

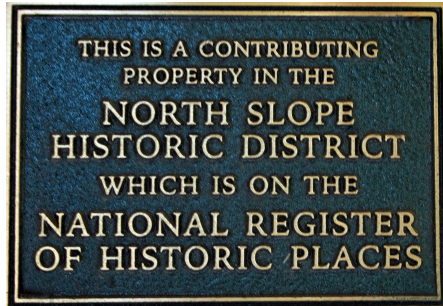
# IS YOUR HOME HISTORIC?

By Jay Turner

*What is the definition of an historic house?* You will be surprised to find out that the answer has nothing to do with size or style or location. To understand the answer, let's start at the beginning.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, was a U. S. Senate bill sponsored by the late Henry M.

"Scoop" Jackson, a Senator from the State of Washington. It was signed into law by Lyndon Johnson in Oct. 1966. The passage of the act established the National Register of Historic Places, with the register administered by the National Park Service.



The **National Register of Historic Places** is the official list of U.S. cultural resources worthy of preservation and is part of the National Historic Preservation Act. Properties listed in the Register include districts (like the NSHD), sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

The NPS delegates authority to each state to review all nominations. The State Dept. of Archeology and Historic Preservation does that for our state. In Nov. of 2002, the NSHD was nominated for the National Register and was placed on the Register on Feb. 7, 2003.

The NPS defines an historic property as one built in the period of significance. There! That's the answer to the question! **If your house was built in the period of significance, by definition, it is historic.**

What is the period of significance for NSHD? The period of significance for Tacoma's NSHD begins in 1881, the date of the oldest, still-standing house in the District. By the end of

1953, homes that fit the form and feel of the "older" homes we know in our neighborhood stopped being built. The answer to the question, is your house historic, depends on when it was built. If it was built in the NSHD between 1881 and 1953, it is a NSHD historic home - as defined by the National Park Service's Register of Historic Places.

**Mark your home with pride.** We have a supply of North Slope plaques. These 5-by-7-inch bronze plaques identify your property as part of the North Slope Historic District and National Register. Bronze Plaques cost \$75 each, including with tax. To purchase your plaque, contact:

## DISCLAIMER

Properties within the National Register Historic District are listed variously as "Historic Contributing," "Historic Non-Contributing," "Non-Historic" and "Vacant". These are classifications used by the National Park Service for the National Register **only**.

The North Slope Historic District is also listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The District was formed, beginning in 1994, and expanded in 1996 and 1999. **The boundaries and inventory of the "Tacoma Register" North Slope District designation differs from the "National Register" designation.**

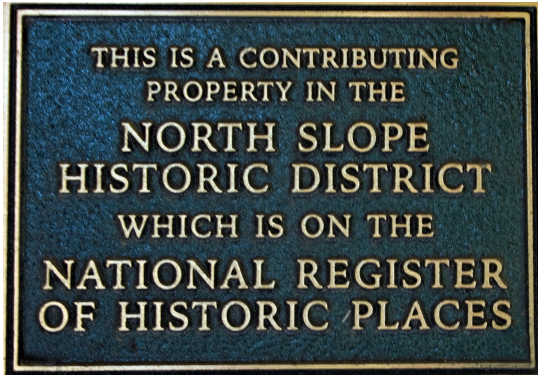
Properties on The Tacoma Register North Slope Historic District are subject to Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07 and the historic district inventory adopted by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission. A complete list of properties, and City classification can be found on the NSHD web page [tacomanorthslope.org](http://tacomanorthslope.org) in the "NSHD LIBRARY" in Chap. 2.

Please call Tacoma's Historic Preservation Officer Reuben McKnight, 253-591-5220, with any questions about City historic district requirements.

# THE PLAQUE SAYS - “CONTRIBUTING” What does that mean?

By Jay Turner

The plaques that are attached to many of our homes say, *“THIS IS A CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY IN THE NORTH SLOPE HISTORIC DISTRICT . . .”*



There is a small error in the plaque because it should have said, “HISTORIC CONTRIBUTING” as the two words go together in the National Register. Often, the word “historic” is unwritten, like it is on this plaque.

Historic, in the NSHD, means that the house was built between 1881 and 1953. Now the question becomes, **what is an historic contributing property?** The definition of “historic contributing”, comes from the National Park Service (NPS): *“Properties may be eligible for the National Register if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.”*

In simple terms it comes down to this - - Does your house retain the characteristics that existed when it was built?

The NPS requires all properties in a residential historic district, like the NSHD, to be classified in one of 4 possible ways: Historic Contributing, Historic Non-contributing, Non-Historic and Vacant.

Non-Historic is just the opposite of Historic, meaning all houses in the NSHD that were built outside the period of significance, 1881-1953.

There are a number of “Historic Non-Contributing” properties in the NSHD. These houses have been altered such that original architecture is no longer visible - wrong dormers, inappropriate additions or alterations. They no longer have the “feel” of yesteryear.

Most important are the houses in The North Slope Historic District that are are “Historic Contributing”. The NSHD is an amazing residential historic district because 73% of the historic homes are HISTORIC CONTRIBUTING; they still have the “as built” characteristics and feel of what they were when they were built.

*OUR HISTORIC CONTRIBUTING HOUSES MAKE NSHD SPECIAL. WE CAN KEEP IT SPECIAL BY HANDLING THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE HOUSES WITH CARE.*