

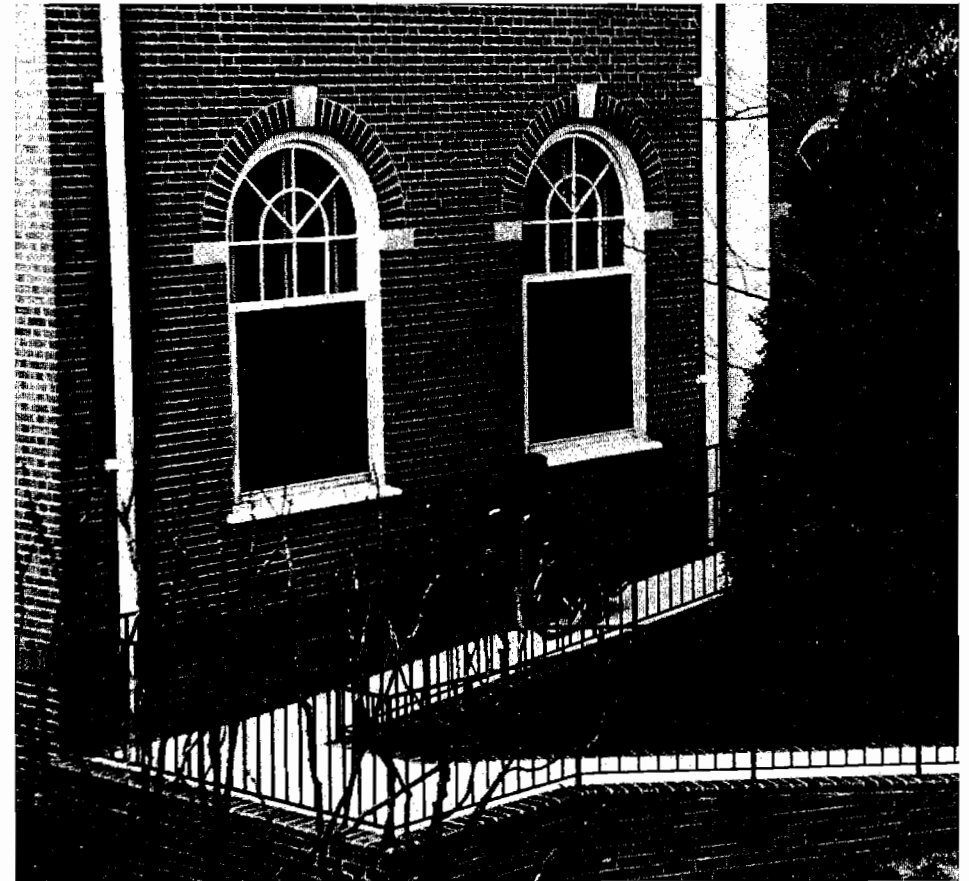
Accessibility Considerations



Accessibility Considerations

It is often necessary to make modifications to a historic property so that it can comply with current accessibility code requirements. Accessibility to certain historic buildings and sites is required by three specific federal laws: the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Federal rules, regulations, and standards have been developed which provide guidance on how to accomplish access in historic areas. The question is not *if* access should be provided; the question is *how* to provide

it to meet both accessibility *and* historic preservation requirements. Thus, work must be carefully planned and undertaken so that it does not result in a loss of character-defining spaces, features, and finishes. The goal is to provide the highest level of access with the lowest level of impact.



Recommended

Identifying the historic building's character defining spaces, features, and finishes so that accessibility code-required work will not result in their damage or loss.

Complying with barrier-free access requirements, in such a manner that character-defining spaces, features, and finishes are preserved.

Not Recommended

Undertaking code-required alterations before identifying those spaces, features or finishes which are character-defining and must therefore be preserved.

Altering, damaging, or destroying character-defining features in attempting to comply with accessibility requirements.



The historic cast iron railing was preserved when a permanent ramp was designed for this museum's main entrance.

Access to this rural historic site has been improved to include designated parking areas, properly graded ramps and walkways around the site, and access within the building to all services.

Photo: Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, NPS.



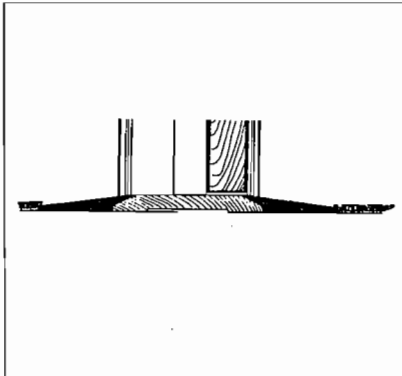
Recommended

Working with local disability groups, access specialists, and historic preservation specialists to determine the most appropriate solution to access problems.

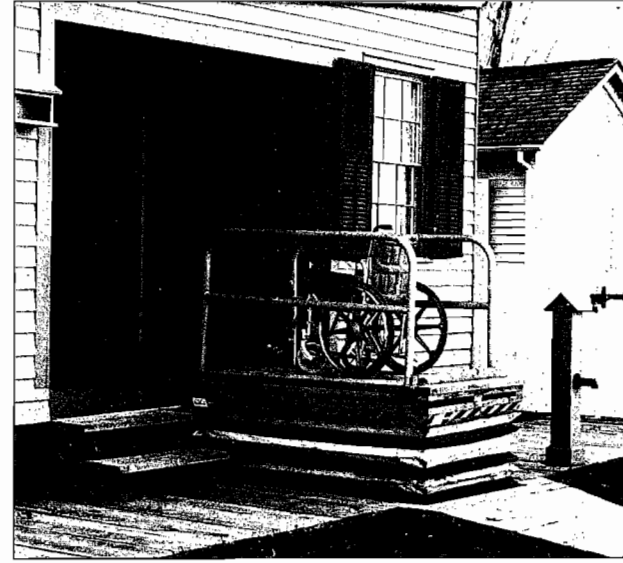
Providing barrier-free access that promotes independence for the disabled person to the highest degree practicable, while preserving significant historic features.

Designing new or additional means of access that are compatible with the historic property and its setting.

A relatively simple way to increase accessibility inside a historic building may be to add bevels to the sides of a threshold.



Drawing: Duncan S. Ballantyne.



An accordion-type platform lift that retracts to ground level when not in use has been installed to make this historic house accessible.

Not Recommended

Making changes to buildings without first seeking expert advice from access specialists and historic preservationists, to determine solutions.

Providing access modifications that do not provide a reasonable balance between independent, safe access and preservation of historic features.

Designing new or additional means of access without considering the impact on the historic property and its setting.