



What are Cultural Landscapes?

Cultural landscapes are places within U.S. national parks that have significance in American history and authenticity to a historic time period. As identified by the National Park Service, the components of cultural landscapes include human-modified ecosystems such as forests, prairies, rivers and shores, as well as constructed works, such as mounds, terraces, structures and gardens. Here's a basic introduction to cultural landscapes. Find out more at nps.gov/culturallandscapes and follow us on social media!



The majority of national park units (417 in 2017) contain cultural landscapes. There are more than 800 throughout the system.

They are part of a system of cultural resources (above) that are products of history and culture. Cultural landscapes help us to understand and experience historic places as a whole.

They vary broadly from historically designed, to agricultural, industrial, ceremonial and spiritual places.



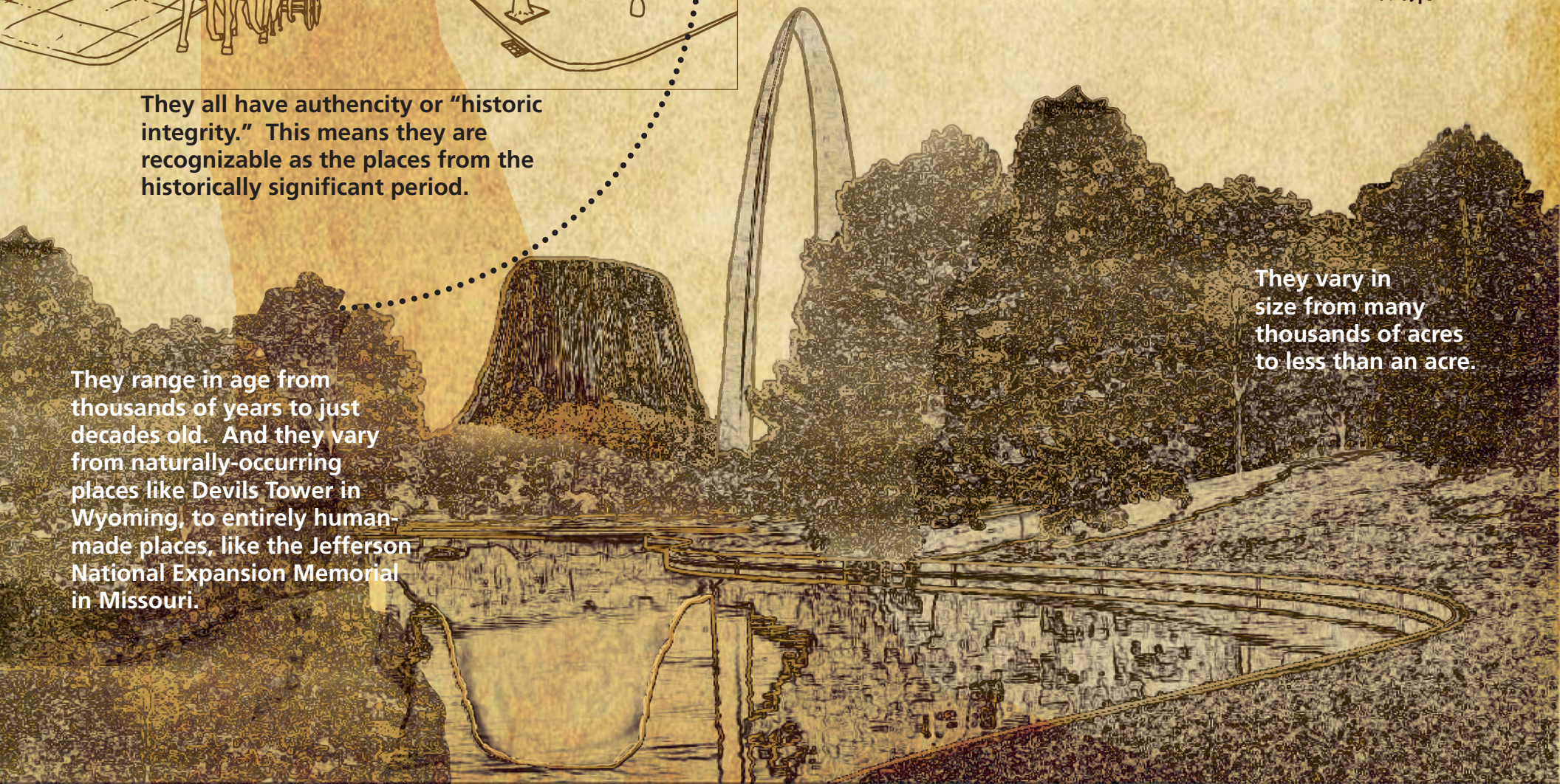
They all have authenticity or "historic integrity." This means they are recognizable as the places from the historically significant period.

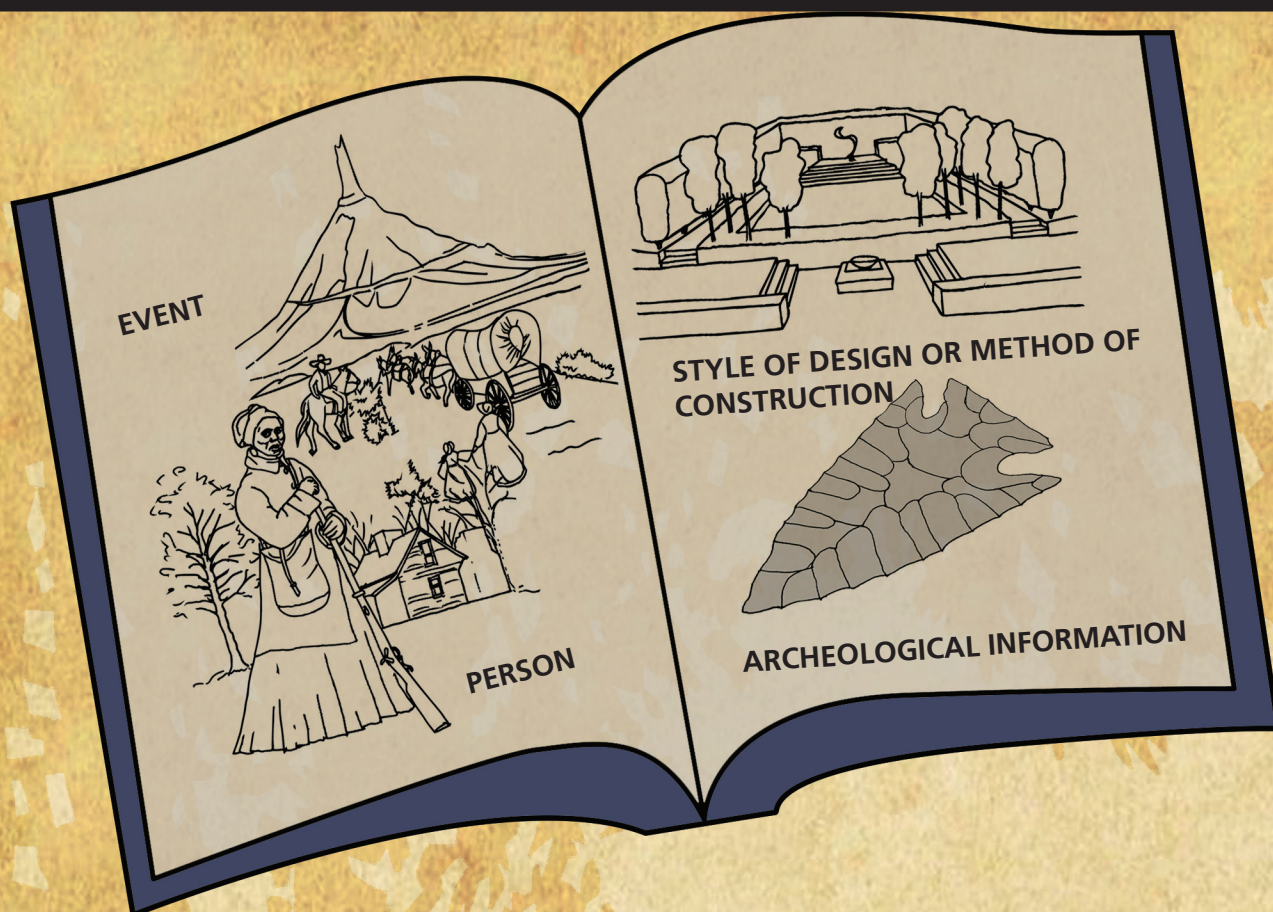


They can be found anywhere, from cities to wilderness.

They range in age from thousands of years to just decades old. And they vary from naturally-occurring places like Devils Tower in Wyoming, to entirely human-made places, like the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in Missouri.

They vary in size from many thousands of acres to less than an acre.





Cultural landscapes have significance in American history. Their significance varies from a historic event, to a historic person, to a historic style of design or method of construction, to a place with the potential to reveal information through archeology.

They also have historic character that conveys their significance and integrity. Integrity is measured by the presence of landscape characteristics. These are the tangible remains of historic processes or patterns. The NPS recognizes thirteen types of landscape characteristics that can be potentially found in any cultural landscape.

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION



The historical, three dimensional arrangements of physical forms.

CULTURAL TRADITIONS



Historical manifestation of collective cultural identity.

CLUSTER ARRANGEMENT



Historical pattern of aggregation in forms.

CONSTRUCTED WATER FEATURES



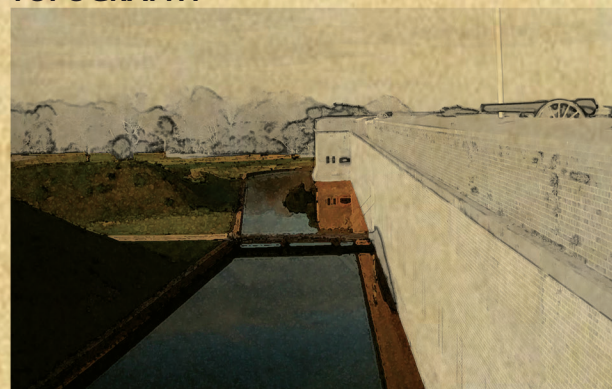
Historical constructed forms for water retention and conveyance.

LAND USE



Historical activities that influenced development or modification.

TOPOGRAPHY



Historical, human-created shape of the ground plane.

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES



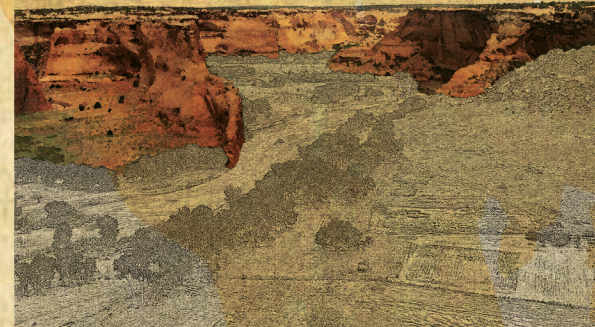
Historical constructed forms and edifices.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES



Historical or pre-contact ruins, traces or deposited artifacts.

NATURAL SYSTEMS AND FEATURES



Processes and materials in nature influencing historical development or use.

CIRCULATION



Historical systems for human movement.

VEGETATION



Patterns of human-influenced plants, both native and introduced.

VIEWS AND VISTAS



Historical range of vision, both broad and discrete.

SMALL-SCALE FEATURES



Discrete, historical elements that provide detail and diversity.