOs have questioned whether a boundary increase should be used as an opportunity to bring early, deficient nominations up to date. If so, to what extent will the original district nomination be reviewed?

The Federal regulations are quite specific on circumstances that warrant boundary changes and the process for achieving them. Federal regulation 36 CFR 60.14(a)(2) states:

(2) Four justifications exist for altering a boundary: Professional error in the initial nomination, loss of historic integrity, recognition of additional significance, additional research documenting that a larger or smaller area should be listed.

The section continues with a clause that guards against capricious boundary increases that are not based on genuine significance, by requiring the new area to possess significance:

No enlargement of a boundary should be recommended unless the additional area possesses previously unrecognized significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering or culture.

Therefore the new area will be evaluated on the basis of its own significance and integrity. The areas of significance, the period of significance, and the level of significance may differ from the original nomination. Deficiencies in the original nomination will not be accepted in the new nomination. For example, perhaps the original district was listed at the national level, but the nomination did not construct a national context and evaluate the district within that context. If the new nomination is to be listed at the national level, the nomination for the new area must include a description of the national context, as required by current standards, with an evaluation of the new area within that context. Otherwise, the context for state or local significance must be presented. The original nomination will not be affected by differing evaluations in the new nomination, unless the SHPO requests the original nomination to be amended.

The format for boundary increases and other amendments also is specified in the Federal regulations. Federal regulation 36 CFR 60.14(a) states:

(a) A boundary alteration shall be considered as a new property nomination. All forms, criteria and procedures used in nominating a property to the National Register must be used. In the case of boundary enlargements, only those owners in the newly nominated as yet unlisted area need be notified and will be counted in determining whether a majority of private owners object to listing.

The National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* states that for boundary changes a new form must be submitted that documents just the area being added or deleted (page 71). Thus, a new NPS Form 10-900 that only pertains to the area added to the district must be completed. However, NR continuation sheets are acceptable if a boundary is to be only slightly increased (i.e., *corrected*) with minimal property additions. Even so, as required by the regulations, the continuation sheets will be processed as a new nomination.

In some cases, the original nomination was prepared many years ago and the documentation and evaluation are inadequate by current standards. Such nominations can pose ongoing problems, particularly if they do not include an inventory and evaluation of each property. Thus, the SHPO may require the preparer to revise the nomination and include the original and expanded area in one document. In this case, the entire district will be re-evaluated.

NPS encourages SHPOs to improve deficient district nominations, including boundaries, when possible. However, the SHPO and its constituents must be aware that such modifications can subject the entire district to a new evaluation under the circumstances described above.

Attachment 1

Excerpt from *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (page 71-72)

BOUNDARY CHANGES (INCREASES AND DECREASES)

In section 1, enter the name of the property previously registered, and in parentheses indicate whether the documentation is for a boundary increase or decrease, for example, Abington Historic District (Boundary Increase). A name change may also be requested.

- In **section 2**, enter only the address of the area being added or deleted.
- Provide new information in **section 5** on contributing and noncontributing resources. Indicate how many resources are affected by the boundary change. For increases, indicate the number and type of resources being added. For decreases, indicate the number and type of resources being deleted. For both increases and decreases, enter the total number of previously listed contributing resources (not just those affected by the change) under *Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed*.
- Identify and describe the areas and resources being added or deleted in the narrative for **section 7**.
- Explain the reasons for the increase (such as the removal of false facades, expanded area survey, or discovery of new information) or decrease (such as loss of historic integrity) in **section 8**.
- Document any additional significance in **section 8**.
- Provide new geographical data in **section 10**, including location, boundary description and justification, acreage, and UTM references, for only the area being added or deleted.
- Provide new **USGS maps** and, if required, **sketch maps**, reflecting the changes in geographical data.
- Provide **photographs** of the area being added.