

## **Why Is History Important? Why Should We Preserve Our National Treasures and How Should We, As a Nation, Continue to Preserve Our Lands and Historic Buildings?**

History can be as broad as human evolution or as narrow as one's family lineage. Between these two extremes, however, lie the events that have shaped who we are and will continue to decide where we are going far into the future. Understanding the link between the past and the present means understanding humanity and civilization.

America is a young nation, and yet our history is incredibly rich, from the formation of a unique federal republic to the trial of the Civil War to the hard-fought battles that took place in the form of the Women's and Civil Rights Movements. Our history is important because it teaches us about our roots.. It allows us to protect and nurture our freedom, and inspires and instructs future generations to help make this country better. Today, we still look at the legacies of historical leaders for guidance, and continue to take inspiration from figures such as Founding Father George Washington, whose wisdom set precedents for the Presidency; John F. Kennedy, whose unwavering determination propelled us into the new frontier of space; and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., whose dream guides us on the pursuit of racial equality.

Our national treasures range from landmarks such as Mount Rushmore to national parks such as Yellowstone. These spaces and monuments should be protected because they are physical embodiments of history, and are vital to our identities. Without them, history would exist as an abstract entity. History is a great educator, and historical sites foster individual connections to community. Those sites enable us to view a blueprint of the traditions that have become a part of our society, and are a tangible portal to the past that inspires awe and appreciation for the journey that has led to the nation we know today.

Moreover, historical sites teach us moral lessons by allowing us to observe both the glories and flaws in our heroes. Monticello, the Virginia residence of Thomas Jefferson, is one such location; Jefferson penned the luminous phrase that "all men are created equal," and yet still kept 400 slaves at Monticello, often submitting them to extreme violence. In creating three-dimensional visions of important figures, historical sites allow for self-reflection, on our impacts within community and the ways that our generation can better ourselves so that the same atrocities are not committed again. It sheds light on the progress that has been made, and encourages further progression.

Preservation of these sites can come in many different ways. Measures that decree and regulate laws for proper treatment of historic sites and buildings are the first steps toward preservation. The Antiquities Act of 1906 provides for the protection of historic, scientific, and prehistoric features located on federal lands, and other acts have followed, such as the Historic Sites Act of 1935, and the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974. These laws set standards for the federal government regarding the protection of historic settings, and in order to contribute to the preservation efforts, it is imperative for citizens to first recognize the importance of that space; this awareness will lead to increased efforts in preservation actions, such as cleaning up land or make donations to organizations like the National Trust for Historic Preservation. More importantly, because awareness and education about the importance of historical sites is a vital precursor towards our nation's collective effort to cherishing and protecting them, historic preservation includes much more than physical restoration of historical landmarks or enclosing land to preserve it. We will most successfully succeed in preservation if we all recognize the value that those entities bring. Visiting those spaces is an important method of preservation; engaging with and keeping alive the meaning of those places is just as essential as ensuring that the physical location is kept in good condition.

The Pulitzer-Prize winning historian David McCullough says that "History is who we are, and why we are the way we are." This correctly illustrates the power of history. We take inspiration from the preservation of these historical sites, and in the end, history is the greatest force that drives us to become a better nation.