

Frequently Asked Questions

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The History of Morris County, New Jersey: It has just begun to be written.

“Is Iustus Exorsus Futurus Scriptum”

Welcome to the future of Morris County history.

The Morris County Department of Planning and Development, Division of Preservation Trust welcomes you to the Cultural Resource Survey website.

The benefits of this database for historic sites will allow for seamless updating. As an example, if a site is newly listed on the New Jersey state or national registers, receives a restoration grant, or is demolished, these facts can be included as soon as the information is received by Preservation Trust staff, not discovered twenty years hence.

Although it remains a best practice to take stock of historic sites every twenty years, this database will prove a useful tool in eliminating much time-consuming research. Additionally, this survey may be applied to assist with various information gathering needs of Morris County citizens, municipal, county, state and national projects, as well as lending assistance to both professional and lay historians and researchers.

The staff members of Planning and Development, Preservation Trust would like to thank the citizens of Morris County for their support.

Topic: The Acroterion

Q: *What was the Acroterion survey?*

A: Sponsored by The Morris County Heritage Commission, and published in 1986, the survey is commonly referred to as the Acroterion, after the name of the consulting firm who performed the survey.

Q: *Where can I find a copy of an Acroterion survey for my municipality?*

A: Both the Morris County Library and Morristown Library have full sets. The municipal libraries should have copies of their own municipality's survey.

The Morris County Heritage Commission also has a complete set, but the Commission requires an appointment be made to view them on the premises.

The Commission does offer the Acroterion for purchase.

Q: *Why is the Acroterion being updated now?*

A: Morris County follows best practices regarding the updating of historic surveys; recommended every 15 to 20 years.

Topic: The New Survey

Q: *What makes this new survey different from the original?*

A: The original Acroterion survey remains an iconic work. The documentation and data collection prior to wide-spread use of computers, digital cameras, is staggering. Incorporating the solid foundation of the Acroterion, this new survey will exploit technological benefits found in the early 21st century. Although a printed and CD ROM version will be distributed to limited recipients, the new survey placed on this website will be the centerpiece of the data display.

Q: *Why is the new survey referred to the Cultural Resource Inventory?*

A: The new survey seeks to include features that make Morris County special, and that is definitely the wide-range of cultural gifts, not necessarily considered structures. The Morris County resident may consider that it is not only the buildings that define us, but it is Kinnelon's Butternut Tree, or Dover's Hurd Park that give Morris County municipalities their cultural flavor.

Q: *How has Morris County prepared for this new survey?*

A: Several steps have been taken over a course of years to prepare for this resurvey. Using the Acroterion, a 'windshield' survey of the majority of the municipalities is performed. This task includes note preparation, fact gathering, noting possible additions to the new survey and preparing preliminary maps. These are just a few of the initial steps that have been taken.

This preliminary fieldwork and documentation by Morris County staff is ongoing.

Q: *How many new sites will be added to Morris County's survey, and how are they chosen?*

A: The goal is to add ten new sites for each municipality. Although this number will not be possible in some cases, or deemed inadequate for others, this number is reasonable for professional consultants to research for inclusion.

New sites have been selected by taking some suggestions of municipal representatives, some from Morris County staff associated with this project, and the remainder from the consultant's field observations.

Sites are included for architectural, cultural or historic interest.

Topic: Municipal Participation

Q: *Will Morris County gather input from municipalities?*

A: Morris County invites municipal participation in certain areas, and a protocol has been designed to engage municipal participation in an orderly fashion.

Official municipal historic committees/commissions are contacted first. If these entities do not exist, then municipal historic societies will be asked.

The mayor or governing body of each municipality is copied on all introductory requests.

Q: *My municipality does not have a historic commission, committee or society. Will my municipality be ignored?*

A: In cases where these historic organizations do not exist, the mayor or municipal governing body is asked to recommend a representative. If no representatives are available, Morris County staff will continue to survey the municipality without a representative, keeping municipal officials apprised of progress.

Q: *Is participation mandatory for municipalities or representatives?*

A: While Morris County staff invites and welcomes municipal participation, this is a voluntary endeavor.

Q: *If I am selected to be my municipal representative, how much time is required for participation?*

A: Morris County is mindful of time constraints that exist for representatives who graciously volunteer. Therefore, we ask for only two meetings with Morris County staff and professional consultants in Morristown.

The initial meeting will last one hour. Although this is a brief allotment of time, it has proven sufficient for municipalities of all sizes, and number of sites to be resurveyed.

Part of the success of utilizing the allotted time has been the extensive ground work executed by Preservation Trust staff. Representatives have several months to thoroughly prepare. Additionally, representatives are urged not to consume meeting time going over spelling errors in the original Acroterion.

The final meeting, which will probably be eliminated going forward, will be the review of the rough draft.

“Phase 1” and “Phase 2” municipal representatives chose to have rough-draft copies mailed to them, reviewed at their leisure, made additional corrections and mailed them back to Morris County Planning and Development, thus eliminating the final meeting.

Q: *If I am a representative for my municipality, what do I need to bring to the meeting?*

A: The key element will be the “working map” with corrections, notations, and a list of properties that might have been over-looked in 1986. Additionally, Morris County requests any municipal anniversary books, or local history books that may be safely lent to the consultant for several months.

In some cases, an additional list of requested items has been inserted into the packet.

Q: *“If I am a representative, will I have to accompany consultants while they perform fieldwork?”*

A: Professional consultants contracted by Morris County’s Department of Planning and Development will work alone in field. We will ask that representatives agree to be available on the rare occasion a consultant may wish to contact them via phone or email.

Q: *If I am a representative, am I required to monitor the progress of the consultant?”*

A: Consultant monitoring is the sole responsibility of Morris County staff.

Q: *I have items I want included in the survey. Should I bring them to the meeting?*

A: Morris County staff has received generous offers of material. Although appreciated, we must decline them at this juncture. We would appreciate a list of resources and their location, for possible use in the future.

Topic: Municipal “Phase” Assignment

Q: *How are the 39 municipalities divided into Phases?*

A: Municipalities are considered for “Phase” assignment based on several factors, including but not limited to: size of municipalities, upcoming major road closures or redevelopment projects.

Topic: Citizen Involvement and Concerns

Q: *May I volunteer directly to Morris County staff to be a representative for my municipality?*

A: Morris County Preservation Trust staff members will not appoint a local representative, but will follow the protocol outlined in the above topic.

Q: *My municipality does not have a historic commission, committee or society. Will my municipality be ignored?*

A: In cases where these entities do not exist, the mayor or municipal governing body is asked to recommend a representative. If no representatives are available, Morris County will continue to survey the municipality without a representative.

Q: *“I have documents/ family photos/8mm film and videos I want to send for the survey.”*

A: These offers are appreciated, but will not be accepted.

We would appreciate a description and location of the items for possible inclusion in the future. You may email the contact for this project, so it may be indexed as a possible resource in the future.

Q: *Will this resurvey impact historic preservation grant dollars received by my municipality?*

A: This survey project will not advocate or preclude an application for historic preservation grant dollars.

Q: *Will Morris County use these surveys to have properties listed on state or national historic registers?*

A: No. Consultants contracted by Morris County’s Preservation Trust render a professional opinion as to register eligibility, but Morris County staff attached to this project are not in the position to nominate, advocate or preclude any historic site for nomination by interested parties.

Q: *My house is described as “Potentially Eligible” or “Eligible”. Is it automatically listed on a state register of historic places?*

A: No. A resource must be nominated to the NJ Historic Preservation Office for listing on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. Anyone can prepare a New Jersey and National Register application and submit the nomination to the state to seek listing of a historic resource. See website link below for more details of the nomination process.

Q: *If my house is included in the Morris County Cultural Resource Inventory, will it affect my taxes?*

A: Generally speaking, when Morris County staff has been approached in the field, property owners had no idea their house had been featured in the Acroterion for the last twenty years. This observation has been included to demonstrate the innocuous nature of the resurvey.

Q: *If my house is included in the Morris County Cultural Resource Inventory, will it affect any alterations to the structure I might want to make?*

A: No. Each property owner should adhere to local municipal zoning and building ordinances. Please check with your local governments for any landmarks or historic district regulations that may affect private property owner actions.

Websites of interest:

Asbestos issues: http://www.state.nj.us/health/iep/asbestos_faq.shtml

Morris County resources listed on the NJ Register:

http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/nrsr_lists/morris.pdf

Register Nomination Process: <http://www.nj.gov/dep/hpo/1identify/nrsr.htm>

Morris County Preservation Trust Website: <http://www.morrispreservation.org/>