

## “Ten Questions to ask at an Historic Site”

1. When did this site become a historic site? (When was the marker or monument put up? or the house "interpreted"?) How did that time differ from ours? from the time of the event or person commemorated?
2. Who sponsored it? Representing which participant group's point of view? What was their position in social structure when the event occurred? When the site went "up?"
3. Why? What were their ideological needs and social purposes when the site went "up?" What were their values?
4. Who was/is the intended audience for the site? What values were they trying to leave for us, today? What does the site ask us to go and do?
5. Did they have government support? At what level? Who was ruling the government at the time? What ideological arguments were used to get the government to acquiesce?
6. Who is left out? What points of view go largely unheard? How would the story differ if a different group had told it? another political party? race? sex? class? religious group?
7. Are there problematic words or symbols that would not have been used today, or by other groups?
8. How is the site used today? Do continuing rituals connect today's public to it? Or is it ignored? Why?
9. Is the presentation accurate? What actually happened? What historical sources tell of the event, people, or period commemorated at the site?
10. How does this site fit with others that treat its era? What other people and events happened then but are not commemorated on the landscape? Why not?"

“We can take back the landscape. It does not belong to the dead, but to the living. Monuments and markers are messages to the future, and the future does not belong to the rich alone but to all of us.”

**James W. Loewen, Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong, New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.**

**Web Site:**      [sundown.afro.illinois.edu/](http://sundown.afro.illinois.edu/)