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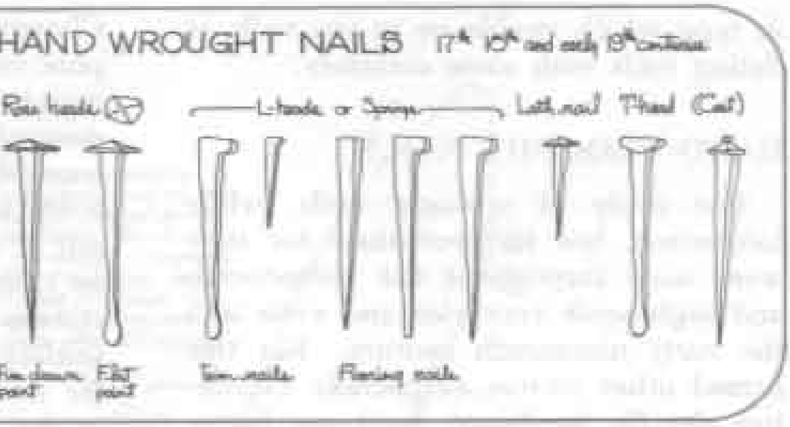

NAIL CHRONOLOGY

as an aid to dating old buildings

By Lee H. Nelson
National Park Service

The National Park Service in its historic structures restoration program has developed some research techniques in the general field of nail chronology as an aid to dating old buildings. This paper was prepared for a National Park Service Historic Structures Training Conference held in July, 1962. The paper was published, along with a paper on "Paint Color Research and Restoration" by Penelope Hartshorne Batcheler, as Technical Leaflet 15 in the December, 1963, issue of History News. *The Nail Chronology paper has been revised, and put in the new format, and published here in the hope that it will continue to be of use to other restoration projects and that it will stimulate further contributions to these studies. The Paint Color Research paper was revised and reprinted by itself as Technical Leaflet 15.*

Dating old buildings from their nails is not a precise technique, but when used with discretion, it has proved generally reliable and useful, for example, in Independence Hall which has been subjected to a complex series of alterations from 1750 to the present time. If a sufficient number of samples are taken from all parts of the building they can be a good indication that (1) the building was built entirely at a given time, or (2) the building has been subjected to additions, alterations, or simple maintenance measures. Nails can help to define the extent of these changes. For this reason we believe it worthwhile to discuss briefly the various nail types that are generally found in American buildings. They are (1) hand-wrought nails, (2) cut nails, and (3) wire nails. Within these major groups there is a surprising variety with subtle differences in type which enable us to use nails as dating tools with some certainty.[1]

HAND-WROUGHT NAILS

The study of wrought nails, while interesting, has its limitations for they were used throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and even into the early nineteenth century. For this period other factors (especially decorative details, hardware, etc.) are better indicators of "period." However, it is useful to become familiar with wrought nails for purposes of identification and comparison with other nail types.

In medieval England nails were made into a great variety of special shapes and sizes and sold by the hundred, *e.g.*, 8d (pence) per 100 nails. From this practice developed the classification of nail sizes according to their price per hundred, a system which seems to have been established by the fifteenth century. After that time nails slowly became standardized by size rather than price. In 1471 for example, "fippenynayl" were only 4d per 100. In 1477 "xpenynayll" were only 8d per 100; and in 1494 "sixpenynayle" were 5d per 100.[2]

During the entire Colonial period nails were an important commodity for importation. In 1684 for example, James Claypoole (recently arrived in Philadelphia from London) wrote to a London merchant as follows: " . . . send no window glass nor lead, but Iron is much wanted, and nayls very much vizt 6d 8d & 10d a Tunn of each sort would quickly sell, I conclude."[3] The scarity of nails in colonial Virginia was reflected in a statute enacted in 1645 to prohibit settlers from burning down old buildings for their nails.[4] Some nails were made in the colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but despite this local production very large quantities of nails were imported during the same period.[5]

During and after the Revolution, America became more dependent upon local sources for the supply of nails. Perhaps a typical nailery was that operated by John Little in Philadelphia in late 1770s (during the British occupation). His manuscript "Account of Smiths and Nailors Work . . ." includes a variety of things like kettles, chain, tools, etc., but primarily covers the manufacture of nails in sizes varying from 3d to 30d.[6] John Little had several dozen

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[1] This paper does not encompass tacks or screws. Although they are interesting subjects, they are not especially useful in dating old buildings except in a very general way. Machine-cut tacks were perfected at an early date and thus not helpful as a dating tool, nor can they readily be identified as an original and integral part of a building. Machine-pointed screws with constantly tapered threads seem to have been introduced in the 1830s, but they are not a reliable indication of date because of their limited use in building construction.

[2] Louis Salzman, *Building in England* (Oxford, 1952), 315.

[3] *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. X (1886), 412.

[4] Hening, *Statutes*, Vol. I, 291. See "Burning Buildings for Nails," American Notes, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 23, showing that an early Kent County, Delaware, courthouse was ordered destroyed in 1691 "to gett the nailes."

[5] See also J. Didsbury, "The French Method of Nail-Making," *The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association, Inc.*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (December, 1959), 47-48. On page 48 is an illustration of a nail-heading tool. This latter subject while interesting, is outside the scope of this brief paper.

[6] Peale-Sellers Papers, American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia. Called to the writer's attention by Willman Spawn, Philadelphia.

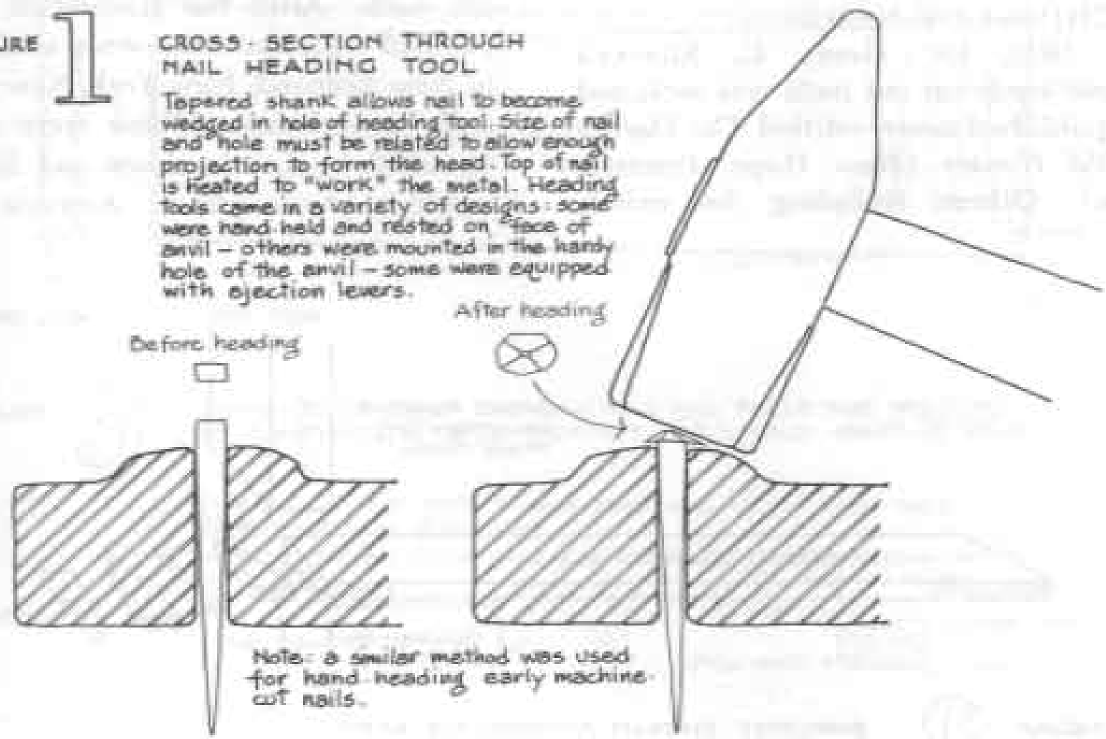


FIGURE 1 CROSS-SECTION THROUGH NAIL HEADING TOOL

smiths and nailors working at various times and a typical entry from his accounts reads:

Supr.						Cr.			
1778	Size	Qnty to the Pound	Weight	Total Number	Price of Making		Amount		
Jan	10d	58	23	1334	@2/6/Pc	100	1	12	15
25	3d			5000	@1/9/D°		4	7	6
26	10d	63	14	882	@2/6/D°		1	2	
28	20		40		1/3/Pc		2	10	

It is important to emphasize that wrought nails continued to be used for several decades following the introduction of the cheaper cut nails. In the 1820s Philadelphia newspaper advertisements of "Nails, Brads and Spikes" often included both cut and wrought nails with prices for each in their respective sizes.[1] Wrought nails continued to be superior for certain purposes, especially where they required clinching or for trim work. For this reason it is not uncommon to find a few hand-wrought nails used well into the nineteenth century. It is interesting that many buildings of this period utilized both wrought and cut nails in their original construction. The Old Town Hall (built 1798-1800) in Wilmington, Delaware, for example utilized hand-headed machine-cut brads for flooring and crude, machine-cut lath nails, but all the finish woodwork was held with wrought nails.

The several characteristics of wrought nails are illustrated in the drawing in the center of this Leaflet. Included is a cast nail which perhaps does not properly belong in this group but is known

[1] See also a nineteenth century English metal trades catalog which includes wrought joiners sprigs, floor stubs, lath nails, etc. Catalog No. E.121-1896, *Old English Pattern Books of the Metal Trades*, Victoria and Albert Museum, Pub. No. 87 (1913), 32-33.

to have been used in the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth.*

MACHINE-CUT NAILS

In 1923, Dr. Henry C. Mercer's pioneer study on cut nails was included in a published essay entitled *The Dating of Old Houses* (New Hope, Pennsylvania). Others, including the writer, have only built upon Mercer's early work; however, much research remains to be done in this field.

The study of cut nails is especially useful where late eighteenth and early nineteenth century buildings or alterations are involved. The period 1790-1830 encompasses a remarkable technological transition from wrought to cut nails. After the Revolution, many cut nail manufactories were established in New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. These were at first operated by hand power and later by water or steam power. America seems to have been leading the English in this particular field.

Authorship for the initial invention and specific improvement of cut nails remains largely anonymous. Certain individuals are known to have received patents during the 1780s-90s, but the precise nature and significance of their

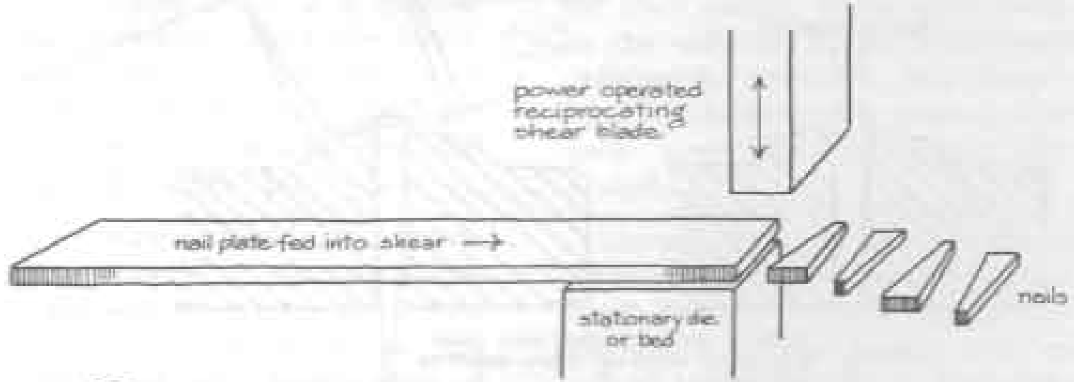


FIGURE 2 SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM SHOWING THE BASIC PROCESS OF MAKING EARLY CUT NAILS

Nail plate was made in rolling mills, thus cut nails were of uniform thickness, depending on nail size. Thin nail plate (i.e., small nails) was usually hand held while feeding into shear. Thicker nail plate (i.e., larger nails) offered more resistence to shearing – was usually heated and held with tongs while feeding into shear. To compensate for tapered shank, nail plate had to be alternately wiggled or flipped, see Figures 3 and 4.

After cutting, the nails were headed by: (a) hand, after heating them and using a heading tool similar to that used for wrought nails, see Figure 1. This was the earliest method, and was used for many years, even after the introduction of (b) machine heading, which gripped the nail instantly (after cutting) and applied great pressure to end of nail, thus forming the head by the displacement of metal.

*Cast nails are illustrated in a late eighteenth century English hardware catalog, and there is an 1829 reference in Bishop, *A History of American Manufacturers* (Philadelphia, 1864), Vol. II, 341. Several excellent specimens of cast-iron nails were supplied to the writer (in 1967) by J. R. Stevens, from a recently demolished c.1820 building in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The sketch and observations regarding cast nails, which accompany this paper, were partly based on the samples generously given by Mr. Stevens to the author.

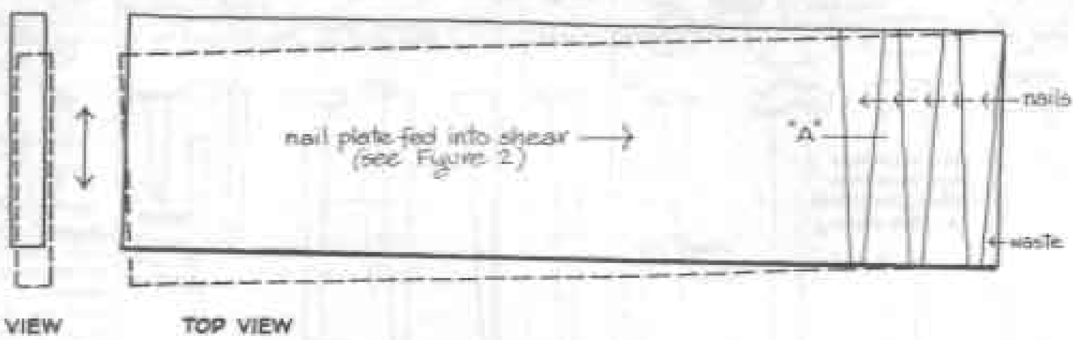


FIGURE 3 SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW NAIL PLATE WAS WIGGLED BACK AND FORTH TO COMPENSATE FOR TAPERED SHAPE OF NAILS

One face of nail plate always remained "up", i.e., nail plate always cut from same side.

Wiggling the nail plate produced nails with: burrs and shear marks on diagonal edges.

Cross-Section through nail: "A"

inventions remains rather vague.[9]

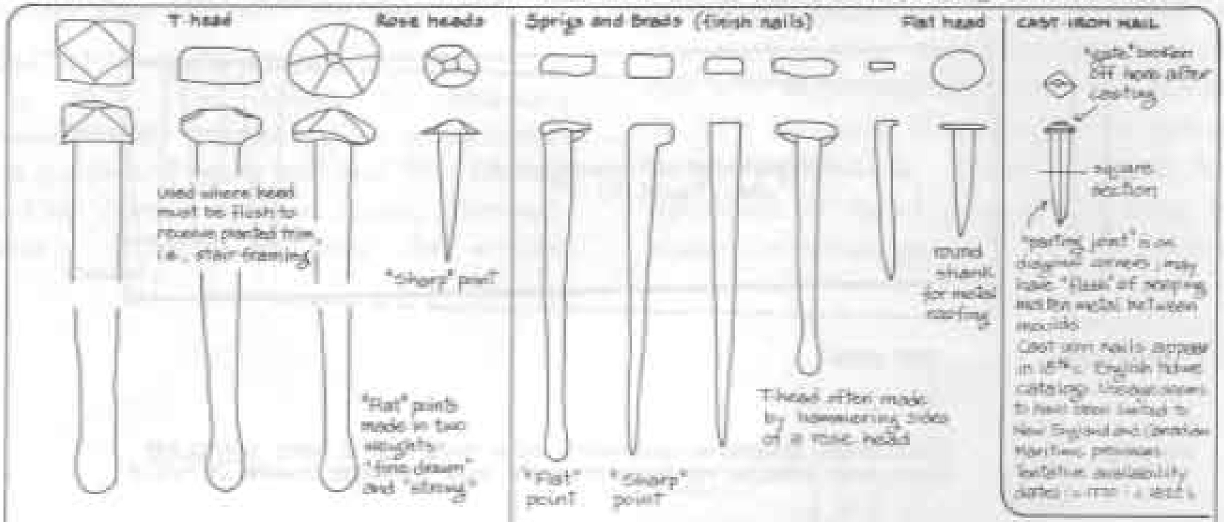
Unfortunately the Patent Office Record's fire of 1836 destroyed a vast amount of primary source material with respect to the invention of cut nail machines. Some of this information has been collected and appended to the scholarly biography *Jacob Perkins* by Greville and Dorothy Bathe.[10] This book provides an excellent background on the development of nail machines and includes a list of 88 patentees between the years 1791-1815. It would appear that the most important contributions were made by Perkins, J. G. Pierson, Jesse Reed, Mark and Richard Reeve.

The rapid development and sale of these machines made it possible to manufacture nails on a wide scale in the early nineteenth century. Thomas Jefferson for example, purchased a machine in 1796 and produced nails (for sale) until 1823. Prior to that time (1794-1796) Jefferson manufactured nails that were wrought by hand. His interest in this endeavor is reflected in a letter: "I am myself a nail-maker. . . . my new trade of nail-making is to me in this country

[9]For mention of a sixteenth century "instrument for making of Nails," see Greville and Dorothy Bathe, *Jacob Perkins, His Inventions, His Times, and His Contemporaries* (Philadelphia, 1943), 172, but it seems unlikely that this was in any way related to a cut nail machine.

[10]For a more complete listing of inventions and events relating to the evolution of nail-making, see H. R. Bradley Smith, "Chronological Development of Nails," supplement to *Blacksmith's and Farriers' Tools at Shelburne Museum* (Shelburne, Vermont, 1966). See also a general history of nail-making by Arthur S. Tisch, "Modern Wood Construction, only as good as its fastening!" reprinted as Bulletin No. 1, by the American Society of Precision Nailmakers, 630 Third Avenue, New York.

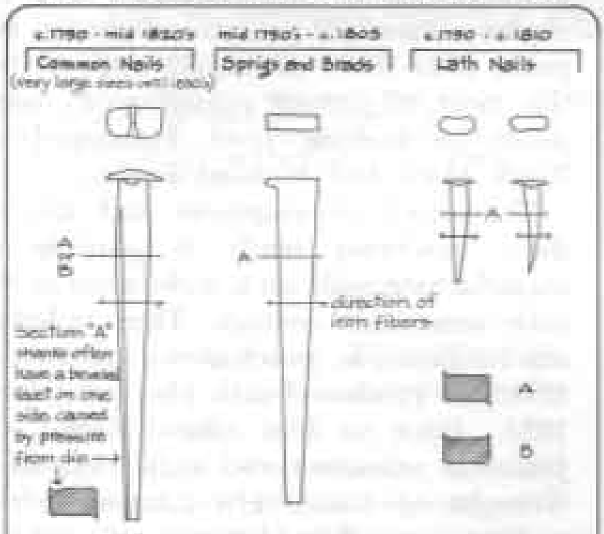
HAND WROUGHT NAILS — TYPES COMMONLY USED IN 17th 18th 19th c. AMERICAN BUILDING CONSTRUCTION



General Purpose Nails: for framing, lathing, and most concealed work, sometimes for hinges, or where head was used for decorative effect. Other shapes were available for special purposes, i.e., clasp nails, boat nails, coffin nails, etc. Wrought nails continued to be used long after the introduction of cut nails, but generally such use was limited to situations where their superior clinching ability was needed (i.e., batten doors).

"Sprigs" and "Brads": These names were often confused or used inconsistently, but they generally refer to headless, or L-head or T-head nails. Smaller sizes were usually called "sprigs," c. ½" to 2", usually sold by quantity. Larger sizes were usually called "brads," 4d to 24d, usually sold by weight. These nails were generally used for trim with heads countersunk and puttied, also used for flooring. Other characteristics of hand-wrought nails: shanks usually taper on both faces; iron fibers run lengthwise; lack of uniformity (especially heads).

EARLY MACHINE-CUT NAILS WITH HANDMADE HEADS

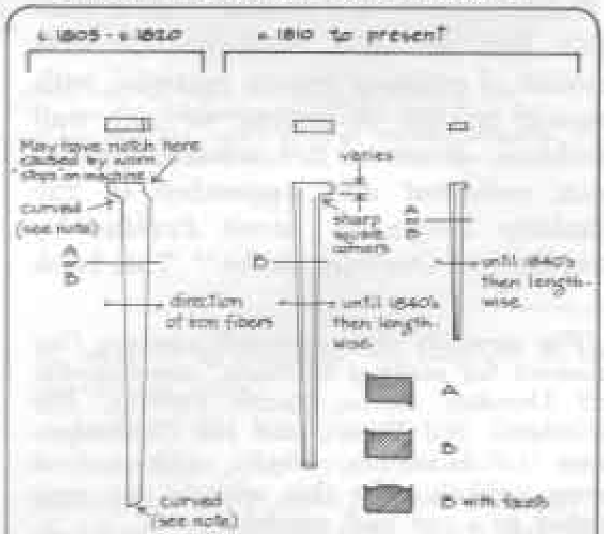


Heads usually have 2 facets, sometimes more. Headed in "tail" like wrought nails. Earliest nails of this type usually have section "A"; later ones usually have section "B" and are more uniform in manufacture.

Size and shape of heads vary because heads were forged. Smaller sizes called sprigs (2" or less), and larger sizes called brads, but by early 19th c., all were often called brads.

Heads vary in size and shape, usually thin and flat (no facets), and eccentric to shank. Shanks vary in length and width and often have a sharp point. Bulge under head often present.

COMPLETELY MACHINE-CUT SPRIGS AND BRADS



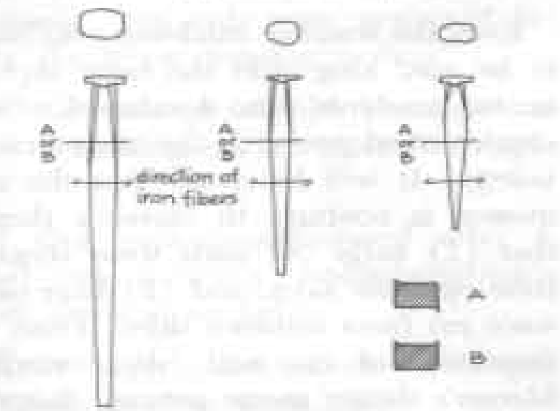
Early completely machine-cut sprigs and brads available in a variety of sizes. Curved corners and points are characteristic of this type.

Perfected machine-cut sprigs and brads were much used for trim and flooring. Once perfected, they have changed little, and are not readily dateable except that the direction of iron fibers offers a general clue (see sketch above). Beveled facets caused by pressure of die, often missing on small nails.

EARLY MACHINE-HEADED CUT NAILS

1815's to late 1830's

Common Nails · See Sprigs and Brads for early cut finish nails

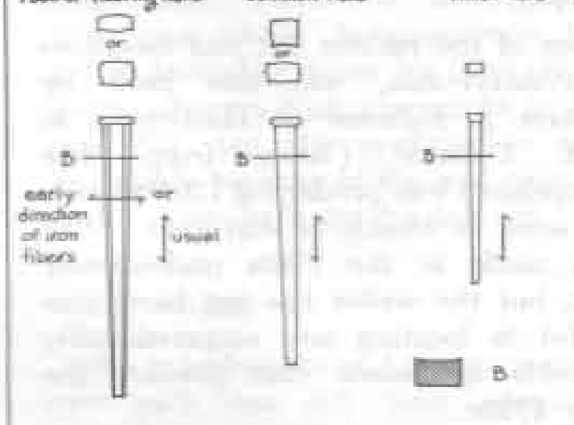


Nails of this period are distinguished by their irregular heads, which vary in size and shape, usually eccentric to shank, though they were more uniform by 1830's. Nails were irregular in length and width, but more uniform at end of period. Nails generally have a rather distinct rounded shank (under head), caused by wide heading clamp. These nails were more readily available than finishing nails, and were often locally modified by hammering the sides of the heads, thus making them into finish nails which could be countersunk.[8] The direction of iron fibers also distinguishes nails of this period from later nails.

"MODERN" MACHINE CUT NAILS

late 1830's to present

Box or flooring nails · Common Nails · Finish Nails



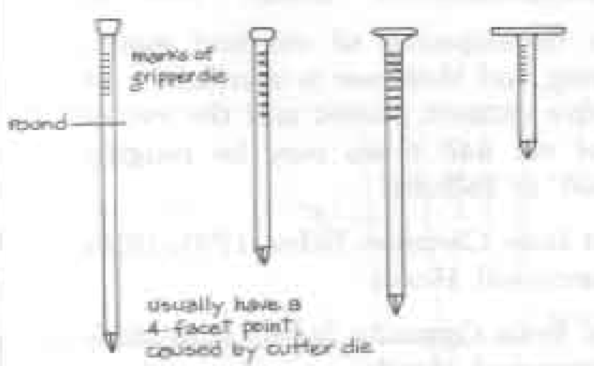
Heads tend to be uniformly convex on each side, and uniform in size and shape, depending on nail style. After c. 1840, cut nails were generally made with the iron-fibers running lengthwise (and later were annealed), which made them capable of clinching without rupture, thus almost completely displacing the hand-wrought nail for building construction. There are many "modern" nail styles not illustrated here; but after the 1840's, cut nails are not readily distinguished from those made today, so that other factors, i.e., decorative details, etc., are better indicators for dating purposes.

The sets of nail drawings on these two pages are organized together so that the user will have a visual comparison when he is trying to identify a nail. The cast nail in the right hand corner of the upper drawing on the opposite page may not properly belong in the group but it is known to have been used in the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth.

MODERN WIRE NAILS

c. 1850's to present

Flooring Brads · Finish Nails · Common Nails · Roofing



These nails are usually manufactured from steel wire, which is held in gripper dies and headed (producing gripper marks on shanks); then wire is advanced and sheared to length with cutter die; and wire stock is then advanced to repeat operation. Earliest wire nails were only available in very small sizes (for picture frames, etc.). Larger sizes were not widely available or used in American building construction until the third quarter of the 19th century. By the late 1880's, they were fast superceding cut nails because of their relative cheapness. Wire nails are not readily dateable, though early examples have bulbous heads that are eccentric to shank. In more recent years, wire nails have been made in a great variety of sizes, head shapes and shank designs (e.g., threaded nails), although cut nails continue to be made for specific purposes.

what an additional title of nobility or the ensigns of a new order are in Europe."[11]

One of the earliest cut nail machines in Pennsylvania, was one built by William J. Folsome at Harrisburg in 1789. Folsome (lately from New Hampshire) was producing 120,000 nails per week in March of that year.[12] Cut nails made in the 1780s undoubtedly exist, but the writer has not been successful in locating any unquestionably dateable specimens that predate the early 1790s.

In Philadelphia and Trenton, nails were manufactured using prison labor. Jacob Hiltzheimer notes in his diary for 7 March 1797, "went from the State House with John Shoemaker, of the House, and about a dozen members, to the [Walnut Street] gaol, to see the prisoners at work at different trades. We saw six men *cutting nails*, and twelve making heads to them. . . ." [italics supplied]. References to the making, sale, and use of cut nails are numerous after the late 1790s.

The development of cut nail manufacturing and their use is marked by at least five distinct phases and the evolution of cut nail types may be roughly outlined as follows:

1. Cut from Common Sides, 1790s-1820s Hammered Heads
2. Cut from Opposite Sides, 1810-1820s Hammered Heads
3. Cut from Common Sides, 1815-1830s Crude Machine-Made Heads
4. Cut from Opposite Sides, 1820s-1830s Crude Machine-Made Heads
5. Cut from Opposite Sides, Perfected Machine-Made Heads — late 1830s to present

Even the simplier machines continued to be used long after the more sophisticated machines were developed, which creates overlapping in the above chronology. It will be noted that this sequence is contrary to Mercer's theory that (1) early cut nails were sheared from *opposite* sides, and (2) later nails were cut from *common* sides. From an inspection of cut nail "shear marks," Mercer's theory seems correct. Surprisingly enough, nails cut from a common side have "shear marks" on their opposing sides (see Figure 6).[13] It should also be noted that until the 1830s most cut nails are also distinguished by the fact that the iron fibers run crosswise to the shank while later cut nails have a fiber structure parallel to the shank (see drawing). For this reason early cut nails could not be satisfactorily clinched and wrought nails continued to be preferred for clinching.

To use cut nails as a dating tool, several factors must be considered:

1. Identification of the cut nail type must be precise.

2. When did that nail type become available in the area?

3. When was that nail type superceded by a "better" cut nail?

4. Are there similar cut nails in dated houses of the same locale?

5. The existence of several cut nail types in the same building might indicate a transition period of nail improvements, or alterations within the build-

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[11]Edwin M. Betts, ed., *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book* (Princeton, 1953), 426.

[12]This and several important related items were brought to the writer's attention by Hannah Benner Roach of Philadelphia.

[13]The writer is indebted to Donald Streeter, blacksmith and collector, of Iona, New Jersey, for calling attention to this fact.

ing. Note: *Cut nail improvements were first applied to the smaller sizes. For example, lath nails were perfected before the larger framing nails.*

6. No attempt should be made to date a building on the basis of a single nail.

7. Cut nails manufactured after c. 1830 are virtually undistinguishable from those made today.

8. Wrought nails were competing with cut nails until at least 1820.

9. Some naileries were contemporaneously offering a more advanced product than others. For example, in 1820 Pierson's nails (New York) were considered superior to those made at the Phoenix Works (Pennsylvania).

10. Urban areas responded to improved products more readily than did rural areas. The foregoing generalizations and dates are tentative and subject to correction and contributions by others interested in the subject.

In general, the study of cut nails has been quite useful in distinguishing alterations within Independence Hall. In the Assembly Room for example, extensive changes took place both in 1816 and 1831, but the evidence is easily discernible because of the vast improvement in cut nails in the interval.

WIRE NAILS

The introduction and development of wire nails has not been adequately studied. It appears that several manufactories were established in New York during the 1850s, following an earlier development in England, France, and Germany. The first American production of wire nails was from machines either imported or adapted from existing European models.[14] The earliest wire

[14]Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States* (New York, 1949), Vol. I, 518. See also the transcript of an unidentified magazine article (dated 23 April 1896) by John Hassall, entitled "The Early

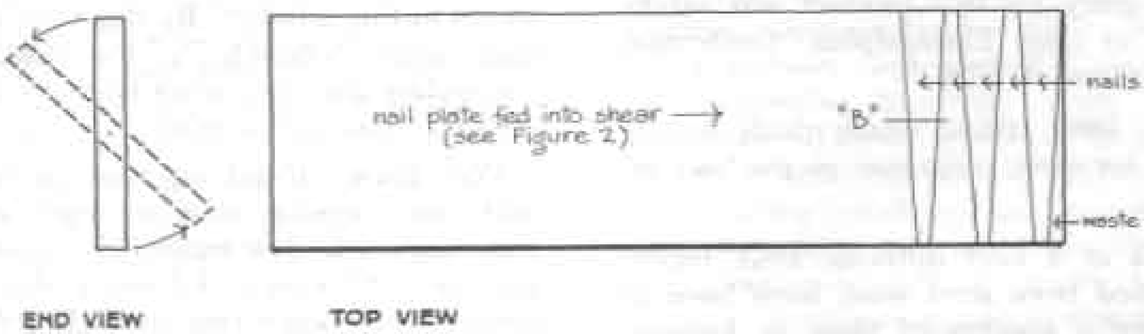


FIGURE 4 SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW NAIL PLATE WAS FLIPPED OVER TO COMPENSATE FOR TAPERED SHAPE OF NAILS

Nail plate was alternately cut from opposite sides.
Flipping the nail plate produced nails with: burrs or shear marks on common edges.

Cross-Section through nail : "B"

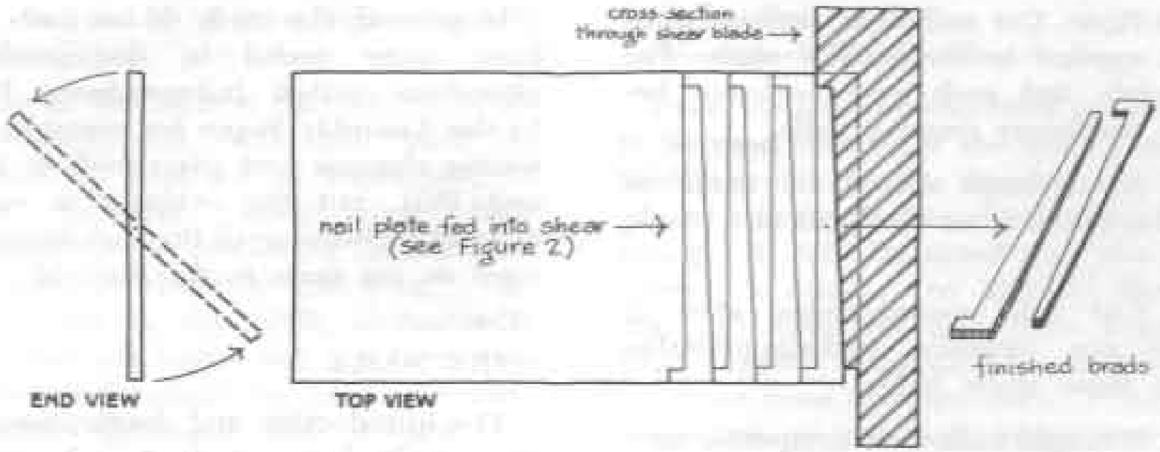


FIGURE 5 DIAGRAM SHOWING ONE EARLY METHOD FOR CUTTING "SPRIGS" AND "BRADS"

Nail plate was flipped over to compensate for tapered shape and to permit nesting pattern.
Nail plate was alternately cut from opposite sides, and produced nails with: burrs or shear marks on common edges.

nails were not made for building construction, but rather in the smaller sizes for pocket book frames, cigar boxes, etc. American wire nail machinery was not really perfected until the 1860s and 70s. Machinery for this product was exhibited at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876.[18]

An 1888 article which deals mainly with *cut nails*, comments on the "newer" type:

"Nails of a very different kind, manufactured from steel wire, have been in use for a number of years in America and for a longer period in Europe, and in both places they have been very favorably received and are fast superseding the common cut-nails for many purposes."

Several advantages were claimed and thirteen different varieties were illustrated in this article.[19] By this time wire nails were definitely in the builders' vocabulary and they were made in sizes ranging from 2d to 60d.

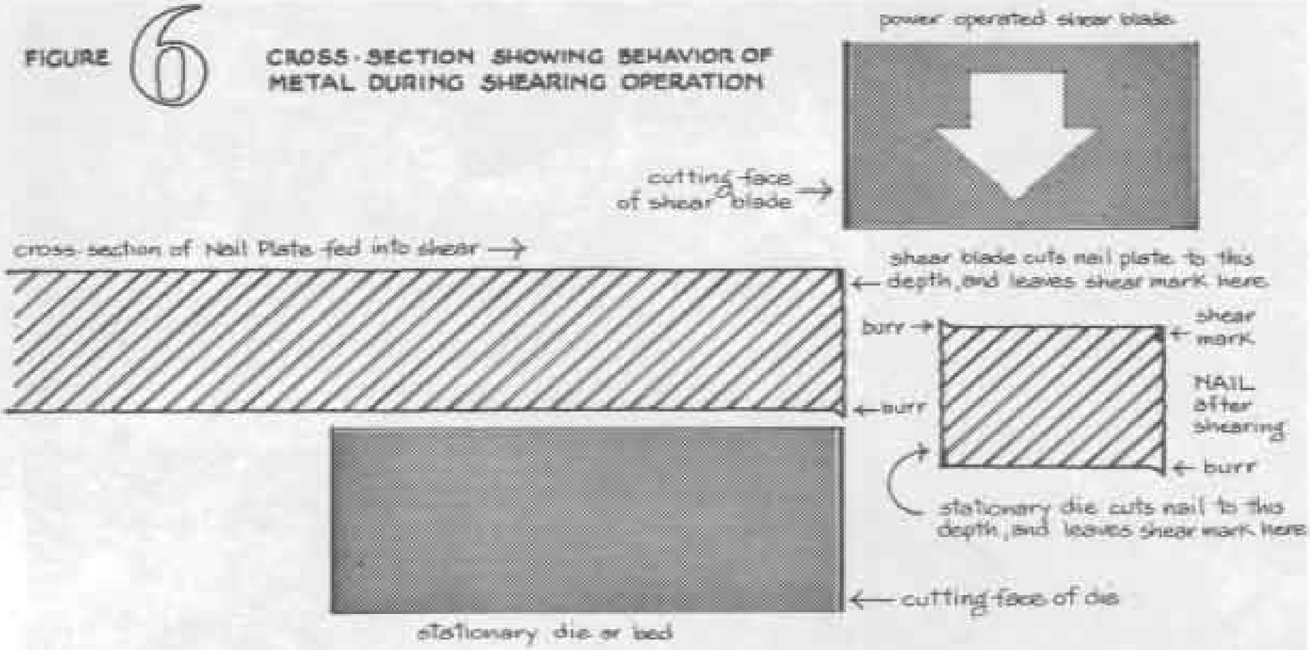
Wire nails did not supplant cut nails with the rapidity that wrought nails were replaced. The transition was more gradual. Wire nails did not really become the dominant type until the 1890s, and many builders preferred using cut nails well into the twentieth century. The greater holding power of cut nails was certainly a factor which delayed the quick acceptance of wire nails. In the

History of Wire Nail Manufacture," courtesy the Shelburne Museum and Donald Streeter.

[18]"*Official Catalogue* of the U.S. International Exhibition (Philadelphia, 1876), "Dept. of Manufactures," 137 and *passim*.

[19]"Builders' Hardware—III. Nails," *The American Architect and Building News*, Vol. XXIV, No. 660 (18 August 1888), 73.

FIGURE 6 CROSS-SECTION SHOWING BEHAVIOR OF METAL DURING SHEARING OPERATION



The shear blade and die create equal and opposite forces. Simultaneously, the blade starts to cut the top of the nail plate, while the die starts to cut the bottom of the projecting portion (nail). With this action, the metal stretches beyond its elastic limits — the nail breaks off, and leaves shear marks and burrs on diagonal corners of nails.

1880s, a series of experiments on the adhesion of nails was carried out by the Watertown Arsenal, Massachusetts. These tests confirmed this advantage, but the relative cheapness, ease of handling and the variety of specialized wire nails gave them a gradually increasing preference.[17] The earliest wire nails can be distinguished from their modern counterparts by their "heads" being bulbous and generally eccentric with respect to the shank. There is not the clearly defined evolution of development that makes the cut nail so useful in dating buildings. As a generalization, the presence of wire nails indicates late nineteenth century repairs, alterations or maintenance, and to that extent they are useful "dating tools." Although wire nails are in common usage today in a multitude of varieties, cut nails continue to be used by some carpenters for specific functions, such as flooring nails, boat nails, and masonry nails.

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[17] See "Adhesion of Nails, Spikes, and Screws in Various Woods, Experiments on the resistence of cut-nails, wire nails (steel), spikes, wood-screws, lag screws," published in the *Report of the Tests of Metals and Other Materials for Industrial Purposes made with the U.S. Testing Machine at Watertown Arsenal, Mass., 1884* (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1886), 448-71. This interesting publication was brought to the writer's attention by Orville W. Carroll, restoration architect, National Park Service.

Hand-wrought nails were turned out at forges such as this two-man forge operated by a blacksmith at Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Massachusetts. Latches, hinges, candlestands, foot scrapers, toasting forks, and a myriad of other objects were made by smiths at these forges of yesteryear. (Photo: Old Sturbridge Village.)

Lee H. Nelson, the author of this Leaflet, is an architect with the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, branch of Restorations, of the National Park Service. He is active in the field of historic architecture and is at the Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

For this part of the revision of the original Technical Leaflet 15, Lee H. Nelson did the whole set of new drawings except the front page drawing by G. Dysert.

TECHNICAL LEAFLET 48

Technical Leaflets are published by the American Association for State and Local History for the purpose of bringing useful information to persons working in the state and local history movement. The series does not follow the same categories month after month, since the selection of subject matter is based upon varied inquiries received by the Association's home office. The leaflets, which are detachable from the magazine, are copyrighted © and should be cataloged as part of HISTORY NEWS.

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HISTORY NEWS

TECHNICAL LEAFLET

A PUBLICATION OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

Developing Effective Educational Programs

BY DEANNA J. KERRIGAN

Developing educational programs for visitors of all ages is a key mission component of many historical organizations. But how can we make them effective experiences that touch the lives of visitors and bring them back for more? This Technical Leaflet examines ways to plan and develop educational programs that are effective in relating information to participants and leave them with a better appreciation for history.

IDENTIFYING AUDIENCE NEEDS

Educational programs are often designed because they serve our needs—to promote an exhibition, share new research, or target a coveted audience. Designing effective and meaningful programs, however, requires an understanding of audience needs, expectations, and attitude about learning. If we cannot make our services relevant to the lives of our visitors, we cannot compete with the vast range of leisure-time opportunities.

Below is a general chart for beginning an audience needs-assessment. Note that these needs and characteristics are very general and do not reflect the diversity of life experiences for all visitors:

Audience	Needs	Characteristics
Pre-school	structure direction variety opportunities to touch strong visuals mobility exhibits their size trained staff	short attention span short physically no pre-conceived notions of museums like to touch excited
School groups	direction guidance interactivity motivation information in context to experiences variety of skills	short attention span may consider history boring varying reading abilities like to ask questions division of interest by gender
Multi-generational	need orientation to space creature comforts more space activities to choose from opportunities for family learning	busy/rushed for time variety of age levels variety of interests emphasis on children "vacation mentality"
Adults	opportunity to socialize more in-depth information respect volunteer opportunities	genuine interest intellectual may perceive museums as elitist busy/rushed for time
Senior groups	creature comforts sensitivity to needs respect for knowledge opportunity to share knowledge volunteer opportunities accessible spaces and material opportunities to socialize	may have decreased stamina may have mobility impairments pre-conceived notions of experience more leisure time large segment of the population larger life context
Special needs	accessible facilities accessible exhibits well-trained staff need to feel welcome opportunities for group and individual learning	often feel unwelcome in museums variety of age levels variety of interests

This list is a beginning point for staff to better understand audience needs. Nothing can take the place of feedback and formative evaluation information from target audience groups. This kind of focus-group approach is essential in identifying those issues specific to your region or site.

IDENTIFYING INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

In developing programs that are compelling, exciting, and effective, staff needs to closely examine the resources and opportunities of the institution and identify what makes them unique. These institutional resources can include:

- **staff experience**
- **volunteer expertise**
- **historical collections**
- **space**
- **funding**
- **community organizations**
- **research**
- **institutional mission**

The goal in examining institutional resources is to identify those unique ways the organization can tie into audience needs and create something that is both educational and relevant—something that addresses the needs of both the organization and the visitor.

EXAMPLE

A museum strives to attract visitors in the 25-45 age range for a series of Sunday afternoon programs, but despite the popular topic, attendance is low. Finally a participant approaches staff with the comment, "I would like to attend more of these programs, but finding a baby-sitter is almost impossible."

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

This museum responded by offering free educational programs for children of registered participants. During one program focusing on scholarly research in regional pottery, children learned how to create their own pots, spent time in the gallery, and interviewed some potters and their children. Following the adult conference, children invited adults to an "exhibition" of their work. The result? An increase in attendance, an expanded audience, and grateful parents.

EXERCISE

Take a few moments to examine your organization's public programming in light of your audience needs, your organization's resources, and the learning styles which follow this exercise. Do you find that most programs fall within one or two main styles? How can you diversify the learning styles addressed by your organization's programming?

PROGRAM PLANNING CHECKLIST

Intellectual Planning

1. Program chair: ______________________________

2. Application to mission statement: ______________________________

____

3. Target audience(s): ______________________________

____

4. Audience needs addressed: ______________________________

____

5. Program goal: ______________________________

____

6. Potential community collaborators: ______________________________

Institutional Planning

7. Community partners and contact names: ______________________________

____

8. Confirmed sponsors and contact names: ______________________________

____

9. Program date: ________________ Time: ________________

10. Program location: ______________________________

11. Fee charged: ☐ Y ☐ N $________

12. Registration deadline: ______________________________

Logistics Planning

13. Speakers identified and confirmed ______________________________

14. Supplies identified and ordered ______________________________

15. Date for program confirmed ______________________________

16. Access to space confirmed ______________________________

17. Publicity materials out ______________________________

18. Press release out (2 weeks prior) ______________________________

Equipment Checklist

☐ Tents
☐ Sound system
☐ Slide projector
☐ Overhead projector
☐ LCD projector
☐ TV/VCR
☐ Microphone and podium
☐ Extra security
☐ Signage
☐ Risers/stage
☐ Chairs
☐ Catering service
☐ Room Layout

Room Layout

Program Evaluation

1. Name of evaluator: ______________________________

2. Attendance for program: ______________________________

3. Total institution cost: $____________

4. Total institution cost per person: $____________

5. Registration fee collected: $____________

6. Total Revenue: $____________

7. Did this program meet the original goals? ☐ Y ☐ N

Why or why not? ______________________________

8. Did this program meet audience needs? ☐ Y ☐ N

Why or why not? ______________________________

9. Where did the publicity appear? ______________________________

____

Attach copies.

10. Would you suggest doing this program again? ☐ Y ☐ N

Why or why not? ______________________________

11. Additional comments: ______________________________

____

____

UNDERSTANDING LEARNING THEORY

The popularity of learning theories come and go, but some constants do remain. We recognize that in many ways children learn differently from adults. We understand that people retain more information when they can relate it to something familiar. We recognize that adult learners have a need to share their experiences with others. And yet, more often than not, we tend not to recognize that individual learners (whether adult or child) can have dramatically different ways of processing and accessing information.

These varied learning styles or "multiple intelligences" as they are named by noted educator Howard Gardner, unlock a wealth of information about how our learning personalities guide our experiences.

Gardner has identified eight learning styles that provide historical organizations rich opportunities to expand programming and make learning experience more inclusive. It is his conclusion that all individuals have all of these personalities, although we each have dominant learning styles that overshadow the others.

Here is a brief synopsis of the eight intelligences or learning styles.

1. Linguistic Intelligence
Highly verbal people who enjoy writing, reading and have good memories for places, dates, and trivia. These are the label readers and adults who enjoy interacting with others during a tour.

2. Logical-mathematical Intelligence
Can compute math problems quickly in their heads, enjoy logic, and take pleasure in playing strategy games such as chess and risk. Generally, they enjoy solving problems and analyzing historical data, such as statistics.

3. Spatial Intelligence
These individuals have good visual memory, can easily read maps, charts, and diagrams. They take pleasure in films, slides, and photographs, and feel more comfortable when they understand the layout of a building (or exhibit) and their relation to it.

4. Musical Intelligence
Musically talented people who enjoy playing instruments, remember melodies easily, and concentrate better when music is playing. May in some ways be related to logical-mathematical intelligence.

5. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence
Individuals who perform well in competitive sports, like to engage in physical activities, and learn better when mobility is not restrained. May also demonstrate skill in crafts and artwork (body as extension of the mind).

6. Interpersonal Intelligence
Very social individuals who enjoy learning with other people and are less comfortable in solitude. These individuals may be more apt to join group tours or become interpreters.

7. Intrapersonal Intelligence
Independent individuals who like to be alone to pursue projects and have a great deal of initiative. As visitors, they may be less comfortable in group tours, preferring self-guided opportunities and reflection time.

8. Natural Intelligence
These individuals have a keen understanding of natural systems, the way ecosystems in nature work, and are comfortable connecting information to a larger overall vision. They are more inclined to enjoy experiential exhibitions rather than those "behind glass".

The goal in examining institutional resources is to identify those unique ways the organization can tie into audience needs and create something that is both educational and relevant—something that addresses the needs of both the organization and the visitor.

HELPING VISITORS LEARN

Most of us wonder how much knowledge visitors to our historical societies and museums acquire through our programs. We wish we could surprise them with a quiz six months after a visit with us to find out what kinds of information they retain and at what level. Of course, this is not something we are usually able to do. Often, we use exit evaluations instead which, while valid, test only short-term memory and not the long-term learning about which we wonder. Helping visitors learn at our sites involves more than revising tours and offering intensive programs. It requires us to assist them in making connections between the material evidence we care for (collections), the stories we draw from them (exhibitions and public programs), and their own experiences. Below are some suggestions for beginning this process.

Understanding the motivation to learn.

The statement that "visitors learn best when engaged and motivated to learn" sounds overly simple. And yet, many of us spend more time training "front line" staff (interpreters, guides, museum teachers) to give succinct, scripted presentations rather than encouraging them to understand our visitors' motivations for choosing us as a learning destination. In this instance, motivation means more than passing interest in a topic—it relates to an individual's active choice to participate in an activity or program and their continued drive to learn more. Why do people choose certain types of programs over others? Why is it that an exhibition the staff considers to be a "filler" can bring in more visitors than one planned for years?

Current research reveals that an individual's motivation for learning is related to many aspects of their life, including previous experience with educational situations (including childhood museum experiences) and the need for information to address a particular problem. Asking visitors questions about what brings them to our organization is a necessary first step in helping them learn. By understanding why visitors make a conscious choice to participate in our programs, we can ensure that our programs are addressing their needs and their motivations.

Linking learning to prior knowledge.

Everyone who learns begins the process by relating new information to that which is already familiar. This tendency to make connections between our past experiences, current knowledge, and new information is not unique to humans, but it presents interpreters of the human experience with a wonderful gift—and a challenge. Both the gift and the challenge are the same—how to tell the stories of our community's history in a way that draws on the prior understandings of our visitors.

With children, this tends to be easier because we have an understanding of their school curriculum, the towns, cities, or counties they hail from, and information provided by teachers or group leaders. Adults have more diverse experiences, interests, and careers, and may not be as willing to share their experiences with others. There are, however, some broader human experiences common among most adults. For example, although our memories of childhood differ, we do remember being children. Although the illnesses we have faced are varied, we have all experienced being ill and the subsequent cultural and social traditions of healing. In linking historical information to the lives of our visitors, we provide them with a deeper understanding of the historical information and significantly increase the retention of what they learn.

Helping visitors learn at our sites involves more than revising tours and offering intensive programs. It requires us to assist them in making connections between the material evidence we care for (collections), the stories we draw from them (exhibitions and public programs), and their own experiences.

Making learning active.

Most historical organizations offer active learning experiences for children. But when it comes to adult learners, we tend to rely on traditional passive formats that rarely provide opportunities to manipulate information, either intellectually or physically. In this respect, exhibitions are often more active than traditional adult programs, using high- and low-tech manipulatives that encourage visitors to assess what they have learned, put this knowledge into a personal context, and physically reinforce intellectual information.

Creating active educational programs for adults and children can involve allowing more time for discussion and questioning. We are often so eager to impart information that questioning is relegated to hasty asides or breaks during a program. Active learning may include providing participants with opportunities to connect physically to history. For example, developing adult programs based on our current concepts of "hands-on" programs or combining passive (lecture) and active (workshop) formats. Historic sites have caught on to this, offering a wide variety of experiential programs for adults as well as children.

Developing programs that help participants learn is essential to implementing an organization's mission. Providing this assistance is critical in not only in engaging our audiences, but in ensuring that our research and our message is retained long after the program is over.

SEEKING PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP

For larger or long-term programs, outside funding may be required. Outside funding may come in the form of grants, foundation monies, in-kind sponsorships, and cash sponsorships. Generally, a combination of all of these is preferable to relying on one solution, but for long-term programs, sponsorships can be the best bet as foundations and government grants are not likely to fund programs long term.

Remember that seeking sponsorships is building relationships. It may take several visits before a business understands who you are and what you are doing. Think of potential sponsors as your allies in the next ten or twenty years.

GENERAL TYPES OF PROGRAM FUNDING

Public Grants

These grants have been the mainstay of program and exhibit support for the past thirty years. Although they are increasingly more difficult to receive, they generally place a priority on scholarship, teamwork, and community involvement. This type of funding is best perceived as "seed money" since very few public grants will fund a project for more than a few years. Generally, they will pay for speakers, printed materials, some publicity, supplies, meeting expenses, and exhibit fabrication costs.

They do not generally fund staff salaries (except consultants), capitol campaigns, food for receptions, purchasing equipment, and they may or may not pay for indirect cost (the overhead expense to keep your site operating during the project).

Private Foundation Funds

Private foundations include everything from corporate philanthropic organizations to family-based grant agencies. They vary widely in regards to grant sizes, requirements, application procedures, and funding priorities. Private foundations tend to have very specific funding areas and many will not accept unsolicited applications. Although this may seem daunting and will require more initial groundwork for applicants, they tend to be more open about what they will fund in relation to project expenses. The best bet for approaching private foundations is to request guidelines in advance and contact the organizations about your specific project. Applicants may have to make several initial contacts before receiving approval. They tend to be very interested in getting to know applicants and their organizations before agreeing to grant proposals.

Developing programs that help participants learn is essential to implementing an organization's mission. Providing this assistance is critical in not only in engaging our audiences, but in ensuring that our research and our message is retained long after the program is over.

In-Kind Sponsorships

This type of assistance provides goods or services to an organization in lieu of cash. Such services can include publicity, legal services, accounting, design work, printing, materials and supplies, catering, or ticket sales management. Contributing businesses provide these services as a way to give back to their community and in some instances receive a tax break for their donations. When approaching businesses about in-kind services, program managers should have a very clear idea about what they are doing and why as well as how the business will be helping the overall community through their donation. Plan on having written contracts handy so both parties will understand what to expect and when. These sponsorship relationships can be long-term and build positive, healthy relationships between historical organizations and area businesses.

Cash Sponsorship

Some businesses will contribute cash for particular programs or events, often in exchange for publicity through the event. Although amounts vary widely, requests for cash sponsorship are generally more successful for larger events and programs with a broad public appeal. For example, a new series of teacher materials or a festival may be more appealing than a small summer camp class. Again, approach businesses with a very clear understanding of the program, its goals, and how the funds will be used to contribute to the event. In this case, keeping a paper trail of what is expected and when is crucial.

TIPS FOR BUILDING PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP

1. Know what you want, why, and who in your community can provide it.
2. Begin with the media (we often think of them last) by inviting a local television station, radio station, or newspaper (or all three) to be your "official media sponsor" for the program. Develop a relationship with local writers, learn what they are interested in, what format photos they want and where they see your site's event appearing in their media. You can provide them with access to speakers, performers, or demonstrators for exclusive interviews and advertising on printed materials.
3. Once media sponsorship is confirmed, it will be much easier to attract other local sponsors as they

can receive free advertising in local markets through the media. Other perks may include free tickets, invitations to a special pre-program luncheon, or reception with the speaker(s).

4. Deliver what you promise and make sure all sponsors feel appreciated.
5. Send thank you letters to all sponsors, no matter how small their contribution.

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HISTORY NEWS

TECHNICAL LEAFLET

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FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

Fundraising for the Small Museum

By Salvatore G. Cilella, Jr.
Executive Director
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The key to the successful management of any fundraising program is an understanding of A) the Institution, B) the Marketplace, and C) the Continuity of Approach. These three elements—a knowledge of the internal culture of the institution—an understanding of the marketplace outside the institution, but the place where the fundraising occurs—and a knowledge of how to manage donor relationships, are all critical to successful raising.

A. THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OR "KNOW THYSELF"

What is your institution and where is it going? As a player in your institution, do you know why it exists—its purpose or mission? Do you know where it is heading—its goals, objectives, priorities, and needs? What strategies have been articulated to get it there—its strategic or long-range planning? And last, how do its constituents perceive it—its image/identity?

Purpose/mission—Do you know why your institution exists?

As a major fundraising player do you know what your mission is? Do you have a mission statement? Does your staff and board have a clear understanding of your mission? Does your membership and development staff understand why you exist? If they don't … you have serious fundraising problems.

The mission statement is the starting point for all fundraising in any institution. All fundraising, from membership to deferred giving, must be mission driven. If it is not, it is a waste of time and money—your two most precious resources.

The mission statement should be concise and easily understandable by all constituents—members, donors, board members, staff, political, and policy-making groups. The best mission statements are meaningless if no one knows they exist. Peter Drucker of the Drucker Foundation for Non-profit Management cites the Salvation Army as the nation's best managed charity, in part because its mission—"to meet human needs in his name without discrimination"—is so clear that it could be silk-screened on a T-shirt.

If you have a mission statement, how do you promulgate it? Orientation sessions? Board notebook? Posted at the front door? Printed on the masthead of all publications? A frontispiece for the long-range plan? For the staff handbook? Personnel manual? Emergency manual? Again, the Salvation Army insures that "followers are reminded of that mission constantly. It hangs on the bulletin board of the East 52nd Street center …"

Examples of non-mission fundraising abound. They usually involve the uninformed, well-intentioned, board member who is frustrated by the lack of money your institution is receiving from the community and goes out on his own. As a manager, you should allow no fundraising in your institution unless it is mission driven/based. In fact, the establishment of a sound mission statement will shut down practically all "wild hair" or "loose cannon" attempts by well meaning supporters.

Goals, objectives, priorities, and needs—Do know where your institution is heading?

Institutional goals must be set before development goals are set and before fundraising begins, because, ultimately, organizational goals determine fundraising goals.

More importantly, goals require enlightened and courageous leadership. If your museum or your development officer is not successful in fundraising, it may be your fault as the director. It may be that you have not sold the "vision thing" to your staff. Leadership/management must be willing to make tough choices and decide which projects have priority over others. But they cannot be developed in a vacuum and they must never be imposed from the top down. Board and staff input are essential to developing them because, when the time comes to achieve them, the pertinent constituencies will have bought into the plan.

Goals should be developed each year during the budget process and when the long-range plan is revised on an annual basis because those plans should be tied to staff performance and evaluations.

For obvious reasons, organizational and fundraising goals must be:

- **Practical** Here common sense should rule. Your attempt to wipe out hunger in our lifetime may be admirable but hopelessly impractical.
- **Believable** This is a close second to practical. Will the supporters who you approach for money believe that you can achieve your goal with their money?
- **Salable** Can you package your goals so that they are palatable to a donor or set of donors? Or are you a marketing klutz who cannot organize them so that they are attractive?
- **Current** Are the goals you are trying to sell to a donor outmoded or outdated ideas that other museums have abandoned years ago?
- **Articulated** Can you explain what your goals are in a sensible way that is understandable by the intended donor, or are your goals so obtuse that no one understands them?

Above all, your goals, objectives, priorities, and needs should be quantifiable. Examples are countless and easily produced.

- The goal for FY 99-00 is to increase our audience from the inner-city area by 10%.
- Our second goal is to increase museum attendance by 20% from the local community and 10% from tourism.
- Our third goal is to increase school attendance by 14% during the next fiscal year.

If it's not quantifiable, it isn't a goal. Examples of non-goals are "to increase and diffuse knowledge among mankind", "to provide better educational programs for our community", "to broaden our base", "to enhance our image."

In setting any fundraising goals whether they are for annual funds, capital campaigns, project support, membership, or deferred giving, the museum must consider three factors:

1. The level of past support to the institution
2. Frequency of past support by the museum's donors or constituents and
3. The museum's financial needs or goals for the year or multi-year long-range plan

Too often appeals for funds fail because they are based on only one or two of these factors. The most common mistake is to appeal for funds solely on the basis of need. For example, the museum does a year-end mailing to all its members and says that it "needs" $25,000. Why? Who and what determined that need? A deficit? If your membership's level of past support is extremely low (it has never exceeded $15,000) or has infrequently supported you in the past (no sustained record of giving by any meaningful group of supporters), the museum will never be successful in reaching that $25,000 goal.

The chances for success for any appeal rely heavily on all three factors. And what this means is that the museum must ask often. It must get its donors in a cycle of giving and that means managing donor relations.

Strategic/long-range planning—What strategies have been articulated to help your institution reach its goals?

Now that you know **who** you are (the mission or identity); you know **how** you want to fulfill that mission (through goals and objectives); you must move the organization along from point A to point B in order to reach your goals and fulfill your mission. Through long-range, strategic planning, you must ask and try to answer the question "**What** are the precise steps we will take to get where we want to go?"

From the fundraiser's point of view, long-range planning is a consensus process whereby the management group and the board agree on a series of precise and specific steps, both large and small, to reach the institution's various goals.

In order to be meaningful, every aspect of the strategic plan should have a price tag and a timetable for execution. This allows the development team to concentrate its resources on institutional needs. It also allows the management team to analyze the cost effectiveness of the strategies proposed.

Direction and approval for the strategic plan should come from the board. The production and implementation of the plan should come from the staff.

Image/identity (the life and death of fundraising)—How do your institutions' constituents perceive it?

Within the institutional context, the museum must also examine its organizational image. How is the museum perceived by the market which will make a leisure time decision to visit it, spend money in the museum, join as a member and, if all goes well, make a conscious decision to give the institution a donation?

A working knowledge of the organization's image is essential to both the fundraising goal and to the successful selling of the museum.

Because of the diversity of funding sources, it is imperative to know your subject inside out. It is important to understand these images in order to be creative about one's fundraising. In fundraising, a poor image, poorly focused image, or misunderstood image will be far more damaging than inarticulate goals, poor long-range plans, and no mission statement.

In addition to these concerns, museum management and the development office must understand the museum's standing in the community and deal with it accordingly. With occasional exceptions such as the United Way mess several years ago, the public holds most non-profits in high esteem in general. But, bad press, bad-mouthing by disgruntled staff or board members, real or perceived mismanagement, real or perceived slights of donors or collectors, and a host of other evils, can and will damage your best laid fundraising plans.

In summing up the institutional context, one must recognize that development is a well organized, defined, management tool directly related to and integrated with the organization's goals and mission. It is not a once and done endeavor but an ongoing, structured, management function designed to create understanding and to gather support for the institution.

Too many non-profits operate in a vacuum. Fundraising without sufficient prior planning or without reference to a larger thing called your organization is doomed to failure. "What makes the Salvation Army so successful is a combination of three essentials to organizational development: it has a clearly defined and easily understood mission; it holds itself accountable for carrying out its mission and for seeing that money goes to the purposes for which it was raised; and it possesses superior marketing skills" (All quotes on Salvation Army from *The New York Times,* Wednesday, November 17, 1999, p. D1)

B) THE MARKETPLACE

The second step of successful fundraising must be a clear understanding of the marketplace in which you must operate and seek funds. Who gives what to whom and how much do they give?

Since the early 1970s, American non-profits have received donations from **private** sources in roughly the same proportions:

- Individuals 90%
- Corporations 5%
- Foundations 5%

In 1998, Americans contributed $174.52 billion to non-profit organizations, according to Giving USA 1999. This represents a 10.7% increase over the previous year. Individuals contributed $134.84 billion. Bequests totaled $13.62 billion bringing the total giving by individuals to $148.46 billion or 85% of all giving.

Although this is less than the model above, the good news is that foundation giving is up substantially to $17.09 billion or nearly 10% of all private giving. The continuing increase in the stock market has propelled the assets of some foundations to new levels, and the trend of increasing foundation grantmaking is expected to continue, according to Giving USA 1999.

Corporate giving, on the other hand, has not budged from its 5% past performances despite the good economy. In 1998, it gave away $8.97 billion a 9.3% increase over the previous year but only 1% of pre-tax income, down from 1.1% reported for the two previous years.

For comparative purposes, **total private** giving since 1983 has tripled from $62 billion given that year.

Individuals

- In 1963, giving by individuals was only $10 billion. Individual giving has grown by a factor of 10 for the last 37 years. Because individuals gave 85% of all donations last year and several years before, they are your prime targets.
- Unlike the corporate or foundation world, where you can peruse a corporate directory or the foundation directory, there is no central file to search for individual donors, and as a result it makes your job more demanding and challenging.
- Information about individuals can be gleaned from newspapers, official records, and annual reports of other similar non-profits. Questionnaires to members, board member information, and corporate reports are useful if your prospect is a corporate type.
- Individuals should be considered for the full range of fundraising possibilities from membership to deferred giving to remembering the institution in their will. But most importantly, you must determine the individual's needs and then attempt to fit them into a part of your program.
- A committed and active donor base for your institution is vital to the overall success of your entire fundraising program.

Every two years, the Independent Sector, a Washington-based coalition of charities and grant makers representing the non-profit sector commissions a survey to measure volunteerism and individual giving. In their most recent survey, the Independent Sector concluded that the average contribution by the American households surveyed, including those that gave nothing to charity, increased by nearly 16% after inflation. Giving by blacks and young people appears to be on the rise, and the higher income, more generous donors have not flagged in their commitment to charities.

Every time the independent sector does its study, it identifies factors that induce people to give. These should not only give you hope but incentive to go after the big gifts.

1. Volunteerism. The Independent Sector found that volunteers in non-profit organizations give twice as much as non-volunteers. Are you asking your volunteers for gifts?
2. Income tax deductions do not induce giving but they do increase the size of the gift. Are you pointing out the tax implications to your donors in the 31% and 38% tax brackets that their donated dollars are important to you but also that Uncle Sam subsidizes them at a greater rate?
3. People who go to church regularly are better donors to secular charities. Church-going folks gave 2.1% of household income as opposed to .6% by non-church goers. If you are in a particularly religious community, and many small historical societies are, you have better chance of being successful in your fundraising.
4. People who are asked to contribute are more than twice as likely to do so as those who are not solicited. Of people who were asked to give money, 85% did, compared to 36% who were not asked. Are you asking people for money or just waiting for it to come over the transom?

5. Bequests—a growth area for everyone. Only 4 in 10 said they had a will and only 13 percent included a charity in their will. Bequest giving varies from year to year with the death rate and because of the varying amount of time it takes wills to go through probate. However, according to Giving USA 1999, within the context of annual volatility there has been a steady increase in the value of willed giving. Are you providing a mechanism for your donors and members to remember you in their will?

There is no question that individuals are your best source of funds and your greatest energies should be channeled in that direction.

Corporations

According to Giving USA, arts groups should not count on corporate growth for more support and noted the trend that the larger arts organizations are taking a larger share of the pie.

Corporate giving, because of its seemingly obvious deep pockets is the least productive source of private giving. During the 1970s and 1980s an unimpressive three out of ten companies gave donations of one kind or another. Conversely, seven of ten gave nothing. During the 80s, the "Five Percent" club was started by farsighted and socially conscious businesses in Minneapolis. "5%" was to represent a percentage of pre-tax income donated during the year.

Generally, corporations give because they **hope** to show evidence of good corporate citizenship, to strengthen employee relations, reach important constituencies, encourage employee creativity, increase media coverage, promote products, increase sales, and increase productivity of their employees. What companies feel they **actually achieve** by supporting the arts are: an enhanced image, reached important constituencies, strengthened employee relations, encouraged employee creativity, increased media coverage, good corporate citizenship, product promotion, increased productivity, and increased sales.

Though direct giving is still the source of most corporate support, the role of **corporate** foundations is significant according to Giving USA 1999. In 1998, they accounted for more than a quarter of all corporate giving. In addition, corporations support non-profits through marketing, community relations, and advertising budgets, which are generally separate from charitable giving budgets, and so, this support is not counted in the Giving USA estimate.

Foundations

Foundations, there are some 44,000 of them in the United States, deal with every imaginable issue. The larger ones like Rockefeller and Ford are constantly changing focus and responding to areas of global concern, such as the abolition of nuclear weapons, national and international security, peace initiatives, world population control, and environmental issues. If you are a small local concern this should not stop you from applying to them if you think you have a fit with their program. Several years ago, the Columbia Museum of Art applied to the Rockefeller Foundation for an exhibition catalogue for a show on Guatemalan textiles. Because the foundation was interested in South American issues and culture, the museum was successful.

But it is the local and family foundations that remain an area of lucrative fundraising for local and small museums. In fact, most foundations are small, locally oriented, and give large numbers of small grants. Foundations in low-asset categories often have little or no full-time staff and although some respond quickly and effectively, many do not. The few foundations which publish annual reports are generally more responsive. Foundations with national or regional giving programs are usually in the higher giving categories, have full-time program officers, evaluate proposals systematically, give larger grants, and publish annual reports. However, there is great diversity and generalizations do not always apply.

As you begin your research, be aware that there are four basic types of foundations: Independent, Corporate, Operating, and Community. All foundations have the following common characteristics. They have been started with a single or multiple sources of funds such as an individual or family. They are non-governmental, non-profit organizations, managed by their own trustees or directors, and established to maintain or aid social, cultural, educational, charitable, religious, or other activities to serve the common welfare.

Independent foundations are characterized by a staff and a broad charter but may move into new fields in response to changing social needs. Examples of large independent foundations are Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Mellon.

Corporate Foundations, while obviously begun with company funds, are constituted independently but make grants with high regard for the corporation's visibility and business interests. They are not to be confused with direct giving programs which are administered within the corporation but are usually coordinated with any existing foundation or marketing budgets which are heftier than contributions budgets.

Corporations establish corporate foundations for several reasons. During a profitable year, the company can provide more money to its foundation for a larger tax break. On a down year, the foundation is fairly well insulated from the corporate low and can continue to make payouts on a three-year grant commitment regardless of the roller coaster effect of the business cycle. A corporate foundation can make grants or gifts to foreign recipients and a company cannot legally. A foundation creates a buffer between any customer or client pressure placed on a company by a pet charity. Rejection can be the foundation's decision and not the company's. In addition, "foundation" has an air of respectability and a positive, beneficial public relations aspect.

The primary purpose of an **operating foundation** is to operate its own programs determined by its charter or board. It does not exist to give away money although a few have been known to make small grants externally.

A **community foundation** is much like a private foundation except that its funds are derived from several sources. Investments are made and managed by trustee banks and grants are always local. The governing board is usually representative of its community rather than the whim of a single powerful family as found in the private foundation. The identity of each fund within the foundation is preserved. They are either donor directed or unrestricted. The efficiency of the community foundation is that it has a central administration for all the funds rather than each donor or fund paying for separate administrations of its assets and resources. The community foundation is rather like a money market or mutual fund but instead operates to make grants.

And where does the money go? Unfortunately, last year all categories of non-profits saw increased giving from all sectors **except** giving to the arts and humanities. Health organizations, human service organizations, environment/wildlife organizations, and public/society benefit organizations all reported contribution increases of 20% or more. The latter group includes groups like the United Way who raise money for themselves and others. Two categories, education and religion, reported increases of 10 % or more but these two groups get the bulk of the money each year with religion gathering nearly 45% of all private giving. Giving to the arts decreased by .8% but that meant in dollar terms a decrease from $10.62 billion to $10.53 **billion.**

Every year for the past several years, the federal government has chipped away at the NEA, the NEH, and the IMLS where their combined yearly budgets for grant making is now approximately $403 **million.** The museum field spends an inordinate amount of time writing grant proposals chasing after a comparatively small amount of money. The question is, should your resources—time and people—be spent chasing federal money or going after the private sector, particularly, individuals? The answer should be obvious.

C) CONTINUITY OF APPROACH

How do you get support from all sources on a continual basis? How do you go about raising the necessary funds for the operation of your institution and its programs? Who do you approach and how do you approach them?

Once an understanding of the museum's mission, its goals, its image, and its long-range plan is in place, and there is an understanding of the realities of the donor universe or the marketplace, an understanding of the concept of the "Continuity of Approach" or "The Circle of Fundraising" or "The Management of the Development Process" is now essential.

This concept consists of three distinct components:

- Cultivation
- Solicitation
- Recognition

Cultivation can be further defined as identification and education. Professional fundraisers call "identifying" prospective donors "prospect research." As Geottler Associates state in a recent newsletter "The essence of strategic fundraising involves the right volunteer asking the right prospect for the right amount at the right time."

Step one is to identify "suspects," a large pool of individuals (this strategy also works for foundations and corporations) who are suspected of having the financial means and inclination to make a major gift to your organization. Sources for suspects are many and diverse. An institution's best suspects for major gifts are probably already a part of the museum's constituency. They may include past contributors, those who utilize the museum's services, or other members of the family including advisory boards, volunteer groups, docents, staff, etc. Most potential major donors have demonstrated their philanthropic inclination by giving to other institutions where they have been recognized in annual reports, newsletters, program guides, or memorialized on plaques. National, regional, and local periodicals publish lists of the top paid executives and the wealthiest families, many of whom live or do business in your community. Some fundraising firms now offer prospect research services of individuals who have a given net worth such as $1 million in a pre-determined geographic area. Don't waste time and energy on some millionaire in another area. If you know about him or her, you can be assured that someone else has known about them for a long time.

Step two is to move your suspect to a prospect. This is accomplished by screening those suspects by the staff, knowledgeable board members, or those in the community willing to lend their knowledge of giving patterns. The success of the process depends on the knowledge of the participants. If you are fortunate to have computer files on suspects, there are software packages that will help you track gifts and tendencies. Once identified, it is the museum's responsibility to educate them as much as possible about its cause. Invite them to lectures, seminars, meetings, receptions, openings, lunches, teas, dinners, etc., based, of course, on the proven affinity on their part for your institution.

Cultivation is a genuine, sincere desire on the part of the organization to make itself a part of the immediate community by involving members of that community in its mission and goals. It is not pandering. If you find it somehow offensive then you are forgetting the long-term goals of the non-profit you are attempting to help. By strengthening your system of recruitment through your volunteer group, your board, and your members, you will feed the "new donor" or "new friend" monster on a continual basis.

Solicitation occurs after sufficient cultivation of the prospect. It is known variously as the actual approach or asking for the order. This is the simplest yet hardest aspect of fundraising for most people. Don't hide behind hours and hours of so-called research in the form of receptions, cocktail hours, and openings to cultivate the prospect without ever asking for the gift. Sufficient research and education is important, but it should never be used as an excuse to delay the inevitable.

Do not approach this part of fundraising as a supplicant or beggar. Do not view your institution as a destitute charity. Position your case or organization as "well" or as "superior," not haughty but "good." Deal from quality. Think in terms of investments and returns on those investments. John D. Rockefeller was eloquent on this point, "Never think you need to apologize for asking someone to give to a worthy cause, any more than as though you were giving him an opportunity to participate in a high-grade investment. The duty of giving is as much his as the duty of asking is yours. Whether or not he should give to that particular enterprise, and if so, how much, it is for him alone to decide."

The greatest sin in all of fundraising is not asking for the order. Do not expect the solicited to respond if you do not have a specific dollar figure in mind. You will embarrass a prospect if you do not ask them for a specific amount of money. Why? Because they want to know the length and breadth of your need, how much of that they are being asked to bear, and by inference, what others are being asked to bear.

In what ways do you ask people for money? The manner of asking an individual, a corporation, or a foundation is closely related to motivation and method. Why do people or organizations give? The motivation for giving money is as varied as the types of people who give. It is incumbent on the solicitor—you—to determine what motivates your prospect to give. Social scientists have identified various reasons as motivations for giving. Listed here are a few:

- **Ego** The most obvious reason—"I want my name on the building"
- **Immortality** Related to ego, but in essence an effort to buy eternity with a major gift.
- **Sincerity** A rarity in the age of cynicism, but some people genuinely believe that their money can make a difference.
- **Tranquillity** "If I give you this one-time gift, I would like you to go away and leave me alone forever."
- **Guilt and/or peer pressure** "If all of my friends are giving, I should too."
- **Fear** Related to immortality but more applicable to health agencies than museums. An example would be the donor who gives $100 to the American Cancer Society in the hopes that they will find a cure before he gets it.

While there are a lot of motivating factors for giving, there are just so many methods of asking prospects for money. They include phone solicitation, mail solicitation, a grant proposal, or the best and hardest—face to face. For all large gifts, a personal visit is the most effective way, and it is usually used in conjunction with peer pressure. Large, proven donors should be sent to visit large, potential donors. A case statement is a good idea for the solicitor to have during his visit with the prospect and something tangible he can leave behind. A case statement is a formal, written document making a strong "case" for the prospect's money. It not only helps you "state" your "case," it helps you put down on paper what it is you want and how you intend to use it.

Direct mail solicitations for annual gifts and memberships summon up the herd instinct. Here the appeal is to join others in your cause, and Americans are natural born joiners. A simple letter that includes a business return envelope with paid postage is an effective method of asking for support.

Telephone solicitation for memberships and small annual fund gifts, although universally hated by those who receive them at mealtime, have proven to be the most cost effective method of fundraising. Volunteers and paid professional callers work in most situations, but the museum team needs to be sensitive to which works better.

When seeking bequests and deferred giving, a personal visit, a handsome brochure, and a pitch for fiscal responsibility is most effective.

When selling a memorial program, nostalgia and sympathy can be tastefully blended in a newsletter ad or direct mail piece.

For project support, nothing replaces a well-written, short, but concise proposal.

As a general rule of thumb, when approaching corporations, foundations, and major donors use reason and logic in the proposal and case statement. When cold prospecting, using direct mail for membership, or annual appeals use emotion, not logic.

Recognition or donor stewardship, also known as "taking care of the donor" should not be overlooked. The museum must work hard at saying thank you. Recognition or the show of appreciation, just like cultivation, must be genuine and sincere. It means pristine gift records, which in turn produce proper thank you letters. Gratitude can come from all involved in the project. Large pan-organization gifts should be acknowledged by the Chief Executive Officer.

Thank you luncheons, receptions, dinners, openings, and lectures are all vehicles of saying thank you and become a means of cultivation for the next or higher gift. Plaques, lists of names on walls or doors, near the front door, on paintings, lists in the annual report, in your newsletter, in brochures, are all ways of saying thank you and recognizing people for their contributions to your institution.

With the close of the circle through recognition, the museum is positioned for the continuing circle of donor relationships. Cultivation has already begun with the last recognition. Each and every donor is important to the museum and the circle of donor continuity must not be broken.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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HISTORY NEWS TECHNICAL LEAFLET

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Telling the Story: Better Interpretation at Small Historical Organizations

by Timothy Glines and David Grabitske,
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INTRODUCTION:

Interpretation is a five-syllable word with special meaning for those who work or volunteer for historical organizations. It's a word often coupled with two others in our mission statements: collect and preserve.

Unfortunately, it is often the part of our mission that is given insufficient attention. Too many organizations still take the easy route: just arranging artifacts in categories, creating historic tableaux with a few labels, or letting visitors wander through our historic houses. We can do better! Because interpretive programs are the most public and visible aspect of our operations, their quality determines how our organizations are regarded. One does not need to be part of a large organization to do excellent interpretation. Organizations with a few paid employees, or even those with all volunteers, can do it effectively.

The essence of interpretation is story telling. And what can be more natural for human beings than to tell stories? Communications expert Peter Orton tells us: "Stories enhance attention, create anticipation, and increase retention. They provide a familiar set of 'hooks' that allow us to process the information that we hang on them." [1]

How do we tell compelling stories in historical organizations? Before we can answer that question, let us consider what interpretation is; what things to keep in mind when interpreting; and, in what ways museums carry out story telling. Planning an interpretive program is necessary, but cannot be effectively accomplished until the planners understand something about the institution, the goals of the institution and its interpretive program, and interpretation in general.

Recognizing that our organizations need to serve broad audiences makes telling our stories a lot harder. We cannot simply say that one size fits all and expect people to take it or leave it. However, an individual program might be developed by focusing on a segment of the overall audience, particularly on underserved segments.

Historical interpretation translates human stories from the past into meaningful thoughts for people in the present. It makes past experiences instantly understandable by a modern audience. At one historic site with a one-room school filled with benches, interpreters are often questioned by school children making instant associations with their own school. They ask, "How did they do their homework?" What they mean is where, since there are no desks. A clever interpreter replied, "Pupils complete their assignments on laptop chalkboards, called slates." What this interpreter did was create an instantly recognizable concept in the child's mind of a chalkboard the size of a laptop computer.

It can be hard for small local history museums to tell a story well. Resources are limited and small organizations often face the challenge of telling stories in difficult places such as historic houses converted to museum use. But perhaps the most serious challenge is simply a lack of familiarity with interpretative theory and technique. Too often, long-serving volunteers have become attached to certain stories and tours and are unwilling to consider changes that would serve new audiences. Even staff trained in museum studies or public history may have had more courses in administration and collection care than in interpretation. Without effective interpretive programs, our organizations risk becoming irrelevant.

It Starts with Audiences

We should always identify or define the audience for our interpretive programs. For many small organizations, particularly in their formative stages, audience identification may be an afterthought. So, how do we define our audiences? For most historical organizations with geographically defined or place based missions, the audience includes all the people who reside in our geographic service area, not to mention those who are only visiting. It is no longer feasible, especially for those of us funded by government sources, to serve a small slice of the community—for example, those whose ancestors have lived here for four or five generations. Even organizations with missions defined by subject (for example, the history of aviation, fishing, railroads, farming) recognize the need to serve more than "buffs" already knowledgeable about the subject matter.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND: THE OPERATIONAL PLATFORM OF 'TELLING THE STORY'

Why tell a story? The answer is usually found in most of our mission statements: to educate. Local historical societies should be educational institutions. What good is it if we are mere repositories of historical facts and objects? Local history organizations should be able to tell people what all that stuff means.

Telling a story complements our primary educational goal by responding to two major reasons people visit museums and historic sites, namely recreation and entertainment. Although local historical societies should be careful not to let these two helpers eclipse the primary goal, visiting a history museum can be a healthy diversion. At many museums, visitors get to try their hands at certain parts of historical processes by using either reproductions or expendable artifacts from the "educational collection." Such interpretation can be seen as recreational. Other visitors are treated to dramatic vignettes, rides in old wagons and trains, and video documentaries; they are entertained. But such experiences must still tell people something about the past. Educational enrichment must always be first, or local history museums will reduce themselves to historically oriented campgrounds or theme parks.

To keep education at the forefront, keep four things in mind when planning an interpretive activity: what a story is, how people learn, the potency of interpretation, and basic customer service principles. These guiding principles will keep an interpretive program on target.

What is a story? There are many definitions. One narrative theory called structural-affect,[2] maintains that the goal must be meaningful to the audience, that the audience develops empathy for the protagonist, and that the outcome holds a surprise for the audience. When using the structural-affect model for historical interpretation, the difference is that, rather than a surprise, we impart a human truth at the end. For example, an interpreter

[1] Quoted in Elizabeth Weil, "Every Leader Tells a Story," *FastCompany* 15 (June/July, 1998): 38.

[2] Peter Orton, at IBM's T. J Watson Research Center, http://www.research.ibm.com/knowsoc/ideas_featurestructure.html.

pretending to be a spectator at a vintage baseball game approached modern spectators, saying, "I'm sure this game looks a little different from what you're used to, but I assure you that this is an improvement to what you all played as children." He went on to relate briefly how the rules used in 1860 either codified or altered earlier practice. In doing so he imparted the truth that human beings are constantly tinkering with things, hoping for a better result.

People learn in a variety of ways. However, scientists who study how people learn say we generally learn using our culture and prior knowledge as a platform. We take in new facts, such as antique baseball rules, through a variety of media to assist in problem solving and reasoning to draw conclusions and comparisons with things we already know, such as modern baseball rules. These new facts should spark our natural curiosity. We respond well to structure. If our visitors know the goals of the program, they will be ready to learn.[3]

Using the structural-affect model and understanding that people use what they are already familiar with, the interpreter can make translations with what might be termed "The Three C's of Interpretation." That is, compare and contrast in context. Once we establish the context of the past, we can make comparisons and contrasts with our own situations, as in the example of the "laptop chalkboards" or our familiarity with the rules of the ball game. Context enables us to understand that those who lived before were products of their own time and place just as we today are products of ours. When visitors understand context, contrast and comparison can convey a meaningful history.

Humor can be as useful as it can be troublesome. Used well, it can help further a lesson, drive home a point, and reassure an audience. One reenactor, costumed as a Civil War soldier, used humor to his benefit. He was talking to a class of school children, comparing and contrasting his historical situation with theirs. Just like the children, he had to obey two things that he wished he didn't: time and teachers. His "teachers" were officers who had gone to a special school and received a special piece of paper called a commission. He had to obey time too, because his "teachers" wanted things in good order. In essence, this grown man was being treated like a child. He then wryly commented for the adults present, "Guess that's why they call us Infant – tree." The pun helped at least the adults to remember that being in the army is like being a kid in school.

Historical interpretation and comic strips have a lot in common: both are potent combinations of ideas and illustrations. Cartoonist Berke Breathed, in his introduction to *Classics of Western Literature: Bloom County 1986-1989,* explained what makes stories work for comics. Rather than surprise the audience, a good story relates a basic human truth—the truth of anxiety seen in *Peanuts* character Charlie Brown, for instance.[4] When interpreting history to the public, it is important to connect them to the past on a basic level; doing so builds empathy with human truth, enriching the mind and spirit.

Just as some local history programs allow recreation and entertainment to eclipse the primary goal of education, others allow artifacts either to become the story themselves or to be more important than a human story. According to cartoonist Bill Watterson, in his anthology *The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book,* great ideas save boring illustrations better than great illustrations saving boring ideas. This is true for local history organizations as well. An artifact without a story or an interesting idea is not particularly educational. Many historical society collections contain the same items as the historical collection down the road. To someone who has heard about the general use of a sadiron, even the best surviving example of a sadiron will no longer be interesting. Who used this sadiron, and what was that person's significance to your mission? Every artifact was used or made by a human being: it's the human story that is interesting, not some obscure tool a modern person doesn't use or recognize. The fact that some other person used the object makes translation of the story possible and meaningful. Objects must support the story you are telling.[5]

At a former state capitol building, the only two people on one tour admitted to the guide they both worked at another historic site. The guide had no stories to tell on his hour-long tour, just explanations of how curious artifacts were used. Instead of orchestrating a conversation about significant proceedings, grand architecture, interesting politicians, and important legislation, this guide knew only about the artifacts. When his visitors already knew about the artifacts, his tour was compromised and less meaningful. Perhaps because of limited training he did not know that objects could help him tell stories about the special community he was living in; and, therefore he was not able to provide a very good customer service experience. Few visitors know the meaningful local stories that we know, even if they live in our area—so it is best to take advantage of what makes our places special to live in.

The final key to effective interpretation is good customer service. We must pay attention to the interests of our visitors by telling meaningful stories, making sure not to fatigue them mentally with breathless depth or fatigue them physically with no chance to take it all in. Be kind and helpful. Take time to get to know them so you can kindle curiosity with the supremely interesting human stories you have to tell. As Watterson suggests, as long as you have the opportunity to speak to someone, you might as well say something useful.

[3] John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, editors. *How People Learn: Brain Mind, Experience, and School.* Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning. Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. National Research Council. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999). http://www.nap.edu/html/howpeople1/ch1.html.

[4] Berke Breathed, *Classics of Western Literature: Bloom County 1986-1989* (Boston, MA: Little Brown & Company, 1990): two. Bill Watterson, *The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews & McNeel, 1995): 6.

[5] Watterson, 32. See also, Hilde S. Hein, *The Museum in Transition: A Philosophical Perspective* (Washington, D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), particularly chapter 4, "Transcending the Object."

Being kind and helpful will lead you to what one interpreter summed up as "Know all, tell some." One guide with a theatrical background saw the story she was paid to tell as being like lines in a play. She would not let visitors leave until she had concluded her "performance." You can fatigue audiences with an exhaustive narrative. Withholding less crucial parts of the story can be a kindness. Visitors often sense when something is missing, and if their curiosity is aroused and they are so inclined, they will ask. Another interpreter described this activity as "digging holes." Dig enough holes, and curiosity will trap the visitor in one of them. They will have to ask a question to get out.

Good customer service at our history museums means getting to know our guests even minimally so we do not bore them with things they already know. We must learn where our guests are coming from, if we expect to build on their knowledge. It means not putting up barriers to their experience. We must describe the experience ahead so the visitor is prepared to overcome challenges like stairs, long walks, no working restrooms, no water, unusual temperatures or light levels, and so on. In short, customer service is the consideration of human needs. By considering our guests' needs, we show that we are fully engaged in their experience.

These four ideas—what a story is, how people learn, the potency of interpretation, and basic customer service skills—kept firmly in mind can produce enjoyable, high-quality interpretive educational opportunities. They can be applied to all kinds of interpretation. They drive curiosity by using the powerful combination of ideas plus good illustrations.

Themes for Interpretive Programs

Given the wide range of human activity, historical organizations have no shortage of topics from which to choose. Of course, some stories lend themselves better to one interpretive medium than others. Some stories can be told well by an exhibition, for instance, but not in a walking tour.

INTERPRETATION'S MANY FACES: VEHICLES OF INTERPRETATION AT LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

Local historical organizations tell their stories in a wide array of interpretive media. We tell stories in museum exhibitions, in public programs conducted at historic sites and house museums, in programs conducted offsite in the community, and through other media, such as publications, where our interaction with an audience is indirect.

Choosing themes or subjects for interpretation should start with mission. It is certainly acceptable to do interpretive programs that go beyond an organization's mission, but the mission should be the primary screen for program selection. Geographically based historical organizations should have no problem knowing where to start, but it is important to take the time and effort to identify the historical themes that tell the story of your area. List the broad themes that help people understand the forces that have made your area what it is today. Your themes may have much in common with those of other areas in your region, but there will surely be some variations unique to your area.

Expand the list of historical themes by writing brief narratives about each one. Connect them with a timeline that includes specific people, places, and events. Then add lists of resources that you could use to develop interpretive programs. These will range from manuscripts and government records to oral histories, artifacts, and books. The information you collect about your historical themes should be dynamic. That is, you should always be adding new material and you should review the themes in light of new historical research.

While developing a list of historical themes is an essential part of planning interpretive programs, another way is to identify more universal themes that can become a framework to connect the history of your area. Think of the big themes that apply to everyone: families, making a living, health, bereavement, and so on. Historian Joseph Amato calls on local historians to look into other themes, some so common that we don't think about them, for instance the senses.[6] How have the sounds and smells of a community changed over time? Amato would also have local historians study and interpret the emotional history of their communities through topics like anger and madness.

According to the National Park Service, themes connect tangible objects with intangible concepts and universals. For further information please see the NPS Web site for the online booklet *History in the National Park Service: Themes & Concepts.* www.cr.nps.gov/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/themes_concepts.htm

Museum Exhibitions.

It is not easy to create an effective exhibition. Unlike other forms of interpretation, which can be tailored to different audiences, museum exhibitions need to work with multiple audiences. They can only do so if they are well planned and executed.

The first step is to recognize that exhibitions are more than displays. A display of neatly arranged and categorized farm or fishing implements with a few labels does not tell a story. Even an arrangement of items in a recreated domestic setting, such as a 19th-century kitchen, does not tell much of a story. Neither technique does anything to engage museum visitors. National Park Service historian Freeman Tilden told us

[6] Joseph Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002): 60. For another approach to developing historical themes, see Tom McKay, "Choosing a Local History Topic: Beginning With Concepts," in *Exchange,* newsletter of the Wisconsin Historical Society's Office of Local History Volume 24, Number 7 (January/February 1982). Available online: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/localhistory/articles/concepts.htm.

nearly 50 years ago: information is not interpretation.[7] Tilden defined interpretation as revelation based on information. Barbara Franco, the director of The Historical Society of Washington D.C., explains that museum exhibitions ought to create memorable experiences.[8] When we plan an exhibition, we need to be conscious not just of what a visitor will see, but of what the visitor will do. Dan Spock, head of the Exhibits department at the Minnesota Historical Society, elaborates: "Exhibits are a mode of communication, but this process is primarily non-verbal, minimally textual, works more in the 'gut' than in the 'mind' and is inherently a two-way street, a kind of dialogue of meaning-making between visitor and museum." [9]

Spock also recognizes that visitors bring a variety of knowledge, experience, and associations with them to the exhibition. Visitors use these things during a museum visit to create new experiences in a "personalized synthesis." He feels that the story is the most common and natural way to move "the personal meaning into the social sphere, into the world of other people where it can be shared and understood." Good exhibitions enable these kinds of experiences.

Isn't all of this impossible for the small historical organization with limited resources? Not necessarily. Even the smallest organization can do excellent exhibitions that address multiple audiences. Of course, it all starts with a clear goal. What is the exhibit about? What story does it tell? What are the primary messages you want visitors to take away after they have seen the exhibit?

Two key words to keep in mind while doing this are layering and interactivity. Layering recognizes that visitors will experience a museum exhibition in a variety of ways. We are all familiar with people who hurry through an exhibition and take very little time to read interpretive panels. Others, however, will spend a great deal of time and read everything. Most people are somewhere in the middle. The process of designing and fabricating exhibitions needs to consider all these visitor styles.

Visitors in a hurry need something to grab their attention. It might be large artifacts that are visually compelling. Or, spatial design can capture attention by drawing the eye to a particular area. These speedy visitors need to see exhibit headings in very large type size if we expect them to understand the message we are trying to convey.

Other visitors, those who might take more time for the exhibition, can be stimulated with other techniques. They are more likely to look at more museum objects, photographs and documents. They may also read text blocks and labels. To be effective, labels or text panels need relation to actual things in the exhibition. Too often, smaller museums retain labels for items after changing their exhibit. Also, be succinct because most visitors will not read lengthy descriptions.

Some visitors, of course, will take much more time. We can engage them at even higher levels. They are more likely to want to share what they learn with others if they are in a group. They are the visitors who would sit down at tables with reading materials that allow them to explore more content. And they are more likely to interact with employees or volunteers who do demonstrations or portray historic characters.

Interactivity refers to techniques in which visitors are no longer passive but can take an active role in an exhibition. Interactivity is not just a passing fad. We know from numerous studies of learning development that people of all ages remember much more about an experience if they participate actively, as opposed to simply reading, seeing, or hearing something. In museum exhibitions, interactives can be simple or complicated. Most smaller organizations lack the resources to design, fabricate, and maintain complicated interactives, so it is best to use tried and true techniques. Things that work well include allowing people to handle reproductions or artifacts from the educational collections, role playing, games and puzzles, simulations of work situations, and mastering crafts and tools through "make it, take it" programs.

Spock says learning works best when it is informal. Exhibition visitors learn more when they are active participants and not preached to by an authority. Planners of good history exhibitions need to understand visitors' prior knowledge with a particular subject and use it to engage them. Spock suggests using stories of human experience common enough to be familiar to today's visitors, emphasizing the voices of real people from the past. He also advocates exhibitions representing the diversity of peoples, communities and roles to engage visitors' empathy and emotion. Spock does not avoid controversial issues in exhibitions, but presents clear, balanced accounts that do not impose one viewpoint over another. He believes visitors are perfectly able to decide for themselves, even allowing issues with contemporary parallels or implications to come to the foreground. Lastly, exhibits are to be welcoming, aesthetically pleasing, comfortable, and accessible to all.

Public Programs in Our Museums.

Public programs generally are history programs with some kind of human interaction. Every local history organization does public programming in some way. Perhaps the most common public programs are guided tours with a docent.

Researchers who study how people learn tell us that most people's tolerance for listening is limited to eight minutes. Many docents are aware of this and make sure they do not spend any longer than eight minutes at any one station. They also notice obvious body language from visitors who begin shifting their weight to relieve tired legs. When visitors are physically uncomfortable, they cannot listen as well.

[7] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* revised edition (Nashville, TN: AASLH, 1967): 9.

[8] Barbara Franco. "What's New in Exhibits?" *Cultural Resource Management,* No. 5, (2000). National Park Service http://crm.cr.nps.gov/archive/23-05/23-05-14.pdf.

[9] Dan Spock, presentation titled "Exhibits: More than Displays" at workshops for Minnesota's Historical Organizations, spring 2002.

Costumed interpreters lead a growing number of guided programs. There are many variants, from strict first person, where the interpreter never strays from a certain time period, to third person that does not necessarily even need costumes. Small organizations might need to rely on community members who have developed a program well suited for its audience. Often reeanctors, living historians, thespians, and interpreters are passionate about their subject and willing to provide programs at little or no cost. However, the organization should not allow just any program to happen. These sorts of programs require planning and evaluation too.

As with every other program, when you bring in someone from outside your staff or regular volunteers, it is wise to write out what you expect from, and what you will provide to the costumed interpreter. Be aware that costumed interpretation has its own language, so acquaint yourself with basic terminology. There are different kinds of costumed interpreters:

- reenactors are the basic hobbyists for whom enthusiasm knows no bounds;
- living historians study and document things often to extreme minutiae;
- thespians can give powerful and memorable performances; and,
- professional history interpreters generally value education above all.

None is necessarily better than another, but consider what each type can do for you. Each type has its pitfalls, as well. The reenactor may be enthusiastic, but can he relate well to the public? Is he well versed in his subject? The living historian, sometimes referred to as 'hardcore,' can lose sight of the broader educational message because she is far too interested in the type of stitches and the number of stitches per inch in her garments. The thespian, while powerful and memorable, may not easily interact with your audience while running the course of the 'script.' A professional history interpreter, while primarily an educator, may be willing to sacrifice some small parts of accuracy for the greater educational good.

Also be aware that the method a costumed interpreter uses may or may not be appropriate. Tom Sanders' excellent article on interpretation points out, "First person in its purest form does have some drawbacks." Cultural differences, willingness to 'play the game,' limitations of the time period or of social class being enacted, and so on sometimes get in the way of the educational goals we set for programs.[10] Of course, thinking about method applies to all our programs.

Costumed interpreters often function at historic sites, historic house museums, and "pioneer/historical villages." Historical environments are often the best places for costumed interpreters to work. Visitors can easily walk with their predecessors, feel like them, and even begin to imagine themselves living as their forebearers did. Here visitors can readily learn about the lives and motivations of people in the past. Of course, such environments also present other challenges such as adequate staffing, proper maintenance, a consistent message, staff morale, training and discipline, and the cost of clothing, reproductions, and other consumables.

Other public programs use onsite interpretation just like docents and costumed guides. Many local history organizations have regularly scheduled meetings at which there is usually some kind of program, often a guest speaker. Slide shows, documentaries, lectures, sing-a-longs, facilitated sharing sessions, book readings, and other such programs are vehicles for telling some important story of your community.

Public Programs in the Community.

Local historical organizations offer many public programs off site. These programs include tours guided by brochures or a recreational activity guided by a historian.

Many small history museums partner with local heritage preservation organizations to produce walking tours of historic downtowns. Likewise, countywide historical museums develop driving tours of historic places in their region or create historical marker systems which, when coupled with a brochure, tell a story about a much larger area. Even more broadly, multiple historical museums may create a theme tour, such as a tour of historic sites related to children's authors.

Recreational opportunities led by a historian are increasingly popular, and history museums are responding. Tour groups might ride bicycles down a path converted from an old railroad line, or through multiple historic areas in larger towns that would be impossible to cover on foot. Some specialized walking tours require a guide, especially those focusing on faint traces of historic sites long razed. In areas with snow, a historian might accompany groups on snowmobiles, snowshoes, or cross-country skis past familiar historic sites that evoke a different feeling and association than they would in the summer. Enos Mills was a tireless advocate in the 1910s for National Parks and the learning opportunities afforded in them. His many books and magazine articles are still good advice for modern guides, whether they are leading groups through pastoral or urban wildernesses. The popularity of site-specific tours today is much the same as it was in Mills' day: people are too busy to stop and consider what they are speeding past.

Cemetery walks are a popular combination of walking tours and costumed guides. Here, after extensive biographical research, volunteers and staff sometimes portray former residents who return to life near their headstones and present a brief story to tour groups. Sometimes a historian leads a cemetery walk. The tour might encounter any number of "ghosts" or markers, but they all relate to some overall theme. To that end many cemetery walks will feature themes like women activists in the community, victims of major natural disasters, railroad workers and their families, and the community's military veterans.

A combination of recreation and history occurs at

[10] Tom Sanders. "Thoughts on Effective Living History: Interpretive Suggestions," *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine,* v. 11, n. 1 (Spring 1990): 10.

recreated "bat and ball" games. Interpreters, volunteers and the general public play "base ball," rounders, cricket, and other versions of ball games—often in appropriate reproduced apparel, but always by the historically documented rules. While the public or demonstrators who participate may have fun and learn about the game, not many sponsoring institutions take the time to make the story of the game relevant to the public watching the event. These types of games make translating history easier because baseball is such a common experience for so many Americans.

Requiring visitors to participate is one way to ensure both a memorable and actual learning experience. A unique combination of outdoor recreation and historical experience is found at Connor Prairie, a historic site near Fishers, Indiana. They decided to address a highly sensitive subject, namely African American slavery. The program is "Follow the North Star," and requires all the visitors to participate in the program as a group of runaway slaves. It is a somewhat physical program covering a lot of ground at night, where they meet various historical interpreters, from slave hunters to abolitionists and Quakers. Through first hand experience, visitors learn what it was like to be a runaway slave in the mid-nineteenth century.

At one Canadian museum that presented a lesson on the War of 1812, guests were randomly handed note cards on which were written quotations from original participants. The lesson focuses on an academic mystery: who held the cannons at Lundy's Lane on July 25, 1814, and when? With the aid of a narrator, each participant stepped forward to "testify" to what was seen that night. At the end of the program, the narrator asked visitors to solve the mystery and concluded by briefly describing the academic debate. The point of the program is not only to show a past human activity, but also to show how those events still affect people today. The visitors developed empathy for multiple protagonists through individual points of view.

All public programs should carefully consider educational goals. History organizations must make sure all their programs meet the mission in some way and are evaluated to see whether the program furthers its mission. Evaluation does not have to be complex, just conducted methodically to produce meaningful feedback in guiding the future of the program.

Publications and Other Indirect Programs

One of the most common ways that local historical organizations tell stories is through research, writing and publication. Unlike the other interpretive programs discussed, publications do not require someone to visit the museum or historic site or register for a program. Much of what has been said about other interpretive vehicles applies. Just be careful to note that publications have a different impact than a temporary museum exhibition or a costumed portrayal at a historic site. Publications are more widely accessible both geographically and temporally.

Whether books or essays, publications differ in another way from other interpretive programs. The historical writer has a fundamental responsibility to tell the reader how she knows what she writes. This means telling the reader about primary and secondary historical sources and making it clear how they are used.

Local history publications also allow for the retelling of history when new information is available. Although reprinting an old history might be a fine project, a better one—although much more difficult and time consuming—would be to undertake new histories, which, in the words of Carol Kammen, "change what needs to be altered and challenge what needs to be questioned." [11]

In recent years, historical organizations have begun to undertake other forms of interpretive programs such as the production of curricular material for schools and now interpretive programs on Web sites. At this time, larger organizations are mostly producing such programs, but in the future they will likely become common in smaller local organizations as well. These programs require solid planning, maintenance, and evaluation just like any other interpretive program. Additionally curricula require collaboration with the teachers whom you intend to use it.

CONCLUSION: WE CAN ALWAYS DO BETTER

Local historians know their work is never done. Just planning, researching and implementing an interpretive program is not the end. All programs need to be evaluated, and then adjusted to improve or discontinue them if need be. Large historical organizations regularly evaluate projects, but smaller organizations without the same resources can do the same. In fact, increasingly, government, foundation and corporate funders demand that evaluation be a component of every program.

Done well, interpretation helps audiences connect with the past in personal ways by drawing on first-person accounts of human activity. The best interpretive programs are well organized, based on sound historical research, and have clear objectives. They are tailored to diverse audiences and ways of learning. While keeping education at the forefront, they let audiences draw their own conclusions about the past. With interpretative programs, we play the ancient and honorable role of storyteller. When we tell stories well, no matter whether our organization is large or small, we know we are carrying out our mission.

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[11] Carol Kammen. *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What it Means.* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1986): 38.

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AASLH
TECHNICAL LEAFLET #244
A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

How Sustainable Is Your Historic House Museum?

By AASLH's Historic House Affinity Group Committee

Dateline: **Anytown, USA**
Headline: **Historic House Museum Permanently Closed**

Unfortunately this is an all too common story these days as funding for small museums becomes scarce, hours donated to docent programs and boards of directors decline, and the public has multiple educational and recreational venues from which to choose. As staff and volunteers at historic house museums, we understand the need to preserve and interpret local history and relate it to broader regional and national themes. But the myriad of challenges we face, including declining public visitation and mounting maintenance expenses, can sometimes be overwhelming.

How can your historic house museum avoid pitfalls and take advantage of help that is available? How do you even know if your organization is in trouble or if it is just experiencing a couple of bad years? The Historic House Committee of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) is tackling these questions in an effort to forestall the decline of historic house museums in peril and outline a path back to a healthy and vigorous future.

Background

The purpose of this technical leaflet is to provide boards and staff of historic house museums with a tool for assessing the long-term strength, stability, and staying power of their own missions, governance, programmatic, financial, and stewardship responsibilities and activities. It is the result of work begun in 1999 by AASLH's Historic House Committee and with conferences sponsored by AASLH, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the American Association for Museums in both 2002 and 2006. The issue of "too many house museums" led to discussions of what makes a historic house museum sustainable and which historic house museums might serve as good examples of sustainability. In 2006, the Historic House Committee initiated a project to identify characteristics of sustainable historic house museums and to pinpoint characteristics of historic house museums at risk. The purpose of this leaflet is to generate ideas and discussion regarding long-term sustainability, defined as the long-term capacity of a stewardship organization to ensure adequate audiences and financial support to preserve and maintain its buildings and landscapes.

In developing this leaflet, the Committee asked for feedback from AASLH members at two AASLH Annual Meetings in 2007 and 2008, from leaders in the field, and from some funders. The Committee initially based the examples of sustainable historic house museums included in this leaflet on a thorough search for house museums to consider for examples of sustainability. Once we compiled a list of house museums to consider, we engaged in a comprehensive vetting process that included interviews with executive directors and other staff, review of some specific house museum documents including financial records, review of Guidestar and other public financial records, programmatic offerings, visitation statistics, community participation and value, professional and board development activities, the state of buildings and collections, and the state of board recruitment and staff turnover. In addition, staff at historic house museums chosen as examples of a particular characteristic were then asked questions specific to that area.

This list of characteristics is intended as a tool for self-assessment. Each sustainable characteristic is followed by a set of questions for reflection and discussion. It is unlikely that any one historic house museum would answer "yes" to all of these questions. However, more "yes" answers will indicate a higher likelihood of sustainability over time.

At the end of each set of questions, there is an example of a historic house museum that addresses those questions and associated solutions head-on. Most of the historic house museums cited as examples for one section could be used to as examples for any or all of the sections. In fact, in preparing this leaflet, it was difficult to assign these house museums to any one area.

This sustainability tool provides historic house museum leaders with the bookends needed to ask questions and evaluate responsive actions and it supplements the AASLH Standards Program currently in development. Staff, board, and volunteers of historic house museums who are asking questions and seeking answers might start with this tool, then use the Standards Program to develop and map corrections once it is available to the field beginning in June 2009.[1]

In presenting this tool, the Committee included historic house museums with a variety of governance and management arrangements. One is a property of the National Trust, one is a state-owned and managed site, several operate with independent boards, and one example is a consortium of historic house museums. The committee also considered geographic representation. We urge readers to contact us with other examples of sustainable historic house museums for possible inclusion in a future publication.[2]

Characteristics of a Sustainable Historic House Museum

The following eleven points summarize the signs of a healthy, thriving historic house museum. While few museums meet all of the characteristics, most strong and viable organizations embody a preponderance of them. By weighing your museum's structure and performance against these eleven points, you can gauge the vitality of your operation and devise a path to a stronger future.

1. A sustainable historic house museum serves its audience and is valued by its community.

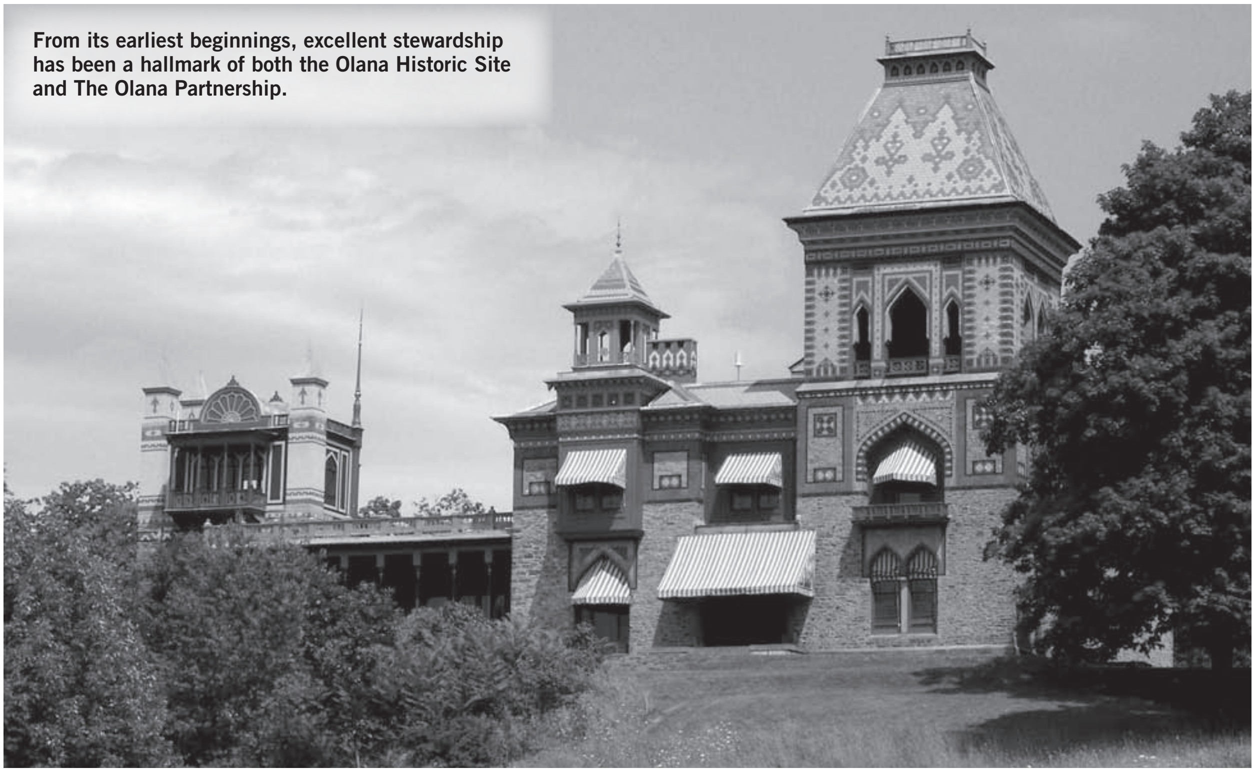
- Do historic house leaders:
  - Know the site's neighbors?
  - Identify audience needs and interests?
  - Regularly identify new audiences in planning programs and events?
- Do community groups and local institutions invite historic house leaders to participate in their programs and plans?

In Practice: Awbury Arboretum Association—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (www.awbury.org)

Mission: *The Awbury Arboretum Association's mission is to preserve and interpret Awbury's historic house and landscape, thereby connecting an urban community with nature and history.*

In Action: The Awbury Arboretum Association is located within the historic district of Awbury Arboretum. Homes surround this historic site and neighbors serve on the board. It strives to instill values of preservation, conservation, and sustainability of the natural and built environment, through job train-

NYS OPRHP, Olana State Historic Site



From its earliest beginnings, excellent stewardship has been a hallmark of both the Olana Historic Site and The Olana Partnership.

ing and educational programs endorsed and supported by the neighborhood and community. Beginning with educational programming geared to local children who rarely experience the outdoors, Awbury has been in the forefront of environmental education in the section of Philadelphia known as Germantown.

In 2005, the site expanded its programming to include job training for at-risk young adults from eighteen to twenty-four years of age. As a result of the success of the program, the organization developed a for-profit landscaping company where graduates may be employed. The for-profit group is now an established, successful landscaping company that provides services to other nonprofit sites and organizations as well as local residents. In developing both the educational programming and the for-profit company, Awbury Arboretum worked with many different community partners including the Olney Redevelopment Corporation, the Philadelphia Water Department Office of Watersheds, and Germantown High School. Awbury Arboretum serves approximately 5,500 schoolchildren per year and graduates eight to twelve apprentices from its program annually.

The makeup of the board is essential to maintaining strong ties to its local community. At least one-third of its twenty-one board members must live within two miles of the site. One board member belongs to the Olney Redevelopment Corporation and others are involved in local schools.

The site's organizational goals for the next two years include expanding the landscape company to provide more opportunities for employment for trained apprentices and to use the fifty-five acres of the Arboretum to expand its relevance to the surrounding neighborhoods by providing science education, community gardening, and other programs that will lead to a more sustainable community.

2. Sustainable historic house museums are inspiring.

- Has leadership developed a vision statement that is inspiring to board, staff, volunteers, and audiences?
- Does the statement provide direction for the future?
- Is this statement widely distributed both inside and outside the organization?
- Do staff members use this statement to guide their work on a daily basis?
- What about the site is inspiring and why?

In Practice: Harriet Beecher Stowe Center—Hartford, Connecticut (www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org)

Mission: *The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center preserves and interprets Stowe's Hartford home and the Center's historic collections, promotes vibrant discussion of her life and work, and inspires commitment to social justice and positive change.*

In Action: The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center uses the author's words to connect people with contemporary issues and actions in order to affect social change. The Center lists its mission statement on all publicly distributed materials and features it prominently on its website. Staff ensures that all programs address inspiration for action, financial viability, and increased visibility for the site. Programs are evaluated in part based on the actions people are inspired to take following their participation.

For example, the Center hosts a series of salons that draw participants from suburbs surrounding Hartford. Guest speakers begin each salon with brief remarks that present an issue to be discussed. Next, a staff moderator invites audience participation. Each session ends with a brainstorming discussion of the actions individuals can take. When participants attending a salon on human trafficking learned of a well-known website that enabled this practice, they contacted the website, ended their own use of it, and spread the word to others about this practice. Another salon on food distribution in urban areas inspired participants to become involved with local farmers' markets and the local food bank. These salons have been extremely well received and have grown largely by word-of-mouth. All programs, including teacher workshops, incorporate a section on "Inspiration for Action." Staff at the Stowe Center follow-up with teachers to learn how students are inspired to act.

3. Sustainable historic house museum leaders adhere to a standard of excellence.

- Do leaders:
  - Model excellence?
  - Encourage and provide for professional development and professional networking for staff?
  - Encourage and provide opportunities to visit and learn about how other historic house museums fulfill their mission and their stewardship responsibilities?
- Are professional museum and preservation standards practiced at the highest level?
- Is the historic house museum recognized by the field, by its funders, by its audiences and/or stakeholders for excellence? Has it received awards or other tangible evidence of its excellence?
- Does it attract new audiences and new support for its activities on a regular basis?
- Do board members bring their families and friends to visit?
- Does staff bring family and friends to visit?

In Practice: General Lew Wallace Study and Museum—Crawfordsville, IN (www.ben-hur.com)

Mission: *The mission of the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum is to celebrate and renew belief in the power of the individual spirit to affect American history and culture.*

In Action: The Museum is located on three-and-a-half wooded acres on the site where General Wallace wrote his masterwork, *Ben-Hur*. Wallace's personal study has been lovingly preserved for over a century and contains original artifacts from every period of his life. His carriage house, also on the property, contains a state-of-the-art collection storage facility, an annually changing exhibit space, rentable meeting space, a catering kitchen, and a gift shop. This small site, with an annual budget of $120,000 and a staff of four, provides leadership at all levels of the museum profession. Their director is active in AASLH and other professional organizations, serving as the chair of the AASLH Small Museum Affinity Group Committee from 2004 to 2008, presently as chair of the Seminar for Historical Administration Alumni Committee, and as the 2010 AASLH Annual Meeting Program Chair.

In addition to being involved on a local, state, and regional level with professional history organizations, the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum has been recognized nationally for its outstanding public programs. In 2008, IMLS awarded the museum a National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries. IMLS honored the institution for its Lew Wallace Youth Academy, which incorporates Wallace's life story into lessons in problem solving, creating art, and serving others; its Taste of Montgomery County event that created an economic engine for small businesses in the area and brought new people to the museum's campus to celebrate local food and music; and its participation in the public forum "Build a Better Downtown." Additionally, the museum has ensured the lasting legacy of General Wallace with the recent rehabilitation of his carriage house as an Interpretive Center complete with a state-of-the-art collections storage facility. Through exceptional educational programming, collaborations with local and state organizations, active collections care, and community development opportunities, the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum fulfills its mission to "celebrate and renew belief in the power of the individual spirit to affect American history and culture."

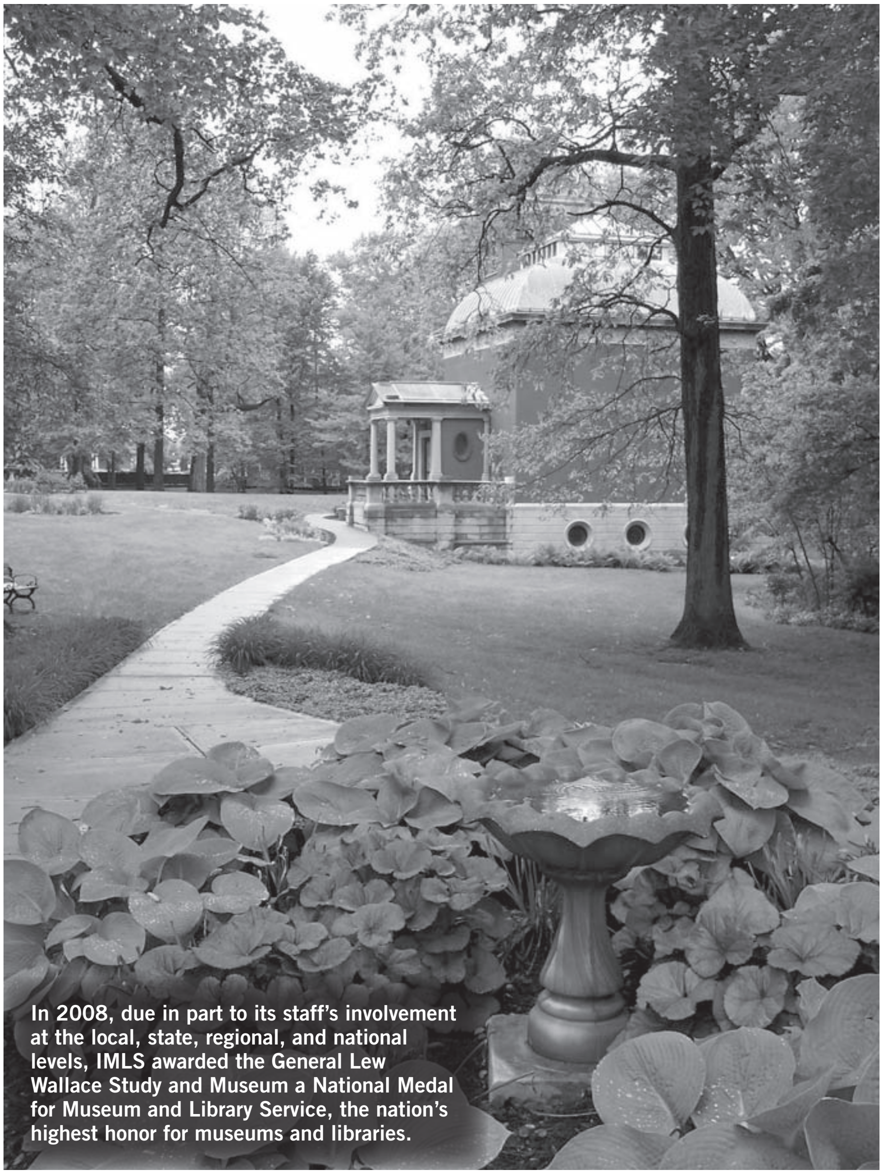
4. Sustainable historic house museum leaders embrace a culture of learning and a spirit of inquiry.

- Is there a culture of learning in the organization?
- Is ongoing scholarly research expected and supported?
- Are board members engaged in learning about the history, preservation, and activities of the historic house museum?
- Are board members engaged in continuous learning about their roles and fiduciary responsibilities?

In Practice: The Kearney Park Project of the Kearney Historic Site and the Fresno City and County Historical Society—Fresno, California (www.valleyhistory.org)

Mission: *To collect, preserve, interpret, and hold in public trust the records and artifacts that document the history of the people of Fresno County and the Central Valley region of California, to provide the community with educational opportunities through excellence in programs, exhibitions, and use of its collections, and to encourage and*

General Lew Wallace Study and Museum



In 2008, due in part to its staff's involvement at the local, state, regional, and national levels, IMLS awarded the General Lew Wallace Study and Museum a National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries.

promote the preservation and conservation of the community's historic and cultural resources with a commitment to an appreciation of our heritage and its place within our greater American heritage.

In Action: The Kearney Park Project of the Kearney Historic Site and the Fresno City and County Historical Society has a passion for California and its story, a desire to make history relevant, an interest in community building, and a commitment to create a center to address some of California's greatest challenges. The historic site includes five original structures and interprets the story of M. Theo Kearney, California's Raisin King.

Organized in 1919 predominately as a repository of the region's history, the Fresno Historical Society today houses an extensive archive that serves both academic and lay audiences. With a solid documentary foundation, the board's vision has evolved from building an urban museum in the mid-1990s to its plans for becoming an agricultural anchor today. Not rushing into planning meant that the leadership took time to educate itself, its staff, and its board members.

The staff arranged for three extensive week-long fact-finding excursions to historic sites and museums around the country, usually attended by twenty to twenty-five board members and spouses at their own expense, along with the director and one additional staff member. Staff carefully plans and orchestrates these junkets as learning opportunities to see what has worked and what has not at other cultural institutions. They prepare for each board member extensive research booklets containing pertinent information about each organization, its history, and governance. Meetings with staff and board members of the destination museums are set up in advance and are often the highlight of the experience. Being able to ask hard questions and learn from the many varied experiences of their host institutions has been invaluable in allowing the board to formulate a solid and viable strategy for the Kearney Park Project.

5. Successful historic house museums are connected to groups and individuals outside the organization who are leaders and decision-makers in their communities and in the professional field.

- Do historic house leaders regularly attend local events?
- Do board members belong to various local organizations? Do they use these connections to help the historic house museum?
- Do historic house leaders meet and correspond with elected officials?
- Do community leaders invite historic house leaders to participate in the activities of their organizations?
- Do historic house leaders and community leaders work together for common goals and agendas?
- Does the local news media report on the museum's activities and events?
- Do historic house leaders participate in regional

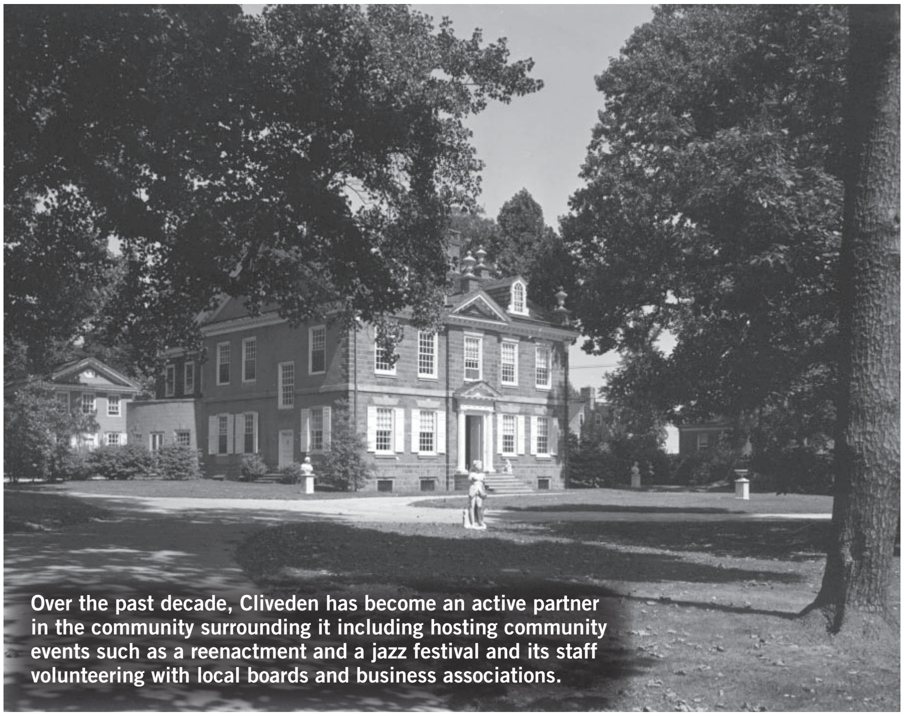
and national activities of the professional field?

In Practice: Cliveden-Upsala of the National Trust for Historic Preservation—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (www.cliveden.org)[3]

Mission: *To help people understand our shared history and motivate them to preserve it by providing access to the rich continuity of history and preservation in one community and family over time, and by offering direction and knowledge about preserving our built environment.*

In Action: Within the last ten years, Cliveden has moved from a traditional house museum to an active partner in the community and the region that surrounds it. Their strategy is to develop an approach that includes the highest museum and preservation standards for operating historic house museums and in-depth community engagement, resulting in economic revitalization. The site hosts several community-wide events on its grounds including the reenactment of the Battle of Germantown, jazz festivals, the police district's party for children, and a youth offenders program. The director serves on the board of the local community improvement association and other staff serve on committees of the business association.

In the last five years, leadership at Cliveden participated with several other community development corporations in urban planning for the area, and worked with multiple cultural, community, and neighborhood organizations to provide after-school programs, an esteemed young writers' program, and preservation workshops for homeowners in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. Its current exhibit on the one hundredth anniversary of an important local bridge has received city-wide coverage and other media attention. Finally, board and staff attend many local community events and fundraisers and participate in national professional meetings.



Historic American Buildings Survey – 1972

Over the past decade, Cliveden has become an active partner in the community surrounding it including hosting community events such as a reenactment and a jazz festival and its staff volunteering with local boards and business associations.

6. Sustainable historic house museum leaders are proactive governors and managers of their organizations.

- Do all board members understand and adhere to appropriate roles and fiduciary responsibilities?
- Are all board members involved in fundraising and/or building endowment?
- Do all board members make an annual financial contribution to the historic house museum?
- Are financial records timely and up-to-date?
- Are other records up-to-date and timely?
- Do board members attend community events? Do they serve as ambassadors of the historic house museum?
- Is board leadership recruiting new younger members?
- Does board leadership adhere to term limits and by-laws?
- Are there succession plans for board members, committee members, and staff?

In Practice: James K. Polk Home—Columbia, Tennessee (www.jameskpolk.com)

Mission: *The mission of the James K. Polk Memorial Association is to operate, maintain, preserve, and restore the Polk Ancestral Home and properties, its grounds and appurtenances, and to perpetuate the memory of the eleventh President of the United States.*

In Action: This historic house museum has an annual budget of $230,000 and manages the home of the nation's eleventh president. Mrs. Polk's great-great-niece founded the Polk Association in 1924. Through its first fifty years, the board's vision and persistence helped sustain the Polk Home as a volunteer-managed site. In the 1970s, the Polk Association hired its first staff members and began the Polk Home's transition into a professionally operated museum. Since then, the board has emphasized governance, fundraising, and long-range planning in the site's operation. To achieve its goal of site expansion, the board initiated a capital improvement

Characteristics of Historic House Museums in Peril

The AASLH Historic House Committee developed the following checklist to help identify the characteristics of historic house museums in peril. Use this list to highlight areas in which your museum may need to improve.

Vision

- ☐ Most people involved with the historic house museum believe that "keeping the doors open" or maintaining the status quo is acceptable.

Mission

- ☐ Few people involved with the historic house museum know or understand the mission.

Board

- ☐ Most board members are unaware of their fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities.
- ☐ Most board members believe that in "keeping the doors open" or maintaining the status quo, they are fulfilling their fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities.
- ☐ Recruiting and retaining new board members is challenging.
- ☐ There is not a full complement of board members.
- ☐ There are few, if any, active board committees.
- ☐ There is no succession plan for board members and no one is willing to be president or chair of the board.
- ☐ No one on the board lives in the community served by the house museum.
- ☐ No one on the board attends community meetings or events as a representative of the historic house museum.
- ☐ There is no regular board performance evaluation, either by the board or by an outside evaluator.
- ☐ There is no ethics or conflict of interest policy.
- ☐ There is no strategic plan or the plan itself is just a list of ideas.
- ☐ There are no regular treasurer's reports.
- ☐ The board is not aware of any problems and/or is taking no action to remedy them.

Financial

- ☐ There are no checks and balances in use for handling financial transactions.
- ☐ There is no audit.
- ☐ There is an operating deficit.
- ☐ There is no endowment **or** the endowment generates less than 15% of the operating budget.
- ☐ There is no planned giving program.

Staffing

- ☐ There is high staff turnover.
- ☐ Staff are reviewed irregularly or not at all or only at the time of crisis.
- ☐ There are no performance expectations for staff or these expectations are not communicated to staff.

Characteristics of Historic House Museums in Peril

- ☐ Staff performance reviews are usually carried out by the president of the board without consultation with the other board members.
- ☐ There is no one on the staff from the community in which the historic house museum is located.
- ☐ There is no one on the staff who attends community meetings or events as a representative of the historic house museum.

Programs

- ☐ There are no historic structures reports for any of the historic buildings under the care of the board.
- ☐ There are no landscape or garden surveys (if the historic house has a historic landscape).
- ☐ There is no little or no regular maintenance of buildings or grounds.
- ☐ Repairs are performed on an emergency basis.
- ☐ Visitation has been declining over the last five to ten years.
- ☐ There are few school groups visiting the house museum.
- ☐ The historic house is open to visitors on a very limited basis.
- ☐ There has been no new research on the house for more than five years.
- ☐ There is little or no interpretation of the facts or story about the house's history.
- ☐ There is no connection made between the history of the house and current events or issues.
- ☐ Docents/guides tell the same story that has been told for many years.
- ☐ Routine tours are longer than one hour.

Collections

- ☐ It is difficult to plan programs because collections are poorly cataloged or are in disarray.
- ☐ Gifts to the collection are accepted without review of collecting policies or knowledge of the current collection.
- ☐ There are multiple numbering systems for the collection.
- ☐ There is no active review of the collection for possible deaccessioning.
- ☐ Collections records are not digitized.
- ☐ Collections are not safely housed or stored.

Communications

- ☐ Computer equipment is more than five years old.
- ☐ There is no website and/or no email address or email is checked irregularly.
- ☐ There is no current 4-color brochure.
- ☐ There is no signage or other means of finding the historic house museum.
- ☐ Membership is declining.

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fund, requested a "right of first refusal" from adjacent property owners, and eventually purchased an 1880s church building to develop as an exhibit hall.

Board responsibilities and term limits are included in the organization's by-laws and policies. One-third of the officers rotate off the board annually. All board members contribute to Polk Home operations and special projects (the Association also counts volunteer work and shared expertise as contributions). Although Association members elect the officers, the board offers the nominees for office. To aid in succession planning, most incoming board members are Association committee members and active organizational volunteers or contributors.

The organization maintains thorough financial records. Financial recordkeeping is handled primarily by the Polk Home's director, the board's treasurer, and a hired C.P.A. Although the Association's written policies do not mandate it, the site's budget committee annually prepares a balanced budget. The Association's budget from any single revenue source seldom exceeds twenty percent of its entire annual budget. Therefore, a shortfall in any single category might prompt institutional belt tightening but would not hinder ongoing operations. And although the Association uses only the interest from its Capital Improvement and Endowment Funds for operating revenue, the principal from these restricted funds serves as an institutional safety net. Policies allow the board to withdraw capital funds for maintenance emergencies and endowment funds for any financial crisis that threatens the organization's existence.

7. Sustainable historic house museum leaders are proactive stewards of their buildings, collections, and landscapes.

- Does historic house museum leadership assess and plan for the best use(s) of the building(s) as part of its strategic planning process?
- As uses change, do historic house leaders obtain professional expertise in assessing structural requirements, code issues, and occupancy requirements?
- Are building spaces available to the public beyond house tours? Are they truly public spaces?
- Is there a space plan and master site plan for the historic house museum?
- Are there cyclical preservation, maintenance, and landscape plans for the historic property?
- Are adequate funds for preservation, restoration, and maintenance of the historic property budgeted annually? Are there budget allocations for replacement costs and for emergency reserve funds?

In Practice: Olana State Historic Site and The Olana Partnership—Hudson, New York (www.nysp.org and www.olana.org)

Mission: *The Olana State Historic Site is committed to the preservation of historic structures, designed landscape, site views, historical and artistic collections, and the archeological resources of the Olana estate. This historic estate is maintained for public enjoyment and passive recreational use in such a manner that Olana's natural, historic, visual, and cultural resources shall not be endangered or compromised. Olana interprets its collections and the history of its property to the broadest possible audience. The mission of The Olana Partnership is to inspire the public by preserving and interpreting Olana, Frederic Church's artistic masterpiece.*

In Action: The Olana Partnership works in concert with staff at the Olana Historic Site to leverage preservation and funding opportunities for the restoration of Olana and to advocate for the site and its landscape.

In 1971, The Olana Partnership, a not-for-profit group, was established to assist the State of New York in raising funds for the preservation of Olana. This friends group implemented traditional methods of fundraising until the mid-1990s, when the group began to attract new board members who brought a diverse array of skills and experiences to the Partnership. In partnership with the Olana Historic Site, it raised funds to hire outside expertise to develop, support, and implement an ambitious strategic plan.

Since that time, The Olana Partnership has supported two part-time curatorial positions, and a part-time librarian and archivist. It has leveraged more than $12 million for restoration and conservation of the house and the collections. The Partnership has a budget of $1 million and supports six full-time staff, including its own executive director. In the last few years, it has advocated successfully for the site, its 240 landscaped acres and its viewsheds.

From its earliest beginnings, excellent stewardship has been a hallmark of both the Olana Historic Site and The Olana Partnership. The site's first director was a graduate of the Cooperstown Museum program. Since then, all staff, volunteers, and others associated with the site endorse and encourage the value of excellence in all of its preservation and program activities. Those involved with Olana consider their involvement to be an honor of the highest order, based on the sense of place that permeates the site.

8. Sustainable historic house museums are interpreted in innovative and creative ways that extend well beyond the traditional house tour. Sustainable historic house museum programs are developed in conjunction with new sources of revenue.

- Are programs based on a central idea or hypothesis that links past to present and connects the historic house museum to the world beyond its gates?
- Does interpretation build on and enhance the sense of place unique to each site?
- Are programs presented in different platforms (e.g.,

Web, audio, exhibit, interactives)?
- Are programs multi-disciplinary in nature (e.g., poetry readings, plays, education programs that address multiple curricula standards, dances, science projects that include historic elements)?
- Do programs charge adequate admission, produce products, or provide other sources of earned revenue?

In Practice: Lower East Side Tenement Museum—New York, New York (www.tenement.org)

Mission: *The Tenement Museum promotes tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of a variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a gateway to America.*

In Action: For more than twenty years, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum has developed stories based on the lives of the inhabitants at 97 Orchard Street. The interpretation is highly researched and based on immigrant issues that are of concern to Americans today. The museum receives more than 140,000 visitors annually who come from fifty states and twenty-eight foreign countries. Its website receives more than 300,000 hits per year.

The work of the museum is designed to meet the needs of current visitors and local audiences including new immigrants. Staff screen all museum programs for the following: visitor interest and connection, fit with school curricula, financial sustainability, and historical accuracy. The museum makes available classes in English-as-a-second language and provides programming related to the topic of immigration. The museum earns revenue primarily through retail sales and visitor admission (general adult admission is $17). In this past year, visitation has increased more than twenty percent.

The museum's programming is diverse, varied, and cross-disciplinary. One of its web-based projects, *The Digital Artist in Residence*, awards virtual residencies to emerging and established artists for exploration of contemporary immigrant experiences. The museum provides work and display space for these artistic works.

Since its inception, the museum has involved itself in many productive partnerships on the local, national, and international level. Each partnership promotes recognition of the museum and its programs, while attracting new visitors and new support for its work. Major individual donors, earned revenue, and some program grants provide a majority of funding for the museum's programs.

9. Sustainable historic house museum leaders are strategic in their thinking and in their activities.

- Do historic house museum leaders understand the difference between a long-term and a strategic plan?
- Does the strategic plan include ideas and a test of financial feasibility for each idea?
- Has the board made choices about which ideas to pursue and which ones are not feasible?
- Does the strategic plan include a budget, timeline, assignment of responsibility, and workplan for each acceptable idea?
- Do members and other stakeholders have input into the strategic plan?
- Do historic house leaders involve neighbors and community decision makers in the planning process?
- Does the planning process include evaluations and feedback from audiences, outside consultants, other professionals in the field, funders, or others outside the organization?
- Is there an independent facilitator for the planning process?

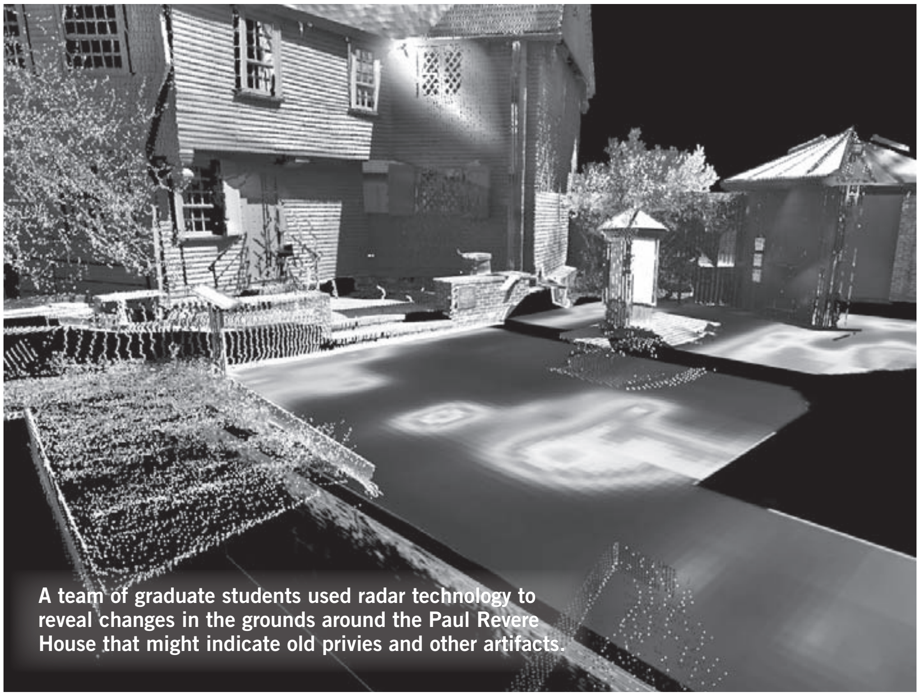
In Practice: Florence Griswold Museum—Old Lyme, Connecticut (www.florencegriswoldmuseum.org)

Mission: *The mission of the Florence Griswold Museum is to promote the understanding of Connecticut's contribution to American art, with emphasis on the art, history, and landscape of the Lyme region.*

In Action: In the last ten years, the Florence Griswold Museum has planned and implemented significant changes in its approach to visitors and their needs and interests. Leaders based all of these changes on comprehensive strategic planning that included participation by a diverse board, local community leaders, and sustained executive leadership over the course of the project. Staff worked with other outside experts on specific focused projects to ensure the highest level of planning. Beginning with a three-day symposium that included experts in several areas of historic site management and interpretation, the project has included restoration of the 1817 National Historic Landmark Florence Griswold House, a boarding house for the Lyme Colony of Artists.

Senior staff worked with outside consultants on focused aspects of the project and incorporated strategic planning for a larger visionary plan and capital campaign as well as for more concrete programs and events. The museum moved all of its ancillary functions like restrooms, meeting space, and offices out of the house and relocated them to other buildings on the property. An art gallery was built to accommodate a changing exhibition program and now the historic house offers a consistent and compelling visitor experience with seasonal changes to the interiors. Tours are self-guided, a major change that took time for docents and staff to agree on, but docents now are delighted with the new role they have that includes facilitation of conversations about the house and the art contained within it.

Several challenging decisions were met with some initial resistance. Yet in time, staff accommodated and embraced all strategic changes. Today, the museum's culture reflects the importance and continuation of



UMass Boston and Harry R. Feldman, Inc.

A team of graduate students used radar technology to reveal changes in the grounds around the Paul Revere House that might indicate old privies and other artifacts.

strategic planning for most of its activities. Visitors rate their experiences considerably higher than they did in the past and report them as much more meaningful. A balance of federal, state, private, and individual giving has supported the planning and the implementation of this major change.

10. Sustainable historic house museums that are well prepared for the future adapt current technologies to enhance their understanding of their resources, expand public access, and improve efficiency and effectiveness.

- Does the museum have computers and email addresses for each staff member? Are computers networked?
- Do the computers include software to facilitate word processing, spreadsheets, and databases for collections, membership, and donors?
- Are tours and/or other educational programming and collections information available electronically? Does the museum maintain a website and is it updated frequently?
- Does the museum use listservs, blogs, wikis, and/or electronic newsletters to communicate with members and supporters?
- Does the museum partner with technological-savvy partners who can extend uses and understanding of advanced technologies?

In Practice: Paul Revere Memorial Association—Boston, Massachusetts (www.paulreverehouse.org)

Mission: *The Association actively preserves and interprets two of Boston's oldest homes. It provides our increasingly diverse audience with remarkable educational experiences based on historical issues and social history themes relevant to our site, our neighborhood, and Boston from the seventeenth through the early twentieth century.*

In Action: In preparation for its centennial anniversary, the Paul Revere House began planning an addition to accommodate its 250,000 annual visitors. First, the Association purchased Lathrop Place, an adjoining site. Next, the staff and board developed a master plan and comprehensive land survey of both sites. This included exploring the entire historic complex using laser technology to explore what is above and below ground.

The director contacted the coastal geology and geophysics department at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and asked if there was interest in exploring the site. An enthusiastic response led to a team of graduate students pulling a radar skid plate over the entire site, revealing changes in the ground that might indicate old privies and other artifacts. At the same time, the president of a surveying company contacted the executive director and offered to do a free survey. The surveying team used three-dimensional laser technology to provide photographs of every inch of the house and grounds in their entirety. Now planning, design, and construction can begin with a never-before understanding of every aspect and dimension of the house and grounds, with a vision of what is at least ten feet below ground.[4]

11. Sustainable historic house museums are branded, promoted, and marketed using consistent graphic languages.

- Is there a marketing plan?
- Are there funds for advertising?
- Are there funds for distribution of rack cards and other marketing materials?
- Is the efficacy of marketing materials tested?

In Practice: Historic Hudson Valley, New York (www.hudsonvalley.org)

In Action: In the early twenty-first century, the marketing effort at several historic sites in the Hudson Valley was chaotic. Other than Kykuit and Sleepy Hollow, most were relatively unknown and without any branding or identity. Each one employed different messages and different graphics. Eventually, the marketing director at one site decided to work with the other sites to establish an identity and a consistent graphic look that could be applied by all the sites. Each site would speak with a consistent voice and develop its promotional materials using one design. The collaborative group of sites would be known as Historic Hudson Valley and the leadership at each site would provide full backing and support for these marketing efforts. Soon, the collaborative decided it would design marketing materials using the best resources and staff from each site (e.g., whichever site had the best website would provide the basis for the group website). The first product the collaborative produced was a coffee table book of each site with accompanying text and full color. (Individually, no one site could develop, print, or distribute a book like this and no one site could sell enough books to net a profit.)

Later efforts included a group website, a common logo, consistent-looking rack cards and websites, and a series of templates that could be used by any site or adapted by any graphic designer to create more materials. The key to success for this marketing program was rigorous enforcement of all marketing materials, including the placement of logos, font sizes, colors, and other graphic elements used by each individual site.

Conclusion:

In examining the issue of sustainability for historic house museums today, it is clear that those best suited to thrive in spite of challenges now and in the future are those that possess many of the characteristics described in this leaflet. The AASLH Historic House Committee intends that this tool will be used by historic house museum leadership who want to attract new audiences, new support, and find new purposes for their missions and historic properties. This tool can be used to quickly assess the qualities and values that are part of the culture of your historic house. It can help an organization to identify what might make a difference in organizational thinking that will lead to thriving (as opposed to only surviving) organizations. Depending on the state of your historic house museum, it may serve as a wake-up call for board members or staff leadership who can learn what the warning signs are for historic houses in peril. If your organization chooses to address some of its challenges, this tool can serve as a guidepost or benchmark along the road to progress. As organizational thinking and learning are progressing, this document can serve as a quick tool for evaluating progress.

For more information about this project and others from the Historic House Museum Affinity Group, visit www.aaslh.org/hhouses.htm.

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[1] For information on AASLH's Standards program, sponsored by IMLS, please see www.aaslh.org/IncrementalStd.

[2] See the AASLH Historic House Committee webpage at www.aaslh.org/hhouses.

[3] See David W. Young, "The Next Cliveden: A New Approach to the Historic Site in Philadelphia," *Forum Journal* 22, no. 3 (Spring 2008): 51-55.

[4] To look at the laser photos online and view a video, go to www.bostonglobe.com and call up "A Look into the Past, with Laser Precision," 19 May 2008.

[5] Silberman acknowledges the support of the William Penn Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Heritage Philadelphia Program for their support of the Alternative Stewardship project, which helped to inform her work developing this leaflet.