

New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

Tips on Photographing a Building

Photographs are important documentation for historic preservation projects, including historic resource surveys and nominations to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Photographs should provide accurate, visual representations of a property, its significant features and alterations, and showcase qualities discussed in a nomination. The number of photographic views will vary based on size and complexity of a property.

Technology

Camera Equipment & File Types

SLR cameras are best for photographing historic resources, but digital cameras on tablets or cell phones are often used in the field. Be sure to take high-resolution images (at least 2000x3000px or more) and save the copies as .jpg files.



Composition



Framing

Photographs should show some of the area *around* a building. Creating this space will help avoid accidentally cropping out key details, such as cornices or foundations.



Lighting Conditions

Too much or too little light can make it hard to read details of a building. Exterior photos? Overcast days can provide even, natural light. Remember not to take photos while facing the sun or through glass (like car windows), as it can cause glare and can create reflections. Interior photos? Turn on lights or use a flash.



Season

It can be easier to see building features when the leaves are off trees (as in the spring or fall). In the winter, piles of snow can hide details, such as roofing or how the building meets the ground.

Documentation



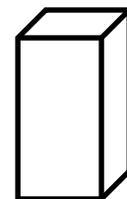
Scope

When documenting a building, start with general overview images that show the entire wall or elevation. Then, document more specific features, such as windows, doors, trim, etc.



Relationships

For historic districts, be sure to photograph streetscapes to convey the relationship between properties. The photos should illustrate the variety of the nominated district, so photograph *all* property types and styles, including non-contributing features.



Scale

It is best to have examples of at least two exterior elevations of a building, to help show depth and massing. For interiors, take photos from two opposite sides of the room to convey size, depth, openings, and materials.



New York State and National Registers of Historic Places

Tips on Photographing a Building

Remember, sometimes a simple adjustment can yield better results!



Front image doesn't reveal much about the massing or size of this building



Showing two elevations of this building better describes its form and features



Backlit, poorly centered streetscape with car in foreground



Better centered, clearer image, more accurately shows character of buildings



Blurry, out of focus, with lens flare



Clearer, closer, sharper image shows more detail of monument

