House Museums as Community Keystones amidst Changing Demographics in the United States

by

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A thesis submitted to Sonoma State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: The primary function of this thesis is to highlight missing discussions within the historic house museum community: How house museums with minimal funding that are dependent on volunteers can acquire key resources, primarily through community engagement. Museum staff will be able to measure success from increased visitor attendance, donor support, and greater public interest in interpretive programming. If successful, the reward to museum stakeholders will be support for their original intent: to sustain their directives in community-based heritage conservation and preservation. The Hembree House Museum, located in Windsor, California, is the case study for this research. The researcher discusses four objectives for house museums: lead relevant interpretive programs, provide ongoing educational opportunities, integrate accessible technologies, and develop “green” management plans, as evidenced by house museums with strong community engagement and financial stability. Key research topics include place attachment, community engagement, sense of place, historic preservation, local history, and marketing.

Procedure: Examine primary and secondary sources regarding historic house museums in the United States. This interdisciplinary study also compiled data from participatory observations by the researcher.

Findings: At the time of writing this thesis, no critical assessment of historic house museums exists. In addition, there is no comprehensive directory, no inventory of historic house museum types, and no census of exactly how many have failed since the first historic house museum was established. In the absence of substantive data, community-based historic house museum managers have few known resources outside of their respective communities.

Conclusions: Very little evidence exists to quantify failures and successes of historic house museums throughout the United States. The researcher invites further discussion with emphasis on collecting quantifiable evidence, including a nationwide directory, critique, and resource database for historic house museums. The concluding recommendations introduce relevant marketing strategies for testing.

Sonoma State University Date: ____________
Dedication

For Rob
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I. Introduction to Historic House Museums

Throughout the United States, historic house museums have become symbols of the American past. Each one tells a story of a person or people, a place, design style, or event. Their stories help visitors capture an intimate fragment of our collective history. One essential function is to preserve our nation’s stories as interpreted through physical spaces and the exhibit of material culture. Together, historic house museums could represent an interwoven fabric of nationwide heritage.

Some house museums have succeeded in sustaining their purpose, as will be demonstrated in this thesis. Yet, readers will see that others have struggled to keep their doors open to the public. Failed house museums become vulnerable to demolitions, adaptive reuses, or private sales. Once this happens, their ability to represent our heritage is subject to compromise or is forever lost.

House museums also act as places for local communities to tell their unique stories. Often used as repositories for local artifacts, house museums rely upon a perceived durability extending beyond the lives of the people that support them. What happens to the archives when a house museum fails extends beyond this research.

The primary function of this thesis is to highlight missing discussions within the historic house museum community: How house museums with minimal funding that are dependent on volunteers can acquire key resources with an emphasis on community engagement. Museum staff will be able to measure success as evidenced
by increased visitor attendance, donor support, and a greater public interest in programming. If successful, the reward to museum stakeholders is support for their original intent: to sustain their directives in community-based heritage conservation and preservation.

Several researchers, all or in part, have addressed the operation of house museums, and in doing so confirmed the challenges facing house museum organizations (Butcher-Younghans, 1993; Donnelly, 2002; Harris, 2007; Heaver, 2000; Merritt & Reilly, 2010). None, however, have discussed the role of a house museum in community-based historic preservation. This missing discussion among a house museum’s role, community engagement, and historic preservation became the nexus for this thesis.

At the time of writing this thesis, no critical assessment of historic house museums exists. In addition, there is no comprehensive directory, no inventory of historic house museum types, and no census of exactly how many have failed since the first historic house museum was established. Two important questions for the museum and preservation communities are: What is success? What is failure? This thesis begins to suggest ways to answer these questions. Given the lack of data, it is essential to cast a wide interdisciplinary net. For this study, the interdisciplinary net includes marketing strategies, sociology, history, sustainable planning, ethnographic studies, and the personal, professional, and academic background of the researcher.

My undergraduate and professional background is in landscape architecture, prompting people to ask why I would want to investigate house museums. It is an odd place to start, but landscape architects are in a unique position to apply genius
*loci* (spirit of place) and sense of place theories along with site analysis methodologies. Our design process enables us to recognize the best elements—and the challenges—in a given landscape.

Landscape architects collaborate and design places of varying scale, from residential gardens to new cities. Each design requires a solid understanding of place to succeed: What are the existing conditions? What structures will remain or be demolished? How do people use the space now? How will they interact within the new place? Landscape architects are required to articulate a landscape’s potential in a way that is easy for clients to understand. In general, house museums occupy places, which make them one of many dynamic components within the larger context of a cultural landscape. This is how I began to understand the landscape of place, and to understand my case study in Windsor, California.

I lived in Windsor for six years, and I observed and participated within the community both personally and professionally. I found that there was always something missing or even lost within Windsor’s landscape, specifically, character, antiquity, and a layering of history. All appeared to be underappreciated by the local population with the exception of a few passionate community historians, history buffs, boosters, and preservationists. It was the first time in my professional career and personal life that I too lacked appreciation for the place I chose to live.

People I interviewed shared this difficulty in understanding Windsor’s sense of place. Until recently, old-timers saw the community in a state of constant struggle for its identity. Therefore, I turned to Windsor’s newly formed house museum for guidance. I discovered that the people running the museum could not articulate
place, or for that matter, the past as relevant for today. In addition, the museum’s management expressed concern for their future while wondering how they would attract visitors and fund projects. Their concern fueled my interest, both practically and theoretically, so this is where I started the investigation.

Three questions consumed me: What is Windsor’s sense of place? What exactly is a successful historic house museum? Could a house museum be the key to articulating sense of place for a diverse community? I would have to set aside questions about sense of place until I had a better understanding of house museums and their functions. For this research, I investigated both successful and modest house museums, discovered a museum typology, juxtaposed stakeholder interests with community interests, and identified key objectives that would support success. The following chapters will discuss this research in detail.

The last subject of objectives bridges theoretical discussions of place with successful approaches in target audience marketing. Given my case study’s interest for business and marketing strategies, it felt necessary to provide a few “hands-on” approaches for immediate application. To do so meant taking a course on marketing for nonprofits where I developed a strategic marketing plan for Windsor’s Hembree House Museum.

Not all managers will be interested in or have the funding capabilities to extend their house museum project beyond their immediate preservation interests. For this audience, it behooves them to engage with volunteer preservationists and trades people that can assist them with their projects, particularly if funding for consultants and professionals is limited or nil. If, however, the goal of a museum’s
management is to increase both community and tourist attendance for the purpose of increasing revenues for other projects, then this is the thesis to test.

Readers may be familiar with well-known historic house museums, such as Mount Vernon, Monticello, and Hearst Castle. They represent classical histories: places formerly owned by wealthy white men. Classical history narratives certainly have value, but their value is in decline among contemporary audiences, as suggested by new discussions of slavery, emigrants, and sexuality described in later chapters in this thesis. Monticello, the New York City’s East Side Tenement Museum, and Jane Addams’s Hull House are three such examples that are well funded and address diversity subjects.

For less experienced house museum managers, however, interpretations about community diversity can be scary but necessary to pique interest and increase attendance. As a result, small, poorly funded, volunteer driven and community-based house museums might not keep up with changing visitor interests. Instead, they rely upon traditional collections set behind velvet ropes. Visitors view the exhibits once and rarely return.

Three areas of study are represented in this research: contemporary trends in museum subjects, a cross-section of American historic house museums, and a case study, supported by a sponsored endowment, located in a small northern California town.

The first area of interest investigates the latest trends in interpreting race, gender, migrant labor, and environmental histories. Why? Museums are benefiting from an awareness of new interpretive trends through increased attendance and
sponsor support. This raises the proverbial bar for house museums to meet the expectations of new visitors, if they choose to do so.

This is not to say that all historic house museums are required to become Mt. Vernons, Monticellos, or Hearst Castles if they are to succeed. Their top-down processes and traditional storylines fail to translate well for grassroots volunteer-driven house museums. Instead, success will be determined by satisfying stakeholders’ immediate concerns for long-term funding, maintenance, management, planning, volunteer support, and community engagement. Managers that adopt an inclusive bottom-up planning process will have an opportunity to act as role models for other challenged house museums.

This research has national relevance. The president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), Stephanie K. Meeks, observed at the Trust’s October 2013 national convention, “I see house museums which are not thriving. Which are barely scraping by. Which are deferring critical maintenance. Which are cutting back on programs. Which have eliminated many of their professional staff” (Meeks, 2013). The solutions identified in this thesis provide an opportunity for testing responses to this nationwide problem.

Even within the historic preservation and museum communities, there are discrepancies regarding the nature of the problem. Meeks (2013) went on to state that 15,000 house museums exist in the United States. This “best guess,” as Meeks admits, contradicted Donna Ann Harris’s reference to the American Association for State and Local History’s 1999 Directory, which listed just over 8,000 house
museums (Harris, 2007, p. 8). No census exists, so without this data, it is difficult to evaluate the severity of the problem.

Meeks (2013) cited Harris (2007) as a leading voice for house museums, referencing Harris's eight solutions, which included reprogramming, mergers, selling, and leasing options. Meeks proposed yet another option: to collaborate with for-profits to create commercial developments such as restaurants and retail spaces. These solutions are indeed valuable as proactive responses to organizational failure while assuring the preservation of historic houses. However, they respond as an end game in order to avoid the wrecking ball.

I argue that such dramatic steps are unwarranted unless museums are actually on their last legs. For house museum managers that can endure the wait, I hope that a national organization like the NTHP will undertake a monitored inventory that will quantify closures. Further, I hope that scholars will expand critiques of historic house museums, and that professionals and academics will become more involved with management, exhibit, and interpretation. This is how we stop the failures and start looking toward sustainable management. Until then, our conclusions are not tested.

The examination continues in Chapter 2 with a typology of historic house museums that will help to understand their historic significance. By combining a specific typology with historic significance, managers can improve upon their missions. Without it, historic house museums become vulnerable to aimless collections and vague stories.
Chapter 2 then examines a cross-section of house museums in terms of their successes, challenges, and failures to remain open. As will be seen, successful house museums have embraced clear objectives for a sustainable future. To succeed, such repositories must lead relevant interpretive programs, provide ongoing educational opportunities, integrate accessible technologies, and develop “green” management plans, as evidenced by house museums with strong community engagement and financial stability. However, these objectives are not enough for challenged house museums.

Success appears to include an implicit—or preferably, an explicit—sense of place articulated by the institution’s management. Chapter 3 discusses sense of place theory to assist visitors in recognizing the value of places shared by diverse populations. For example, curious tourists might be entertained by a house museum’s interpretation of unique characters, buildings, places, and events in contrast to the ubiquitous “big-box” retailers and fast-food chains that line our national byways. Locals, too, could learn from the same stories, become fond of place, adopt meanings and pride, and by proximity embrace their personal involvement. By articulating sense of place, visitors will gain greater understanding of a place’s significance for personal interest and value.

To briefly summarize, most of us have experienced this sense at some time in our lives. The emotions connected with travels to places like Yosemite, Paris, or Central Park come to mind. We may discover a similar notion sitting at a favorite café or walking through a historic neighborhood. We invest our emotions through interactions and experiences in places. We attach. Articulating a sense of place
serves to nurture this emotional attachment for long-term support. Given that house museums are by definition historic, they lend their physicality to places of special interest for visitors. If successful, visitors will volunteer their financial or participatory support.

This research began with a tangential inquiry: How can a small community embrace a sense of place, participatory action, and historic preservation? Moreover, what is the role of a house museum in a community’s place-based narrative and historic preservation policy? Chapter 4 will introduce the case study from an insider’s perspective, where both house museum and its stakeholders are new to management, planning, community engagement, tourism, and preservation. This case is relevant because its newness offers an opportunity to observe the changing priorities of its stakeholders from saving a threatened place to establishing a local institution intended upon sustaining a management plan and engaging visitors and tourists. Their challenges and successes offer a glimpse into what might be happening nationally.

Between 2006 and 2012, I resided in the small community of Windsor, in Sonoma County, California. Typical of contemporary towns in the West, Windsor’s tract homes in small subdivisions dominated the landscape with a homogeneous monotony. I observed a landscape dotted with a few 19th-century homes, most of which appeared to suffer from deferred maintenance. Two risks are plausible where old homes and their owners are concerned. Planners and geographers label such distressed structures as "blight," and sociologists address the label’s ramifications via gentrification (Brown-Saracino, 2009, 2010; Carriere, 2011; Greiner, 2010;
Pierce, Lowenthal, & Tuan, 1973). The identifiers are related: blighted structures are vulnerable to demolition. Refurbishing blighted structures, reconstructions, or new construction risk gentrification, which displaces community members. This process has typically excluded valuable participation by community members, local historical societies, and house museums. If they work together, their participation can support community-based approaches to preservation and even urban planning.

Deferred maintenance risks the destruction of older buildings and can lead to the chance of redevelopment, displacement of social structures, and disruptions of collective memory. When planners and developers eliminate blighted buildings from the landscape, Windsor loses opportunities to use such buildings in historic narratives. Replacement is easy; but there are alternatives if the community wishes to press the point: building relocation (if necessary) or adaptive reuse (depending upon the scope of the new project). The community, however, had shown little interest in the preservation of older places. As a former resident of Windsor, I observed that some of Windsor’s older structures were slated for destruction and loss.

Based on this research, Chapter 5 will summarize how contemporary museum programs, such as community participation, are transferable to small community-based house museums. In this final chapter, marketing a museum’s typology determines how house museum managers can revise their mission, establish objectives beyond saving a historic home, and move toward a sustainable future. Complementing this process is an attempt to articulate sense of place and engage in community dialogues about preservation. If successful, house museums
can lead the way for telling unique stories of place throughout our nation. By adopting a purpose beyond the limited if valuable goal of saving a historic place, stakeholders, volunteers, and staff are sustaining the physical evidence for public knowledge and consumption.
II. Stories Untapped

Fresh concepts in museum interpretive programs have attracted visitors who might not have been a part of the museum scene before. As mentioned above, historic house museums and historical narratives are no longer limited to a select few famous white males and their accomplishments. In this era of changing American donor and visitor demographics, museum scholar, Catherine M. Lewis (2005) references multiple examples where museums have attempted to evolve from “temple to forum” for contemporary audiences. Lewis cites data reflecting changes in donors, from a preponderance of white males to include “women, baby boomers from all racial and ethnic backgrounds who were mainly educated during the civil rights movement, and the young, newly wealthy.” Visitors too are changing, which suggests to Lewis that “retrenchment” is not an option (pp. 136–137). To maintain relevance, historiographies and museum interpretive programs today discuss advancements in relatively new yet traditionally ignored subjects. The following are just a few examples.

Women’s equality, gender, race, and the emergence of LGBTQ civil rights are all finding voice in both academic and museum studies. Princeton professor Joan Wallace Scott (1999) moved the historical context of gender past sexual differences toward "how gender hierarchies are constructed, legitimized, challenged, and maintained," in order to "point out and change inequalities between women and men" (p. 3). Scott’s and others’ deconstructions laid the foundation for emerging
scholars that acknowledged traditional narratives of patriarchy while examining the significant roles of women and minorities (Bronski, 2011; Hodes, 2006; Painter, 2010; Pubols, 2009).

In recent years, museums have followed suit. If not dedicated to specific subjects, as in the proposed National Women’s History Museum in Washington, DC, or San Francisco’s GLBT History Museum, which opened in 2010, diversified museums have created inclusive exhibits to encourage broader attendance. Some examples include the Oakland Museum’s Gallery of California History, the Missouri History Museum’s “Race: Are We So Different?” or the Carnegie Museum of Natural History’s “Empowering Women: Artisan Cooperatives that Transform Communities.” All three exhibits provided opportunities for visitors to participate in the conversation over passive viewing. They respond to modern trends of study while expanding historical narratives for today’s audiences.

Traditional American histories commonly emphasized the accomplishments of Anglo pioneers, settlers, landowners, and entrepreneurs. Instead, emerging research has shed light upon minority labor stories. Richard Steven Street (2004) examined the life of migrant farm workers in California as they "coped with and adapted to their situation" in roles based upon "many ethnic groups, intermediaries, associations, and individual responses" (p. xxiii). In this example, other lesser-known actors became agents in transient farming and community building. Their stories have the potential to equalize more dominant “how the West was won” narratives, thereby expanding exhibits for more diverse audiences.
As if in response to Street's research, two California exhibits recently emphasized the lives of farm workers. In 2010, the California State Railroad Museum presented a bilingual photographic exhibition, “The Migrant Project: Contemporary California Farm Workers.” In 2011, the Fresno Art Museum presented an eclectic exhibition, “California: A Landscape of Dreams,” that juxtaposed California’s agrarian landscape with stories of an immigrant’s past. Neither exhibition examined migrant labor exploits in detail, but their emphasis on modern photographic interpretation and community involvement responds to Lewis’s observations mentioned above.

Regional and national environmental histories are also finding their way into contemporary historical studies. Where traditional narratives highlighted a pioneering spirit, environmental historians emphasized the adverse impact of farming, industry, and expansion on the American landscape (Cronon, 2003; Isenberg, 2000, 2005). In contrast, Ted Steinberg (2009) examined how the land played a key role in human history. Further research included how land and people have always had a dynamic relationship beyond manipulation and dependence (Cronon, 1991; Lightfoot & Parrish, 2009). Environmental histories provide ample fodder for advanced house museum exhibits representing pioneers, settlement, and resource losses or their management.

Both traditional museums and living museums have included environmental histories in their exhibits, presentations, and research. At Maine’s Davistown Museum, its staff integrated their regional environmental history into an online narrative. Although museum staff could have limited local history interpretations to
locally well-known figures and places, they opted for distinctive additions by discussing “the evolution of a bioregion inhabited by indigenous peoples” to near obliteration by Anglo settlers and 20th-century “biocatastrophe” (Davistown Museum, n.d.)

A discussion at the Wisconsin Historical Museum, “History Sandwiched In: American Women in Environmental History,” combined two subjects not commonly paired in classical histories. Even living history museums are developing academic exercises for visiting students, as in Old Sturbridge Village’s self-guided environmental history study program. For historic house museum staff, it is time to decide if such discussions, exhibits, and narratives are right for them and their viewing public.

In each of the preceding examples, we see how new subjects in scholarly study have filtered into museum exhibits for public discourse. By developing interpretative programs based on contemporary studies, museum organizers maintained their institution’s relevance for today’s audiences interested in active learning (Kelly, 2007). However, there is a caveat: "All of this means that those who conserve heritage are under constant pressure to adjust their work in order to support this or that interpretation" (Kaufmann, 2009, p. 9).

Such adjustments cost time and resources not readily available to volunteer and donation-dependent staffs. Therefore, it should be no surprise that modest community-based house museums have not followed trending interpretative programs. As will be discussed in later sections, they commonly rely upon traditional white privilege in static displays. By not keeping up with interpretive
movements, they failed to remain relevant for a diversified audience. For the typical house museum, their small size and few stakeholders reduced program capabilities.

Unlike larger counterparts, who corporate donors fund with sizable endowments, poorly funded house museums commonly started through the passionate interests of ill-prepared individuals or small community groups. Who else but a local community will know which places are significant to their story? This investigation will benefit community members with little to no experience in museum studies or historic preservation. They are dedicated individuals who rely upon their memories of specific places, material culture, and nostalgia to instill identity. Saving landscapes, buildings, and objects becomes their methodology.

Yet, not everyone within the community will agree with preservation interests or narrow historical interpretations. Despite a shared place, ethnographic research and oral history projects indicate that individuals and groups remember events and places differently (Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Ferguson, & Anyon, 2009; Portelli, 1991). Thus, community preservationists must accept challenges in recognizing the history of memory and of the many, not their memories as a singular history. To reinterpret this as a question: Will museum stakeholders choose to convey an exclusive story or embrace the multiple viewpoints all stories have?

Thus, multivocal histories are contestable. Where one community group might remember a place representing a pioneering spirit, another could see it as an ancestral land lost in battle. A case in point is Phoebe Kropp's (2006) description of tensions in "Californians’ fanciful cultural memory of the Spanish past and its ramifications for Mexican–Anglo relations" (p. xiii). How one community of interests
interprets a place and its past will undoubtedly be challenged by another, yet both could have equal representation in history and interpretation for museum audiences. What appears to be a conflict is actually an opportunity for inclusion.

The relationship between community and place also provided an intriguing area of study. Both appear to depend upon each other like the voussoirs that form an Etruscan arch. They also support sense of place narratives that, if aligned, can nurture collective memories, place attachments, and inclusive narratives. Taking the architectural metaphor further, an arch made up of honed stones depends upon its keystone to be structurally sound. Here is an opportunity for historic house museums to position themselves as community keystones.

In this thesis, I broadly identify the voussoirs as shared stories of place that make up the community's viable foundation, whereby their keystone, or house museum, can lock in a sense of place. If successful at securing community representation, I argue that a house museum will weather economic downturns and/or maintenance challenges. In doing so, they have an opportunity to retain relevance as community interests and diasporas shift. This suggests that a symbiosis could occur, whereby the house museum will act as a representative to the same interests and voices.

Researching community-based preservation subjects requires an interdisciplinary approach. Scholar and preservationist, Ned Kaufmann (2004) challenged his peers in preservation to heed an interdisciplinary call. "Preservationists debate problems of authenticity, integrity, architectural quality, stylistic purity, and significance, [while] citizens seem to worry more about loss of
character, pleasure, or usefulness in the places they inhabit and love, of the ability to recall the past in them, of being forced to leave them." Kaufmann continued to note that "preservationists are hardly alone in missing the brass ring here: Both the environmental movement and the historical museums could have addressed the cultural dimensions of the environment but, until recently, largely haven't" (p. 314). A practicum in historic preservation appears to be no longer sufficient for adapting to community interests, should it wish to remain relevant in modern American culture.

Instead, preservationists need to step outside of their period displays. They would benefit from seeking out others to assist with planning, research, interpretation, and display. The NTHP's Forum Journal is rife with interdisciplinary calls. For example, the director of Sustainability for the NTHP, Patrice Frey (2012), summarized the journal's intent to "help Forum members understand the latest thinking and current practices relating to the integration of sustainability and historic preservation" (p. 4). In response, the subsequent discussions addressed working with planners, architects, energy providers, and policy makers on adapting older buildings for energy conservation.

Sustainable subjects were not limited to "green" preservationists that argued, "the greenest building is one that is already built" (Elefante, 2012, p. 62). To maintain relevance, some preservationists have taken a holistic approach. Leading preservationists call for a broader look at places to conserve over specific buildings to preserve (Michael, 2010). In other words, the time is right to stop fixating on static practices of saving buildings (preservation) and start integrating spared
historic buildings into local heritage, culture, and economies (conservation) that change over time. Historic buildings as retailers, office spaces, restaurants, places of worship, event centers and community centers, are examples of making active places from static exhibits. We have the ability to resist demolition and displacement due to “blight” by supporting community members and the “places that matter” to them.

The NTHP highlighted several successes at conserving whole places for open space, sustainable agriculture, and a break from urban sprawl, such as natural and historic landscape sites in Tennessee and rural communities in Maine. They also coordinated interdisciplinary approaches for protecting Oatlands Plantation in Virginia and public–private partnerships at Montpelier, Virginia. After all, and as this thesis argues, "working together, conservation and preservation organizations can dramatically increase community support, access to resources, and the protection of places that embody multiple values—and lead to the protection of the whole place" (Mayes & Bradford, 2010, p. 24). As readers will see, some historic house museums have embraced heritage conservation as part of their mission.

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach also means seeking out nontraditional resources for an inclusive program. For instance, we cannot ignore how the information highway has altered how disciplines such as medicine, design, technology, and politics have incorporated data through open-source practices. The term “open-source” reflects current interests in almost any discipline with a desire to share their information for free, as described by multiple guest speakers at the
Preservationists and house museum managers can follow other disciplines’ use of open-sources for free or low-cost resources and inspirations.

One example highlighted how Cameron Sinclair, a co-founder of Architecture for Humanity, spoke about open-source architecture, stating, "we believe where resources and expertise are scarce, innovative, sustainable and collaborative design can make a difference" (Sinclair, 2006). Smaller preservation groups and house museums could build on grassroots initiatives. Their reliance on free information (open sources) and public participation (“crowdsourcing”) could make a significant difference in their success, given issues of affordability and accessibility of information to house museum volunteers on a tight budget.

Where does this introductory chapter leave us? I started by recognizing that house museums exist throughout the United States, yet there appears to be no formal data collection about their successes or failures. Despite commentary by leading preservation organizations like the NTHP, we really have not quantified the opening of house museums that failed due to mismanagement, poor funding, loss of interest by stakeholders, or even natural disasters. No critical assessment of house museums appears to exist, unless an institution gained national and international attention. Overall, there is little basis for establishing criteria for evaluating the structure or the programming for the case study discussed later in this thesis.

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1 References to open-sources are no longer limited to software codes being openly accessible. Some examples are derived from the online think tank TED: Richard Barniuk (2006), on open-source learning for online education at; Marcin Jakubowski (2011), open-sourced blueprints for civilization and farm equipment; Harvard researcher Jay Bradner (2011), open-source cancer research; and Cameron Sinclair (2006), a call for open-source architecture as a response to global housing crisis.
This preliminary data does not bode well for evaluating successes and failures, but the story does not end here. As we have seen, historians, museum scholars, preservationists, and others have already established a wealth of data to infer success. Their assessments consider a practicum of management practices, interdisciplinary calls to action, inclusive interpretive programs, and community engagement as benchmarks supporting a sustainable management plan. Yet, I see new avenues for excellence.

I also returned to my original education as a landscape architect to establish criteria emphasizing site analysis, stewardship, conservation, and sense of place. Coupled with interviews, participating in community life, observing social interactions, and comparing multiple institutions all provided a deeper and more nuanced understanding of place. The multilayered approach proposed in this thesis is only a starting point for further investigations. Chapter 5’s marketing components attempt to ensure a more solid footing into a sustainable future.
III. Walking Across Thresholds: A Museum Typology

Dotted throughout the American rural, suburban, and urban landscape, a myriad of house museums came into vogue as our nation's bicentennial was nearing. Not coincidentally, their emergence paralleled our country's bicentennial celebrations. Our country's historical subject narratives—including the founding fathers, significant events surrounding our independence, and unique architectural expressions from days gone by—act as linkages to our early nation building motivations. In the course of researching what other scholars have written about historic house museums, I discovered a typology of house museums that reflects these three categories (famous people, event, or style), and this chapter discusses these findings. Regardless of their type, house museums evolved from humble, grassroots initiatives to preserve American heritage. Indeed, most house museums began with impassioned community members who had little or no experience in saving "places that matter" (National Trust for Historic Preservation [NTHP], n.d.).

This chapter will also identify four critical objectives that have been missed by other researchers: 1) interpretive programs based on community relevance and context, 2) ongoing educational opportunities, 3) fluid integration of new information and technologies as they become available, and 4) maintenance practices supporting "green" preservation initiatives. Each objective enables modest house museums to sustain their respective missions. Nevertheless, I argue that all four fail to include sense of place narratives, which encourage preservation and
place-attachment by visitors, stakeholders, and volunteers. Further, by encouraging place-attachment in a meaningful way, museums will create support through community capacity building.

House museums occupy three unique places within museum nomenclature. Whereas large-scale public museums cater to state, national, and international interests, small-scale house museums emphasize their historical relationships to local communities. At the Harris-Lass House Museum in Santa Clara, California, for example, management encourages connections between the former farmhouse and the county’s agrarian landscape. Its management supports thematic events, such as an author lecture on the county’s former apricot orchards (Historic Preservation Society of Santa Clara, 2013). The subjects complement the museum’s agrarian significance. Other museums might emphasize fame, invention, or design. A museum typology (described below) assists stakeholders in developing mechanisms for evaluating the relevance of specific artifacts for exhibit and interpreting museum holdings.

Sherry Butcher-Younghans’s (1993) comprehensive "how-to" of house museum management defined three key types of house museums: documentary, representative, and aesthetic (pp. 184–186). Yet, few organizations take advantage of this typology. Their distinctions are described in detail below, and in Chapter 4, I will identify how the Hembree House Museum experimented with each category.

All three types are susceptible to museumification or museumization, in which stakeholders attempt to portray ordinary objects, spaces, and even local cultures as extraordinary (Di Givoine, 2009; Pavoni, 2001). In other words, not-so-selective
stakeholders found everyday material culture worthy of pedestals, glass cases, and idealization. Both the documentary and the representative are particularly vulnerable to this kind of static display, which does little to engage visitors beyond observation. An example discussed later in this chapter is the Theodore Roosevelt Inauguration Site. Museum managers recreated their static exhibits into a dynamic interpretive program in response to declining attendance.

Furnishing documentary and representative house museums traditionally involved an excruciating level of detail. Every object represented a specific period, either during the residency of a famous white, wealthy male (documentary) or a specific style of architecture (representative). In some cases, both types of house museum have been successful in engaging visitors, inviting in local community groups, and interpreting place narratives. Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia, Jane Addams’s Hull House in Chicago, Illinois, New York City’s Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater in Mill Run, Pennsylvania, are a few examples.

The third type presents a certain aesthetic collection, such as antiques, decorative arts, or artifacts deemed significant by a community of stakeholders. Their collection may or may not be restricted to a specific period in history. Butcher-Younghans (1993) pointed to the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, where "in the multitude of rooms collections of furniture and decorative arts are displayed—objects all appreciated for their own merit" (pp. 185–186). The museum’s Web site invited visitors to wander through multiple early
American decorative and fine art galleries, none of which were dedicated to a particular time.

In each case, the nonprofits that manage these house museums have successfully engaged local communities. Some examples: The Monticello Foundation sends seasonal email notifications to the local community and beyond about wine tastings, harvest fairs, and garden-related events. Hull House regularly hosts monthly gastronomic studies for the public at the House’s soup kitchen, and provides manuals for canning preserves. At the Hubbell House in Albuquerque, New Mexico, seasonal backyard-farming workshops teach locals about native seeds and foods, food preservation, hoop house construction, and composting. Although the above represent a variety of successful cases, too many house museums appear to be failing.

Chapter 1 noted that no current and comprehensive record of failed house museums exists. Yet, to date, no definitive answer clarifies how many house museums currently exist in total. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) referenced over 17,500 museums but did not differentiate a community house museum from a national institution.

In addition, Chapter 1 highlighted scholar Donna Ann Harris narrowing the count to over 8,000 by citing the AASLH’s 1999 Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States. AASLH has not updated the directory since. When contacted about current data, AAM, AASLH, and the NTHP had no available data and each organization referred this researcher to the other (Eddy, September 10, 2012). We need more research to comprehend the severity of the problem.
Despite the lack of data, preservation professionals and scholars regularly discuss the vulnerabilities of historic house museums. In an attempt to enlighten inexperienced museum managers, Potvin, Rymsza-Pawloska, and Weinberg (2010) published a reference guide discussing everything from the history of house museums to interpretation and sustainable funding. Although a tremendous resource for documentary and representative museums, there was little in the study that referenced aesthetic museums. And there was still less information on interpretive programs that emphasize community context.²

When failure appears immanent, then closures should proceed in a responsible way so to continue the preservation of the home (Harris, 2007; Mayes, 2011). For Harris, the strongest recommendations included selling and leasing options. "The variety of adaptive uses is almost endless, but most house museum stewards seem to be attracted to hospitality or office uses such as bed and breakfasts, vacation and holiday retreats, and other professional office uses that allow the public some kind of access" (p. 92). In doing so, historic preservation of specific buildings takes priority over the continuation of failed house museums. Harris’s recommendations are certainly valid, should remaining open no longer be an option.

Other scholars, such as Butcher-Younghans (1993), favored better training and education of house museum managers; professional guidance that could

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² For an example of community context, see Ruth J. Abram’s (2007) Kitchen Conversations: Democracy in Action at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. While president of the museum, Abrams initiated discussions about past and current immigration subjects with staff and visitors, literally at the kitchen table. A measure of the museum’s success was in part due to the staff’s ability to engage the community on a subject that remains relevant.
prevent closures in the first place. Assistance by paid consultants and academic researchers could be challenging, however, for grassroots groups with little to no financial resources. "There is a great disparity between the larger and more notable, well-managed and adequately funded museums—such as The Hermitage and Monticello—and their impoverished cousins, the struggling, volunteer-based, poorly funded house museums found in communities everywhere" (p. 6).

Butcher-Younghans's (1993) book provided a pragmatic process for museum management without the expense of high-cost researchers. Although it supported fundamental management practices, it failed to emphasize the primary objectives mentioned above. A detailed discussion of the objectives follows.

For the first objective, successful house museum organizations appear to depend in part on their ability to develop comprehensive interpretive programs. Many of the museums discussed in this thesis feature such programs and measure their success through increased donor support, visitor attendance, and advanced educational opportunities. Some examples of comprehensive interpretive programs go beyond wealthy, white men narratives to include their families and the communities, servants, slaves if acquired, and the family/families that supported them. Such stories would unfold into layered historic and contemporary discussions of politics, race, and gender.

Moving from simple to comprehensive stories is not without trials and tribulations, as stakeholders at the Campbell House in Spokane, Washington, discovered. Washington State University’s Janice Williams Rutherford with graduate student Steven E. Shay (2004) reviewed the results of a collaborative effort to revise
the Campbell House’s interpretive program in which graduate students and a paid consultant attempted to develop narratives beyond the home’s original owner. The museum benefitted from student research that included “the development of historical context that had not been featured in previous interpretations . . . for example, the team working on Amasa Campbell added environmental history and labor history to the traditional interpretation of the mine owner’s business operations” (p. 38). Although the museum management felt rewarded by the historical scholarship, implementation suffered from rigid scripts, preexisting stakeholder expectations, and a pedagogy that “sometimes [took] priority over historical interpretation” (p. 47).

Successful programming creates an emotional attachment to place by volunteers, visitors, and the local community. The achievements of certain American house museums suggest a correlation between narratives with a broader sense of place and interpretive programs that engage people beyond tours around a velvet-roped display. This connection anchors the museums’ economic framework as a foundation for its continued preservation.

Because interpretive programs can set the tone for a museum’s future, I next examine Donnelly’s (2002) compilation of essays, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*. Although most essays revisited "how-to" management discussions, some offered critiques of current interpretations. Concluding that house museums fail due to "interpretation [that] focuses only on the domestic life of the family," Butler (2002) also observed that, "there is little or no interpretation of issues of work, education, religion, social activity outside the household, and the many nondomestic
aspects of life that make the domestic environment possible or needed” (p. 40). For Butler and his colleagues, staged rooms behind barricades and no interpretation are no longer relevant for today’s museum attendee.

National demographics are rapidly changing. Many local populations appear ready for diversity subjects, prompting researchers to discuss how both large-scale museum and house museum organizations should take further steps to expand their interpretative programs (Christensen, 2011; Ellis, 2002; Horton & Crew, 1989; Nolan, 2007; Melosh, 1989). Specifically, Rex M. Ellis, curator for the African American History Museum and former vice president for the historic area at Colonial Williamsburg, promoted the interpretation of underrepresented or challenging narratives involving race and gender. One such high-profile discussion involved the Monticello Foundation’s recent DNA investigation. Their testing confirmed the sexual relationship and descendants of Thomas Jefferson and his slave, Sally Hemmings (Ellis, 2002). Thomas Jefferson will certainly continue to be the primary draw at Monticello, but these new discussions invite new audiences to the table.

The Foundation’s research continued as archaeological excavations investigated Mulberry Row. The residential/industrial landscape, which is adjacent to Jefferson’s home, performed as a village where slaves, freemen, and their families lived and worked for the plantation. The Foundation opened their process to Mulberry Row’s interpretation to gain broader exposure. For example, their Web site included detailed accounts of the excavation, entitled “The Landscape of Slavery” (Monticello Foundation, n.d.). Both DNA testing and archaeological research enabled
interpreters to expand their place narratives for increased relevance to a changing, diverse and ready audience.

Where places such as Monticello and Colonial Williamsburg succeeded in discussing slavery to varying degrees, others have failed. The childhood home turned house museum of Confederate General Robert E. Lee ultimately closed its doors and was sold to become a private residence (Robert E. Lee’s childhood home is sold, 2000; Harris, 2007, pp. 196–198). Although there was no mention as to why the closure occurred other than underfunding, interpretations at another house museum dedicated to Lee suggest an exclusive rather than inclusive program (see below). Organizers might not have been keeping up with modern social discussions within African-American studies that would have opened programming to a larger audience.

Lee’s birthplace at Stratford Hall, where the management buried slavery discussions, is a case in point. Found through an online search of their Web site, Director of Research and Education, J. A. Calhoun, wrote dismissively of archaeological investigations. Researchers were "hampered by the nature of most slave dwellings, wooden and flimsy, and the scarcity of their possessions." The exclusion of ethnographic studies and a lackluster interpretative program at Lee’s childhood home could have accelerated the museum’s demise. If true, then the museum failed to gain greater attendance from the growing African-American community. Their support might have saved the museum.

The challenges affect contemporary studies as well. In 2010, I visited the Anne Spencer House and Garden Museum (ASHGM) in Lynchburg, Virginia, and the
management expressed concern about being able to advance their mission due to lack of funding. Ms. Spencer, a well-known African-American Harlem Renaissance poet, died in 1975. The museum management, made up of family and community members, have not altered the home’s contents since her death. She left behind a wealth of material culture and a clear message of place through her passions of writing, collecting, and gardening.

As if Ms. Spencer just stepped out the door, the museum had not evolved toward an interpretative program. Visitors depended upon descendants being present for home tours and to shed light on the stories and meanings of the material culture. In addition, their missing place-based narratives brought to light an inarticulate context indicative of house museums. Similar to other museums identified in this thesis, ASHGM would benefit if they would interpret the significance of the home’s owner and location in the context of an ordinary cultural landscape for visitors.

The tour guides were diligent in discussing what it meant to be an African-American intellectual. Ms. Spencer used her home much like a Parisian salon in the early 1900s, particularly "when laws of segregation barred [African-Americans] from hotels" (ASHGM, n.d.). As a place to discuss early 20th-century African-American culture, the house museum would benefit from interpretive materials that do not otherwise exist. It would also profit from its continuation as a place to meet for intellectual and creative discussions modeled after Ms. Spencer’s social patterns.

Spencer’s retreat in her back garden was a place of inspiration for her, motivating a local garden club to sponsor the garden’s restoration. Despite financial
challenges and a lack of interpretive materials, the house and garden provided visitors with a visceral understanding of a refuge set within the context of a standard suburban neighborhood. In this example, an almost indescribable sense of place separated this house museum from most others.

The above illustration begs to question of why do discussions about management, exhibit, and interpretation discount sense of place? For that matter, why is the landscape so often excluded when it always extends beyond the boundaries of the museum holdings? No museum is isolated from its surroundings. In other words, is the influence of a museum exclusive to the four walls of the museum itself, or should interpretation extend into garden, landscape, and horizon that places the museum in context?

At first glance, the answer could be simple and starts with the preservation of a house in the first place. Once interested stakeholders identified a house as a threatened building, it became the preservationists' prerogative to save it from further threats. Neglected homes represent a common challenge for preservationists: a threatened building suffering from deferred maintenance risks inevitable demolition. Given that most house museums begin with an emotional grassroots initiative with little funding, it should come to no surprise that all dedicated resources are limited to the practical tasks of repairing roofs, foundations, plaster, and glass. For many house museums, their management does not look beyond these initial priorities and are satisfied in saving their historic home.

With the home saved, the management might decide that their job is complete, but it fails to address long-term issues. At the low end, managers may
wish to move on and sell the property, create a lease agreement, or other relevant 
ideas. Or they may wish to establish an endowment for ongoing maintenance, use 
the space as a community center and resource, or move toward a regularly operated 
house museum with programming, interpretive exhibits, and social events. 

If a house museum survives beyond the initial state of development, and 
management wishes to expand into the public arena, then the management's goal 
should be to engage visitors with their exhibits. This is the moment for management 
to announce, “We're open.” For aesthetic house museums, such as Villa Finale in San 
Antonio, Texas, there appears to be little motivation to emphasize context, people, 
and place over the “museumification” of contents. "By doing so, they often ignore 
the homeowners' reasons for acquiring and owning the objects, neglect the artifacts' 
primary uses in the house, and discriminate against the host of nondecorative [sic] 
items that were equally essential to the particular home environment” (Donnelly, 

Following this traditional model of decorative display, management of Villa 
Finale did little to tell the story of its former owner, Walter Mathis, who dedicated 
himself to countless hours for community-based historic preservation. Nor has 
management discussed his life in a comprehensive narrative. Visitors would benefit 
from greater interpretation of Mathis, his personal life, and his reasons for 
identifying San Antonio, Texas, as a place whose architectural history he wished to 
preserve. 

Documentary and representative house museums require greater 
interpretive skills where historical context is key to visitor interest (see Rutherford
Two successful examples were the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site (TRIS) in Buffalo, New York (documentary), and Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Mill Run, Pennsylvania (representative). At TRIS, management saw a need for significant change. Before a 2009 major remodeling of the facility and exhibits, and redoing the interpretive programming, TRIS represented only a few interests: once again, stakeholders emphasized the traditional value of saving a locally interesting historic home. The original exhibits focused upon the home’s early owners but did little to discuss its national significance. The historic home was where Theodore Roosevelt was inaugurated as president after the death of William McKinley.

The TRIS Foundation presented their program reconstruction at the 2010 NTHP Convention in Buffalo, New York. Struggling to stay viable, the Foundation sought to reorganize to gain greater visitor engagement. The Foundation determined that the exhibit should focus upon the specific period of Roosevelt’s inauguration, September 1901. McKinley's assassination occurred while attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, requiring a hasty transition of power to the then vice president. Placed within this period of significance, the house museum’s exhibits guided visitors through the events of that year.

Unlike other untouchable exhibits behind glass cases, TRIS encouraged interaction. A reconstructed oval office with a technologically advanced touch-screen presidential desk invited visitor participation. This hands-on approach allowed children to interact with the desk’s virtual typewriter and documents. This dynamic change involved funding through their affiliation with the National Parks
Service, and a decision to alter the museum’s programming away from interpreting the lives of the original owners, Ansley and Mary Grace Wilcox. The reward for TRIS has been increased donor support and visitor attendance.

The Foundation’s effort to interpret sense of place extended beyond the museum walls. Since Roosevelt’s visit, encroaching commercial interests had compromised the site’s integrity, as defined by the historic military parcel. According to the museum’s Web site, the Foundation received a former bank building (which had been built on the home’s parcel) as a donation (TRIS, n.d.). This gift by Bank of America will allow for the former bank building’s removal and return of the grounds to a spatial relevance similar to the 1901 experience. Once removed and the landscape reconstructed, visitors will gain a better understanding of the spatial context of a nationally significant event.

Taking a different approach to site context is the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy’s interpretive program at Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater. Set in an exceptional location, the Conservancy could have limited the narrative to the home’s world-renowned architect. Wright was indeed a key asset. However, the story of place would not be complete if it were to stop with Wright. Instead, the Conservancy established from the onset that their interpretive program was to include the family that commissioned Wright for the project. Visitors also learned about a general design process performed by a skilled architect sensitive to site analysis.

Wright came from a rare breed of architects that exemplified site analysis, a skill usually isolated to the field of landscape architecture. In the Conservancy’s Web site, the Conservancy described Wright as having an “organic” design process,
because his focus was always about using site value to determine architectural layout. Fallingwater was no exception to this rule. The client was "surprised" by Wright’s design, which did not allow them to see the waterfalls when in the house. Wright "wanted them to live with the waterfalls, to make them a part of their everyday life, and not just to look at them now and then" (Fallingwater, n.d.). His study of places catapulted Wright to the forefront of Prairie Style. Both Wright’s clients—and today’s visitors at a number of his project sites—learn about design concepts, spatial analysis, and by extension, sense of place.

To be clear, the interpretive programs at TRIS and Fallingwater are not the only reasons they succeeded. Nor do they depend upon their interpretative programs as the sole measure of success. At both places, management excels in establishing institutions with healthy and sustainable financial plans. The discussion here draws upon comprehensive interpretive programs intended to achieve increased attendance.

Regardless of the museum’s typology, the above examples have either inadvertently or explicitly interpreted sense of place through the people, historic structures, landscapes, and meanings. Their failure or success at place-based interpretation suggest a correlation with an overall mission that assists visitors with understanding sense of place, an emotional connection to place, and its relevance to their everyday lives. Of the examples, only the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the Hubbell House Alliance attempted to incorporate a sense of place as part of their overall missions (Fallingwater, n.d.; Hubbell House Alliance, n.d.; Thomas Jefferson Foundation, n.d.).
The second objective is providing educational opportunities. Engaging people with an interpretive program will lead to further dialogue about the subject matter. In 2007, the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Jane Addams’s Hull-House Museum initiated a dialogue by asking visitors if Jane Addams was a lesbian. This offered an opportunity for discussions among visitors that would go far beyond the traditional exhibit display. Using a portrait of a woman hanging over a fireplace, the management asked visitors if the woman was a dear friend and supporter of Addams or her devoted companion for over 30 years. The dialogue prompted the Chicago Tribune to pick up the story (Schoenberg, 2007). I attempted to contact the Jane Addams’s Hull House’s management to ask if the project resulted in increased attendance, donor support, or exposure beyond the Chicago Tribune’s article. At the time of this writing, there has been no response.

To further the discussion, the university continued with a Valentine's Day venue, “‘Let Me Count the Ways: Queering Valentine’s Day at Hull-House.’ Join us as we bring the museum alive with performances of poetry in dedication to an expanded definition of love inspired by this history” (University of Illinois, n.d.). The university heightened awareness to the museum’s past as a safe haven for alternative lifestyles. In light of contemporary national discussions about same-sex marriage, the university succeeded in interpreting the past for a modern audience.

No museum thrives without the advantages of today’s modern technology, such as Web sites, digital archives, virtual realities, smart-phone applications for self-guided tours, and social networking. For this third objective, readers must recognize that larger institutions with dedicated funds have greater capacities for
advancing their technological presence. In spite of limited funding, however, smaller institutions can take advantage of affordable or even free online resources and crowdsourcing strategies. Basic electronic capabilities in support of institutional programs, as outlined below, will help laypeople adopt technological tools and communicate their uses to museum management.

Large-scale house museums have already adopted many of these types of technologies to improve the visitors’ experience, and that experience can begin even before people actually visit the museums. Monticello, Poplar Forest, and Colonial Williamsburg also excel in this area. Their embrace of interactive Web sites, digital archives for off-site research or public entertainment, and active online communities based on social networking encourage greater participation by outside interests.

Museum information professionals (MIPs) frequently exchange ideas regarding museum informatics: the study of people, information, and technology interactions at museum sites (Marty & Burton, 2007). Referencing other scholars discussing MIPs’ roles within a museum, Paul F. Marty (2007) described museum informatics as becoming “increasingly important as advances in information science and technology offer new capabilities to help museum professionals meet changing user needs,” including metadata standards, museum Web-site analysis, and end user assessments (p. 97).

Despite the changes at larger museums, few technological advances have trickled to smaller house museums, which have limited or no means of hiring Web or information technology (IT) managers. For them, they might be lucky to find a
volunteer with the technological know-how to manage Web sites, Internet domains, electronic communications, digital archives, or social networking. When found, capable volunteers can assist museums with more sophisticated exhibits (see the TRIS Foundation’s museum).

Some readers will counter that modest house museums do not have control over their IT capabilities. Searching for technology driven volunteers may seem like finding a needle in the haystack. Yet, this is just one example of seeking out volunteers with specialized skills that also have an interest in museums, historic preservation, or themed events and discussions conducted by management. Reaching out toward IT professionals to assist with the museum’s goals is no different from seeking out a bookkeeper to volunteer as treasurer, or a school teacher to assist with storytelling.

A caveat: technological applications can easily distract users rather than support interpretive programs. At Frank Lloyd Wright’s Martin House Complex in Buffalo New York, and at Monticello, visitors are ushered into technologically advanced visitor centers before taking the house museum tour. Both visitor centers have become objects on their own, running the risk of distracting visitors from their historical counterparts. Unlike the TRIS Foundation’s museum, they have segregated rather than integrated technology for visitors.

Adjacent to the Martin House, the high-tech, all-glass Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Pavilion is stark, cold, and distinctly different from the Martin House. Visitors were obligated to watch a video set on glass screens that narrated the development of the home. Using this form of technology coupled with online virtual
tours and restrictive docent guided tours is an austere experience. Visitors may find the experience no more dynamic than displays behind velvet ropes.

Likewise, Monticello’s $43 million Visitor Center, a LEED-certified building, is separate from the museum it supports; isolation for a good cause. The sheer volume of visitors, approximately 500,000 annually, has necessitated greater control over how the site is used. For this reason, the visitor’s center acts as a secondary facility for scholarly research and expanded exhibits. However, an elaborate gift shop, additional exhibits, and the Web site appears to draw attention away from the house museum itself. Some visitors might not feel the need to visit the historic home at all. Although new technologically advanced objects (i.e., interactive displays) and virtual realities (i.e., online museum tours) are part of a diverse experience, visitors become physically distant from the historic home; the experience of arrival appears to emphasize tourism over place. Prospective visitors experience a diluted sense of place due to a loss of visceral experiences by physically being there.

One final objective remains: developing maintenance practices to support "green" preservation initiatives. “Every building starts with an environmental debt that includes resource depletion, energy, and manufacturing from the impact of construction” (Carroon, 2010, p. 7). In other words, architect Jean Carroon suggests that we do not squander our debt through destruction, demolition, or misuse.

Once again, we can turn to Monticello for inspiration. Its LEED-certified visitor’s center, including two green roofs, geothermal heating and cooling, locally sourced and sustainable building materials, and advanced resource conservation (including water storage and energy saving) contribute to a less costly management
plan over time. Yet, the upfront cost is considerable and is not useful as a model for small-scale community house museums with low revenue.

We can however, take away “big picture” concepts developed at Monticello. For example, Monticello’s volunteer and educational programs facilitate on-site experiences including garden maintenance and facility repairs. Both historic and modern practices, depending upon the application, will promote the long-term durability of objects, structures, and landscapes. Products produced by the site’s resources, including artisan wood bowls made from a historic tulip tree, contributed revenue that supported ongoing maintenance. In the above examples, participants contribute time, resources, and talent to preserve the historic house museum. Their ingenuity nurtures a sense of place and place attachment.

What is a sense of place and its relationship, if any, to house museums? Is there a tangible benefit for interpreting a sense of place? A cadre of theorists has periodically answered the first question in the 1950s and again in the 1970s. They cited a wide range of references from the humanistic perspectives of Gaston Bachelard to Michel Foucault’s panopticism. Their spatial analysis laid the foundation for their successors to articulate place, particularly in the disciplines of history and cultural geography. As scholars would soon discover, place and one’s rootedness in place transforms tangible spatial arrangements into contested meanings of authenticity, boundary, displacement, and influences on diasporas.

Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (1996) discovered that contemporary ethnographers were finding "a larger narrative in which previously absent ‘others’ are now portrayed as fully present, no longer a presumed and distant ‘them’. 

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removed from a vague and tacit ‘us’” (pp. 3–5). The ethnographer’s lens gives us an opportunity for interpreting place meanings for the modern, diverse communities they intend to represent.

For most people, sense of place is a subjective. Its roots depend upon individual or shared perceptions, emotional expressions, and the relative scale of place(s), which are often difficult for people to articulate. House museum managers can seek out researchers to assist with this challenge. In essence, “material culture, experience, and memory” contribute to sense of place, although passing this identity on to others is difficult for researchers who are not attached to particular places of study (Watson, 2007, p. 160). As Sheila Watson concluded when researching museums and community sense of place in Great Yarmouth, England, locals reimagined that past with a high level of nostalgia. Their reflections did not accurately represent the realities of the past, or for that matter, the present day.

Viewed as Great Yarmouth’s heritage, the fishing industry promoted capturing a sense of place during a golden age that ignored the realities of that era, e.g., seasonal migrant labor, gender inequities, and the industry’s eventual disappearance. Watson’s experience in Great Yarmouth suggests that interpretative programs require walking a tightrope between collective myth and academic history. This walk can challenge historians to ensure a balanced and inclusive narrative.

Another lesson learned in Great Yarmouth is that investigations into a sense of place require the assistance of paid professionals and researchers, which some house museums may not be able to afford. Although I argue for the inclusion of a
sense of place narratives, they are enhancements, not requirements. Within the field of landscape architecture, for example, professionals will typically seek out sense of place to anchor new designs in existing landscapes or places. Likewise, historic house museums might find it beneficial to budget for research that will lend weight and meaning to their exhibits for new interpretive programs.

If house museum managers wish to investigate a sense of place, the management will need to step back from the daily challenges of maintenance, volunteer coordination, and fundraising to ask, "What are we doing? Why are we doing it? What or who do we represent? and What does it mean to our community and to our visitors?" These questions open the doors to critique and context, or perhaps a more specific question: "How can our house museum convey sense of place that will evoke an emotional connection or attachment to place?"

Articulating sense of place—indeed, delving into the subconscious of visitors, stakeholders, and the local population—appears to benefit house museum management in several ways. All three groups will have varying levels of expectations based on their experiences at the house museums and with museum staff. This frequently includes—but is not limited to—a preconceived impression when prospective visitors search the Web. In the era of the Internet, museum Web pages, social networking, and published reviews all create an expectation for any would-be visitor. Museum Web sites in particular have the greatest opportunity to set the stage for the visitors' experience.

In considering a sense of place narrative, museum managers will benefit from keeping in mind their historic house museum's typology. Although no sense of
place narrative currently exists in the house museums discussed in this thesis, we can hypothesize what might be the best direction if managers were to pursue it. For the documentary house museum, interpreters can narrate why the person of interest chose their particular home, site, and community for their residence. Is the home’s setting still intact? If not, as in Poplar Forest’s extended view or TRIS’s encroaching commercial building, then a compromised sense of place could become a part of the interpretive program. Loss of setting can open discussions about change over time.

Representative house museums might have it easier, as in the earlier example of Fallingwater. Specific architectural designs can support sense of place narratives just by their physical presence. The Phillip Johnson Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut, and Mies van der Rohe’s Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois, depend upon their settings to convey the richness of their designs.

Finally, the aesthetic museum will have the greatest challenge expressing a sense of place, because its exhibits have the greatest range in terms of subjects, collections, and eras. The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum and Villa Finale are both challenged by this missing place-based narrative. Both emphasize exhibits disconnected from place. Gaining a sense of place might depend more upon a community of interests associated with the site rather than the collection.

Once visitors arrive at a house museum (of any type), the quality of the experience depends upon the success of the interpretive program. In the examples in this chapter, the most successful house museums focused upon one primary subject. From this central theme, they introduced subcategories that added
relevance and a body of research that created depth of meaning for larger and more diverse audiences. Visitors and stakeholders could then engage with the physical space and the layout of exhibits, as well as with the people, activities, and functions that are the basis of place attachment.

The test of a museum's success in creating an emotional connection to place appears to rely upon the experiences retained within individual and collective memories. Repeat visits, a healthy retention of volunteers and stakeholders, and even the routine participation in maintenance and repairs are also significant contributors. An understanding of a museum's role within the community suggests that interpretive and activities programs must reach further than the walls of the house museum and into the surrounding landscape. Be it rural, suburban, or urban, museum managers have an opportunity to examine place-based concepts.

Combining typology with a sense of place narrative is an experiment yet to be tested. Glimpses into their relationship suggest a need for further study. Yet, interpretive programs at the successful house museums in this chapter present deeper narratives that draw visitors into the story of people and place. House museum managers can of course choose to forego place-based narratives and remain dependent upon collections as their main draw. The observations in Chapter 4 suggest a need to move beyond object display in order to connect community with sense of place. Regardless of the interest in museum managers to test key subjects within this research, the challenge remains to establish critique and examples that could assist with the progressive advancement of historic house museums.
IV. Hembree House Museum: A Case Study

The house museums discussed in Chapter 3 highlighted the commonality of missing place-based narratives. Although some museums have touched upon a sense of place as a component of their mission, most have not recognized its value for inclusion. Positioning their house museum within the context of a cultural landscape was also missing, yet doing so provided significant advantages. In this chapter, the investigation focuses on the Hembree House Museum in Windsor, California. The museum expresses characteristics similar to other community-based museums discussed in this study: A determined, small group of community members founded a museum while saving a locally significant home. Their persistence resulted in one community member's contribution of a significant endowment (discussed below). Its location in a small community (population exceeding 25,000) also reflects the challenges in capturing resources and promoting to the interests of the local residents.

Beginning with its opening in 2002, stakeholders of this historic house-turned-museum initiated the goal of establishing a comprehensive aesthetic collection representing the community's history and identity. As will be described in this chapter, the Windsor Historical Society set out to use the museum as a place to exhibit artifacts relevant to the former owners of the home as well as a wide-ranging collection of artifacts found throughout the community. Stakeholders were also interested of expressing the breadth of landholdings by Windsor’s first settlers and
the significance of the home’s location near the center of town. In essence, the material culture and historic places from Windsor’s past provided an opportunity to express meanings for visitors. Yet, no interpretive program for either collection or story existed at the time of this writing. The museum stakeholders, new to the house museum stage, limited community engagement in place, preservation, and landscape.

There were two unique advantages in researching this case: 1) an active residency by the researcher who was 2) participating in an interdisciplinary study program. As the student researcher, my residency in Windsor afforded an opportunity to observe and participate in local events, policy development, and marketing strategies. This first advantage enabled data collections as needed through routine spatial and social interactions, formal and informal interviews with community members, and attendance at various meetings and events. Due to the limits of the researcher’s resources, this methodology can only suggest new directions for further research by the museum management and its consultants.

The second advantage was the interdisciplinary study. Adopting methodological processes within environmental studies, sociology, history, and anthropology provided a multilayered approach to historic preservation, community engagement, collective memory, and sustainable planning. My proximity made it easier to follow the museum’s development without excessive travel and expenditures. This diversified academic program limited monolithic and traditional historic preservation studies.
A three-pronged approach supported data acquisition and analysis: 1) personal participation and observation, 2) primary and secondary source collection, and 3) theoretical study. I triangulated my active—and therefore biased—participation in town activities and the study of various theoretical approaches to historic preservation with sources that could support (or challenge) collected information about the house museum and its community. Historic maps, public agency planning documents, local history books, and news articles provided the necessary primary and secondary sources for comparative analysis. This method enabled me to determine the Hembree House Museum's typology, evaluate the museum's current programming, and identify missed opportunities.

It is essential for readers to understand that this research has its flaws. In this case study, time and funding limited the ability to extend surveys to larger groups, interview more subjects, or collect data on the multitude of house museums throughout the United States. Where bias occurs, the discussions merely suggest by example ways in which house museums, consultants, professional organizations, and scholars can advance this discussion.

The case study is divided into three primary areas of study: 1) How the museum organizers used place-based artifacts to preserve and interpret the past; 2) how these stories and artifacts at the museum do not reflect current community demographics, and 3) what are the available resources that could help museum organizers gain broader public support in local history and preservation. The first area of study examined how the museum came into being and what the museum exhibited and interpreted. Observing the museum's prioritized collections coupled
with researching place, people, and artifacts aided in identifying the museum's typology. This preliminary data laid the groundwork for comparative research into Windsor’s past and how the museum and historical society portrayed local history to stakeholders, visitors, and the community in a way that promotes preservation.

The second section of this chapter includes a report on the field studies conducted, available primary and secondary sources, and a chronological history of Windsor. For comparative purposes, this section will also discuss contemporary community demographics and include my observations at social interactions. An oral history project coupled with informal surveys and interviews also contributed to this research.

The final section of this chapter discusses alternative resources for museum organizers. In lieu of overt financial support, alternative resources helped bridge the gap between stakeholder and public interests while promoting preservation and sustainable programming. In most cases, house museums' budgets are too limited to make use of outside resources, such as professional consultants or extensive marketing campaigns. For this section, I identified several community-based resources that require little financial investment.

In essence, we are witnessing what so many other house museums have become: places that were once saved but are now vulnerable to closure. All too often, the primary cause was limited stakeholder skills and interests. What “fix” will ensure a sustainable future? Answering this question required extensive study and analysis while respecting the founding principles set forth by the museum stakeholders.
As a Windsor resident and former undergraduate student of landscape architecture, I explored Windsor through cognitive mapping followed by analytical processes: defined territorial boundaries, needs and desires expressed by community members and museum stakeholders, and the site’s assets and liabilities (in this case, scalable to the regional landscape, community, and museum). This effort was set long before I sought to document the community within a graduate program, because I lived in Windsor for several years prior to returning to academic study. Once I decided to pursue this study, my early research informed my analysis of Windsor's cultural landscape. A few examples follow.

Daily walks, bicycle rides, and drives enabled me to understand the various boundaries associated with the Windsor area. The region’s geography of hills and plains separated Windsor from the adjacent communities of Santa Rosa and Healdsburg. Another kind of boundary, socioeconomic segregations (the gated communities of Lakewood Hills and Oak Hill Estates), provided some residents with a sense of security apart from the masses (Low, 2004). Finally, city boundary lines viewed as urban and suburban townscapes transitioned into the county’s agrarian landscapes (Map 4-1). Each border changed over time. A chronological study of maps, planning documents, and commentary in local media supports understanding the evolving cultural landscape over time.
I sought to understand Windsor as a place set within a “vernacular landscape.” As cultural landscape researchers Susan Buggey and Nora Mitchell (2008) recognized, "vernacular landscapes are accumulative; they include material evidence from previous generations as well as ongoing cultural activity" (p. 165). Material evidence exists throughout Windsor. A quick visit to Sonoma State University’s Northwest Information Center highlighted previously documented archaeological surveys and historic resources within the area.

The Windsor Historical Society could use the records mentioned above for expanding place narratives outside civic boundaries. Even some of the exhibits at
the museum reflected a sense of place beyond town limits. Evidence of a German prisoner-of-war (POW) and immigrant labor camp in the hills just west of town was one example. Artifacts from hop farms in the Russian River Valley provided another. Although artifacts, community surveys, and oral history projects could support sense of place narratives for interpretive purposes, the management has not taken advantage of these opportunities. The underrepresented versus the represented highlights common challenges among museum stakeholders.

I found a wealth of history not interpreted at the Hembree House Museum, which I will discuss before continuing on to the presented exhibits. There is no accusation of stakeholder intention here, given the newness of the museum, limited resources, and other priorities inhibiting their programming planning (e.g., maintenance, repairs, fund raising, administrative tasks). The following discussion serves to draw attention to missing narratives to differentiate between the underrepresented and the presented.

After examining Windsor, I examined existing data on the Hembree House Museum and how it, Windsor history, and historic preservation evolved as part of the museum’s programming. Informal interviews with museum stakeholders and community planners aided this research. In addition, routine visits to the museum, volunteer participation in the Windsor Historical Society, and a review of local newspapers and history books informed the following data.

In a historical atlas from 1877 (Map 4-2), the Cunningham estate, including the Hembree House, played a significant role in the development of Windsor. The surveyed 160-acre parcel included the Cunningham home with a small orchard
immediately behind the home's north facade. What is now known as Windsor Creek runs north to south within 100 feet of the home. Whether guided by land prospect or existing fortune, the Cunninghams’ interest in this site is unknown. The location suggests that the estate adjacent to the proposed San Francisco/Northern Pacific rail line and depot was influential. The dusty north–south Redwood Highway bisects the parcel running corner to corner, so rail and road afforded the Cunninghams great transportation options for the commodities they raised (Map of Windsor with Windsor Station, 1877).

Map 4-2. Thompson, T. (1877). Historical atlas map of Sonoma County, California. David Rumsey Collection.

The family, being one of the first to homestead in the area (ca. 1850), contributed to the overall narrative of Western settlement, growth, and speculative
communities, yet management presented no interpretation of this information. Located adjacent to what is now known as East Windsor (the original downtown), the parcel’s location influenced the evolution of West Windsor to eventually become today’s downtown. In short, the Cunninghams were one of several families at the epicenter of Windsor’s development.

The original parcel, though inevitably subdivided, bisected, and built out, was still apparent when looking at modern maps (Map 4-3). Here are a few examples of how the Cunninghams’ property evolved. The SMART Train, a proposed commuter train that will begin operations sometime after 2014, will pass by in the rail line’s original location at the southwest tip of the former parcel. Although reconfigured, Old Redwood Highway still exists and bisects the Cunninghams’ former property. Once completed, the extensive and wide Highway 101 (built in the 1960s) severed any connection that the eastern portion of the parcel had to its western boundary.
These divisions exacerbated a long-disputed challenge in identifying Windsor’s sense of place based on where and what was “downtown.” Yet despite all the modifications over the years, two homes and a cypress tree allée remained. At the epicenter of Windsor’s development, this site could easily set the tone from interpreting place-based narratives in support of the stakeholder’s goal of understanding Windsor’s meaning. Interpreting the family, the location, and the evolution of place over time provides an opportunity to narrate place at a time when
the community is challenged to articulate its identity for locals and visitors alike. There were further challenges to address as well.

For example, project coordinator David Bieling (1984) of Sonoma State University’s Anthropological Studies Center referenced ethnographic records that identified the core region as associated with a Southern Pomo tribelet known as *katai*. Although Bieling was unable to conduct subsurface investigations, on site mortars set within a stone retaining wall in Clara Hembree’s sunken garden supported this early research. Beiling continued to suggest that the *katai* might have been connected with a known village site, *tsolika’wi*, located approximately one-half mile to the east (p. 4). This archaeological survey suggests a known land history that existed before the arrival of Anglo settlers. Unfortunately, the museum management provided no interpretation of this information. If the museum stakeholders’ goal is to represent the community as a whole, then Bieling’s research provides more evidence in support of inclusive narratives that could encourage greater attendance.

It is clear that the Cunninghams were well on their way to establishing roots within this former First People’s territory when they set out their orchard and tree-lined drive. Their investment of time and land benefited from the railroad bringing convenient transportation for their commodities (e.g., “Indian corn”) and livestock (e.g., cattle), as noted in the 1860 Agricultural Census (personal communication with S. Lehmann, February 16, 2014). Community speculators parceled properties just east of the Cunninghams, anticipating the coming railroad. Like many early speculators in the West, the anticipation of a rail line brought hope for future development:
So soon as it is learned that the fiery horse is snorting through a hitherto unknown territory, so sure are travelers to make their appearance, and as the numbers of these increase, more certain is it that permanent occupiers will follow, trading posts be opened, and around their nucleus before the lapse of many weeks will a town spring up. As the transportation of freights is facilitated, so will produce increase, and as crops multiply, still more certain it is that peace and plenty will reign. (Munro-Fraser, 1880, p. 85)

Settlement, land investment, and as we will see, misguided speculation, are stories that have gone untold at the Hembree House Museum.

Windsor’s founders, Sam Emerson, James Prewett, and C. Esmond, began the process of establishing a town with a Main Street, public plaza, church, school, and local businesses. The Old Redwood Highway acted as the primary transportation artery connecting the county’s major towns, thus motivating locals to identify the highway as Windsor’s Main Street. Community speculators designated a plaza between the highway’s eastern side and the town’s first Methodist church (Map 4-4). The predictably named First through Fourth Streets joined Main Street, and owners of the town’s businesses flanking Main Street began to hang out their shingles.
Map 4-4. Plat of the NE ¼ of Section 13 T.8 N. R.9 W., Monte Diablo Meridian, including the town of Windsor, Sonoma County, California. H.B. Martin, Surveyors. (1866), Book 4, p. 12.

Windsor’s town historian, Stephen Lehmann, stated in an interview that an investor would soon start buying railroad right-of-ways to compete with a parallel rail line, known at the time as the California Pacific Company (personal communication from S. Lehmann, March 21, 2011). In Windsor History and Happenings, author and local historian William L. Beedie (1978) summarized the situation:

Sometime between 1870 and 1872, Peter Donahue built the railroad from Petaluma to Santa Rosa, with a subsidy payment from Sonoma County of five thousand dollars per mile. Mr. Donahue awoke one morning to find Mr. Latham and his California Pacific Company, with a Chinese work crew of over one hundred men, busily starting grade work towards Healdsburg. The race was on to reach Healdsburg through the pass into the Russian River Valley. This area had never experienced so much excitement before. (p. 50)
Latham might have encouraged Windsor's Trustees to invest in the downtown, which would have cleared access for this competing railway. Indeed, examining the accepted town survey showed the addition of a hotel, perhaps in anticipation of the coming rail line. Nevertheless, Latham's railway never came to fruition. The San Francisco/Pacific Northwest Railroad decided to build a different rail corridor between Santa Rosa and Healdsburg. This route bypassed Windsor by almost a mile on the far western side of Old Redwood Highway.

This development caused the town's identity and sense of place to wane. The rapid success of the railroad to supplant horse-drawn buggies meant that the town would miss any opportunities to accommodate tourists. Rail passengers might not have even known that there was a town called Windsor, because passenger and freight trains would sometimes skip the stop at this desolate depot. With no adjacent railway and less traffic on Main Street, Windsor declined as a destination and could not succeed in formal incorporation. The Pacific Northwest Railroad's success would have a long-term impact on contemporary attempts to identify the downtown's sense of place. New maps would show Windsor far from the new Windsor Station, which further compounded the town's plight (Map of Windsor with Windsor Station, 1877, p. 40).

Few if any new downtown structures would reinforce Windsor’s town center. Instead, investors looked to parcels adjacent to the new depot that offered greater opportunities for trade. As properties developed, the rail depot area transformed into a new downtown offering saloons, hotels, warehouses, and workshops. By 1898,
Windsor maps depicted two town centers: the new West Windsor and the older East Windsor (Reynolds & Proctor, 1898, p. 45).

The above narrative highlights a time when Windsor’s vernacular landscape was rapidly evolving through Anglo speculation and planning. The Spanish missions, disease, or a highly politicized process of land ownership displaced First People. The specifics of First People displacement in what would become Windsor were unclear at the time of this writing. Euro-American settlers would use the land for their needs but eventually subdivided parcels for speculation and profit. Chinese and other immigrant labor played key roles in the development of land and rail, as with much of California. The ebb and flow of planned development, speculation, displacement, and a mosaic of ethnic labor forces would continue throughout Windsor's history. Yet these influences to Windsor’s sense of place were not evident in the museum’s exhibits.

Similar to so many other American preservationists before them, in 1992, “history buffs” (later known as the Windsor Historical Society) sought to save two adjacent homes tied to one of Windsor’s founding families (Mason, 2009). The first, the Cunningham House, was in dire condition with a rotting foundation, walls, and roof, and only a remnant of a larger Irish immigrant home remained. Its recent history included partial demolition to make way for a new community senior center. Local historians identified the 1850s home as one of the county’s earliest Anglo settlement buildings.

The Cunninghams’ granddaughter, Clara Hembree, with her husband, Atlas, built the second home in 1931. Both homes sit on the original 160-acre parcel
owned by Clara's grandparents, is recognized as the earliest settlement in the area and includes at least three generations of evolution before subdivision and changes in ownership. Ultimately, the Town of Windsor acquired it for use as a public facility. Known today as the Hembree House, its future came into question in 1994 when the Town of Windsor planned the demolition of multiple farm structures within the parcel. This demolition would allow the property’s development as the community’s senior center. The remaining farmland evolved into additional single-family residential housing (Town of Windsor, 1994). The Hembree House itself was not at risk of demolition, although the municipality pondered the homes’ use as civic facilities.

Because demolition was no longer an immediate concern, the next question for the Town of Windsor’s planning department naturally became, "What can we do with this building?" A brief discussion considered using the home as additional office space for the town’s civic needs. Alternatively, in 1991 the now-established Windsor Historical Society began planning the home’s use as a museum site, as evidenced by their published Needs Assessment, which included requests for museum equipment, office space, gift shop space, and even a garden area (personal communication from Barbara Ray, November 2, 2012).

Windsor’s civic leaders heeded their call. Barbara Ray, a local author and historian, noted multiple civic events that quickly made the museum a reality. The Town of Windsor incorporated in July 1992, providing greater flexibility in policy and planning. In May 1995, the planning department initiated historic designation of the Cunningham House, Hembree House, and the related sunken garden at the
request of the Windsor Historical Society. Finally, in March 1996, the municipality and the Windsor Historical Society entered into an agreement to "stabilize and preserve the Cunningham House and seek grants and funding for restoration" (personal communication from Barbara Ray, October 27, 2012).

Preservation was clearly in the hearts and minds of both community members and the Town of Windsor, because the homes represented a part of Windsor’s founding story. When saving the homes from further decay, the Town of Windsor established the homes’ historic designations. Prompted by public feedback and a community of interest in historic preservation, the Town of Windsor’s associate planner, Pauletta Cangson, subsequently expanded the historic register’s scope as a community-wide, selective inventory. (personal communication from Pauletta Cangson, November 26, 2012).

Like other stakeholders before them, the Windsor Historical Society, community members, and Town of Windsor staff acted on behalf of the community to save places that mattered. Working together, the stakeholders used historic preservation as a catalyst in discussing community history. In doing so, however, the Cunningham House and the Hembree House specifically fell under the spell of museumification (see Chapter 3). The homes and their contents of ordinary objects, such as furniture, apothecary bottles, and photographs were displayed without explaining their relevance for contemporary visitors.

In the previous chapter, I discussed three types of historic house museums and used this typology to identify the motivations behind museum formations. We can now examine how the Windsor Historical Society used each type and to what
extent. Two types merged and blurred as the society addressed documentary and representative house museum concepts.

In a brochure and on docent-guided tours, the Windsor Historical Society acknowledged Atlas and Clara Hembree as the home’s original owners. Brochures and volunteers identified the home’s Spanish aesthetic as an exception within the county’s agrarian landscape. Yet the brochures, docents, and exhibits said little of the Cunninghams’ or the Hembrees’ positions within the community, or why the Hembrees selected a Spanish Romantic architectural style for their retirement home (Figure 4-1).

![The Hembree House Museum, Windsor, California. Photo by Thomas Eddy.](image)

If visitors asked more about the home, informed volunteers would talk about refinishing the original eucalyptus wood doors and moldings (Figure 4-2). In
addition, there appeared to be more emphasis on how the home was brought up to modern ADA (American with Disabilities Act) and restroom compliances (personal communication from Stephen Lehmann, September 9, 2009). In this case, modernization for public use and the restoration of historic carpentry shared significance, perhaps a natural response for expressing pride in the museum’s development and progress under the direction of volunteer stakeholders. Only a passing mention in a local newspaper described the embossed wallpaper in an upstairs room (Mason, 2008). Narratives about the Hembrees’ aesthetic choices
Figure 4-2. The Hembree House Museum, Windsor, California. An interior view of eucalyptus wood doors and moldings. Photo by Thomas Eddy. could expand upon relevant discussions of class and gender (see Chapter 2). There were no other discussions about the home’s style, layout, or location.

At the time of this research, the architect and builder were unknown. Thus, the museum could not succeed in a representative interpretive program until more information was found. There were no furnishings from the 1930s in the museum to
complement the period architecture, which would have been beneficial should the museum staff wish to pursue a documentary interpretive program. Instead, museum organizers chose to prominently display the Cunninghams’ 19th-century bedroom set, donated by descendent Mary Frost, in the Hembree’s former dining room (Mary Frost obituary, 2012). As a result, presenting the museum as a documentary museum with mixed period furnishings risked confusing visitors regarding the home’s style or significance. The using of the bedroom set as the only family artifacts told visitors little about the owners, architect, or the landscape as actors in a period story to merit documentary or representative presentations. This example serves to highlight the challenges in developing a documentary house museum. If museum management intended to display items that were solely relevant to the original owners, then all other exhibits related to the community would have to be removed and reserved for another type of museum: a challenging decision for stakeholders.

In general, we have seen that aesthetic historic house museums have been uninterested in exhibits dedicated to a specific point in time but instead emphasized a specific collection. Some examples are Russian porcelains, period rooms spanning a century, or a historical society’s collection of community-based artifacts. By this definition, the Hembree House Museum and its collection were aesthetic. Their collection appeared piecemeal with random artifacts dating from precontact to contemporary art. Next, we examine how the stakeholders exhibited the museum’s collection.
Contemporary folk sculptures by the museum’s primary donor, George Greeott, dominated one room. A hop-growing exhibit took center stage in another. What was once the home’s living room exhibited early schoolhouse artifacts, a 19th-century blacksmith’s bellows leaned in front of the room’s fireplace, photos from Windsor’s World War II German POW camp, and a collection of found Native American arrowheads, mortars, and pestles. In one corner, a collection of photos and small artifacts told the story of Fred Wiseman, a man who moved to Windsor then built and flew the first airplane in California. Wiseman then went on to perform the first North American airmail flight (Lehmann, 2011).

A small kitchen nook acted as a gift shop, and the home’s foyer had a display identifying the home as the site of Landmark Winery’s founding. Despite ongoing disputes about the winery’s founding, the exhibit included a photo of President Ronald Reagan serving guests with one of the vintner’s varietals (Who founded Landmark Vineyard? 2011). The upstairs facilitated offices, staff, and archives in storage.

The remnants of the ornamental garden, known as Clara’s Garden, can only be described as a ruin. Regardless of its state, the former novelty garden provides a venue to discuss class and gender subjects, such as ornamental gardens as a luxury feature in a rural community, or the perception of a garden as a woman’s domain. The owner’s gentile status and large estate separated them from the surrounding community and vernacular landscape.

Severely damaged garden steps leading to the sunken garden necessitated a barricade to prevent their use. The original concreted koi pond remains, but missing
plumbing, funding, and a fear of vandalism or liability prevented its restoration. Resting in a pile were small rocks used to make up an outdoor fireplace, but their relocation makes future analysis and reconstruction difficult. According to the Historical Society, Clara Hembree gathered native ferns from all over the world. Yet no visible evidence of this collection has been recorded. For better or worse, landscapes change over time.

From First People’s tools to contemporary folk art, wine and hop exhibits, and a garden ruin, the Hembree House Museum’s typology was aesthetic. Yet when prompted by visitors, docents were interested in discussing the home’s original owners and its architectural style. All of which lacked interpretation that could motivate visitors to engage in the interactive process.

Here stands a common challenge for many small-scale museums, as John A. Herbst (1989) observed: "founders of historic house museums remain unaware of the broader field of history museums and may consequently have a quite narrow vision for the house or an incomplete understanding of its educational potential" (p. 100). For the stakeholders that founded and maintained the Hembree House museum, there appeared to be great satisfaction in collecting and exhibiting objects that for them represented the story of Windsor’s past. They indeed have connected a story to each object that represented their unique view of Windsor’s past. However, the stories and the meaning of those stories depended upon visitors’ interactions with whoever volunteered at the museum on any given day. The museum exhibits stopped short of interpretation, sociohistorical analysis, and a context statement. Without this comprehensive program relevant to a
contemporary museum experience, visitors could not be expected to understand
Windsor as a place.

Evidence of the museum's disconnect with visitors was highlighted by their
attendance. The sparseness of the guest registry seemed to reflect the community's
minimal interest in the museum, which suggests poor marketing, minimal
community engagement, or both. An earlier interview with historical society
member, archivist, and docent, Jan Lehmann, noted that people visited once and
never returned (Eddy, 2010). Engaging visitors is a subject I will discuss later in this
thesis, but for now we will examine the Hembree House Museum's relevance in
contemporary Windsor.

For today's visitors, the early 20th-century Hembree House has greater ties to
the adjacent senior center facility than with the original farmland. It took great
effort to imagine the home in its early period landscape. Tract homes have replaced
the orchards, vineyards, and outbuildings. The original 1872 driveway lined with
cypress trees had formerly led from the Cunningham House to downtown Windsor,
but freeway and subdivision developments destroyed the allée's continuity.

Former land holdings that have been compromised by asset losses, sales, and
development encroachment over time appear to be common conditions facing
house museums and their management. Chapter 3 highlighted two such situations,
where the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site successfully worked with bank
owners to have the encroaching building donated and subsequently removed.
Poplar Forest is building monetary assets to buy back encroaching structures over
time. It may not be a realistic goal for the Hembree House Museum to acquire all the
former land, yet a view through the Cypress trees presents an opportunity to discuss with visitors changing landscapes over time (Figure 4-3).

Figure 4-3. View from museum to original cypress-lined driveway. Photo by Thomas Eddy.
Few of the original cypress trees are alive today. Those that remain have slowly decayed and died, partly to their natural lifespan but also from a lack of long-term management practices. Despite the historic home's preservation, the site has too few connections to its original context. Without signage, interpreting the landscape was difficult for visitors, and it is difficult for them to comprehend its former significance as one of the largest and earliest estates in Windsor with close proximity to downtown and rail line.

The leaders of the Windsor Historical Society have an opportunity to perform as an authoritative consultant for museum visitors, town planners, and community members. Their input on current developments could help make informed decisions about Windsor's heritage, significant buildings and sites, and make conscientious choices about preservation, restoration, or demolition. For example, a new hotel, restaurants, and a reenvisioned Old Redwood Highway for new businesses are currently underway in Windsor’s former East downtown. In essences, it represents a return to an earlier time when it was intended to be a commercial district rather than the diverse neighborhood it is today. Redevelopments risk gentrification, social displacement of underrepresented minorities with established cultural networks, and loss of physical places. An awareness of such risks, highlighted by the Windsor Historical Society, might mitigate heritage losses while developments move forward. All are weighty tasks given the limited resources and interests of the Historical Society and museum stakeholders.

Instead, the museum exhibits focused primarily on classic historical material: middle- to upper-class white men of accomplishment. I hypothesized that the
Hembree House Museum exhibits did not reflect the broader demographic interests of the Windsor population. To test this hypothesis, I performed three tasks: a study of available demographic research, field observations of public/commercial meeting places and associated material culture, and an informal survey through social networking. I also expanded upon an earlier oral history project and conducted brief, informal interviews.

In May 2010, the Town of Windsor published an online demographic survey of its population by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). With a populace exceeding 25,000 since 2009, the average age of a Windsor resident was between 35 and 44 with a household annual income $94,749. Between 2000 and 2014, the Town of Windsor anticipated growth in its diversity index from 60 to over 73, meaning that the white majority is continuing to decline within the community. In general, the population reflected a middle-/working-class demographic. Those residents attending some college education exceeded those completing higher undergraduate and graduate degrees (Environmental Systems Research Institute [ESRI], 2010).

The demographic study by ESRI also highlighted the community's growing diversity. From the year 2000, whites have dropped their 79% majority by 10% whereas “black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races” will make up 31% of Windsor’s population by 2014. The gains in ethnic diversity reflected an ongoing trend throughout California and the United States. As Anthony Browne (2000) reported, the "U.S. Census Bureau issued figures showing that non-hispanic [sic] whites made up 49.8 percent of the population of
California," and "where California goes, the rest of America is predicted to follow."

As Windsor's demographics continue to evolve, it behooves the Historical Society to incorporate greater diversity within their historic narratives, even to develop bilingual programs in support of the local Latino community, which could mitigate some social tensions within the community.

My longue durée in Windsor afforded an opportunity to observe subjects as an accepted member of the community. I had become acutely aware of both overt and latent racism within the white community. In general, I observed their behavior through social interactions. This is where participatory observation played a key role in data collection. I strived to fit into the community long before I tried to conduct formal research. When I began my investigation in 2010, I initiated field notes, journal writings, and interviews as part of the data collection process.

Readers might criticize the following examples as anecdotal stories, but they do support two objectives: first, to confirm particular behaviors and actions as a historic pattern in Windsor and nearby communities, and second, to qualify future directives in marketing toward specific target audiences. Researcher bias is certainly a part of this research; therefore, I encourage further investigations for verification.

A downtown restaurant owner informed me that she stopped a local group of auto enthusiasts from participating in a weekly summer car show because of a perceived association with Mexican gangs. This reference to "Mexican" is a go-to moniker that expressed distaste for certain social patterns within Latino groups. As
readers will see later in this chapter, Windsor has had a long-standing reputation for racial tensions.

Racial profiling appears in social interactions as well as local press (Callahan, 2007; Halverson, 2007; Howard, 2013). During a house party of exclusively white guests, one person referenced her new neighbors as Mexican and commented uncertainty about their employment. I asked how she knew that they were Mexican, to which her defensive response was "I'm not a racist . . . they have been doing good work on their garden wall" (comment made on September 3, 2012). Similar conversations peppered my tenure in Windsor. For example, when informing my white neighbors that I would be relocating, the immediate reaction explicitly expressed interest in preventing a multigenerational family from moving in. Their discomfort further exposed an exacerbation at having to pronounce difficult and foreign names.

For Windsor's 20th anniversary, celebrating the town's incorporation, Windsor resident Heather Cullen created The History of The Town of Windsor: The Musical to commemorate the event. Sourcing the Windsor Historical Society, the Healdsburg Museum, and two books about Windsor's history, Cullen surmised that Windsor "was a town whose residents valued family, took care of each other, and helped to serve their community" (De La O, 2012). Cullen's musical was representative of booster motivations in support of community image building. I attended the performance and observed antiquated impressions of ethnic minorities along with a manic yet charming “kitchen-sink” approach to interpretive history. Still, the “adorable factor” of the adolescent actors saved the show.
The musical opened with authentic Pomo performers singing, drumming, and dancing several story-telling pieces. There was no interpretation, translation, or transition to inform the audience of contemporary Pomo life within the Windsor community, suggesting that the Pomo story begins and ends with Anglo settlement. Once their performance was over, Windsor school-aged actors "began" Windsor's history.

A similar scenario played out when midway through the musical Latino(a) folk dancers began their performance. Once again, there were no transitions or explanations, as if foreign performances interrupted the musical. This approach to interpreting Windsor’s history mirrors the cultural divide among ethnic groups within the community. Although the theatrical event was an inspiring image of Windsor, it exposed ethnic barriers that are still prevalent within the community.

General narratives of Windsor’s development over time excluded both Pomo and Latino(a) contributions (personal communications with Bethany Hawkins [AASLH], Elizabeth Merritt [AAM], & Kaitlin Utz [NTHP], September 10, 2012). With a growing ethnic minority, how will the Windsor Historical Society contribute to the multivocality of human history? How will the museum present an inclusive narrative? Will Windsor's ethnography contribute to future discussions of community-based historic preservation? These questions extend beyond the scope of this thesis; however, I will investigate some answers in the final chapter.

Compiling data for the hypothesis also meant observing public and commercial meeting places. These places were primarily casual, which supported Windsor’s demographics as family orientated and interested in outdoor activities.
Regional and community parks were popular during the summer when boating, fishing, hiking, and family barbeques occurred on a regular basis.

Latino(a) groups were highly visible at outdoor family gatherings, basketball courts, and soccer fields. By contrast, individual, couple, or small-group activities appeared to interest mostly whites. The Windsor Historical Society should collaborate with municipal parks and recreation departments to investigate patterned activities further. Their professional studies could inform the society's varying outdoor events, gatherings, and museum exhibit content.

I also researched larger, community-based events for further data. The Town Green Concert Series, established to invite visitors to downtown Windsor, appeared to have succeeded in responding to audience demographics. In 2010, the Windsor High School students surveyed concertgoers and discovered that half of the visitors were not from Windsor (Town of Windsor, 2010). The weekly event provided an affordable alternative to expensive stadium concerts and high-priced restaurants. Other events included Tuesday Movie Nights and other destination-type events like the Vineman Triathlon. All three examples are geographically disconnected from the museum, and are conducted in or around Windsor’s new downtown. Yet, they do present opportunities for marketing strategies that target tourists and extend beyond the boundaries of the museum.

The Windsor Historical Society could have also utilized future garden reconstructions and interpretive programs at the house museum to increase community interest. Walks through neighborhood developments documented a wide range of garden styles that are not immediately apparent to the casual
observer. At first glance, the landscape matched the ubiquitous tract homes set behind them: small lawns bordered by overly clipped shrubs. This sameness dominated newer subdivisions, such as in the Vintana and Vintage Green planned neighborhoods, which emphasized New Urbanism motifs of narrower streets, front porches, street trees, and small backyards. These design features encouraged more front-yard social interactions with neighbors over the backyard privacy found in earlier subdivision developments. Developer-installed front yards compounded the sameness due to the limited plant palette.

By contrast, older neighborhoods represented a greater diversity among residents. The landscape was dotted with “do-it-yourself” stone, brick, or stucco walls and modest, floral iron fences suggesting preferences for individual expression and privacy. What might have appeared to outsiders as cluttered or even blight could be seen as a means of utilizing land by homeowners as a basic resource: storage, small-scale agriculture, or even interests in barrio-styled courtyards and gardens within limited spaces (Waldenberger, 2000, pp. 232–245). Identifying Windsor’s unique neighborhoods supports two strategies: broadening interpretive programs for Windsor’s diverse community, and marketing toward the target audiences to encourage greater local support.

The final task for the hypothesis the interests of neighbors active in social networking. One newer neighborhood mentioned above, Vintana, has taken social networking to its fullest potential. Using Facebook, the neighborhood group currently has nearly 240 members represented out of the 500 households within the neighborhood. Even the current mayor has joined because it is an effective
means of communicating community interests. Commonly posted on the group's Web page were lost pets, searches for contractors and service providers, and neighborhood watch reports.

As a resident of Vintana, I have been able to monitor the neighborhood Facebook group, develop personal interactions, and observe patterned use of both private and public spaces. The Facebook group also afforded me an opportunity to conduct an informal, online, and anonymous survey to better inform my research. The results suggest that it would benefit the Windsor Historical Society to conduct surveys for neighborhood demographics data. For example, the data collected from this new and most populous subdivision is different than the overall Census demographics outlined earlier. Subjects surveyed do not represent the growing ethnic groups in Windsor. A comparative investigation is needed to develop more detailed assessments of early and modern Windsor, as well as specific neighborhood populations. However, the data collected here represents a potential group to target for events and exhibits at the Hembree House Museum. Further analysis should also include surveys by other house museum managers and their consultants in other communities.

Of the 47 respondents, 79% identified themselves as married and having children living in Vintana. Most respondents disclosed their age, which averaged 44. The dominant ethnic background was white. Home-based businesses and small company employers with fewer than 50 employees were the largest employment groups.
Given that Vintana is a new subdivision, it should be to no surprise that most of the respondents were first-time homebuyers who moved to Windsor within the past decade. Ninety-one percent of the respondents did not come from families that had lived in Windsor for more than one generation. A majority did not have extended family within the area. This base information led to inquiries about their interests in family history, preservation, and Windsor as a place (Eddy, 2012).

Most respondents expressed an interest in sharing family history through storytelling, genealogical research, and even scrapbooking with family members. Although an overwhelming majority had an interest in local historic preservation, only one respondent could identify a historic place of significance. All other respondents confused modern reconstructions as historic places, if they could identify anything.

Half of the respondents were familiar with the museum but not with the Historical Society. Only 10 had actually visited. This data suggests a missed opportunity by the Historical Society to engage new residents in family and community history along with preservation subjects. In particular, the lack of an interpretive program meant a failure to talk about the town’s evolution as a place.

Given its predominately, if shrinking, white population, Vintana would benefit from interpretive programming that raises awareness of ethnic issues and even pre-Anglo history. Both could engage existing and emerging populations with local history and contemporary social issues.

When asked for the best word to describe Windsor, subjects primarily responded with "community," "town," and "green." “Town Green” referenced the
community’s new downtown square, which acted as a hub for social interactions, shopping, dining, and the weekly summer concerts discussed above. Their focus upon the town center should suggest to the Windsor Historical Society an opportunity to engage community members in this location. Two examples to consider: expand existing downtown historic walking tours to discuss the development of the Town Green, and station an information booth at Town Green events.

The Town Green also came to mind when respondents were asked to describe Windsor’s landscape, yet its locality as a town center took precedence over its physical configuration. Responses included a general awareness of nearby trees, hills, and vineyards along with the area’s general beauty. Of course, mature trees exist throughout Windsor’s landscape, including the Town Green, but hills and vineyards are not within the town’s boundaries.

It is not surprising that some mailing addresses within the surrounding hills fell within the jurisdiction of the neighboring Healdsburg and Santa Rosa communities. Yet, these residents had greater identity with and proximity to Windsor. Some subjects living beyond Windsor’s borders actively associated with the Windsor community rather than other places held under the authority of other communities. Their bonds to Windsor blurred residents’ understanding of borders and sense of place.

The budding narrative of Windsor as place creates a challenge for the Hembree House Museum. Competing community interests and the misguided planning based on rail line speculations present an opportunity for discussing
Windsor’s progress. The tension between East and West Windsor’s development provides another. Windsor’s recent incorporation, the commitment to West Windsor as a downtown, and subjects such as gentrification, historic designations, and neighborhood development offer more opportunities to discuss Windsor’s evolving sense of place. It is a challenge that merits greater study and comparison with other community-based house museums.

People residing outside of Windsor’s boundaries also place-attached to Windsor, which provided another avenue of research, interpretation, and story. George Greeott has lived in the Chalk Hill Valley of Healdsburg for 80 years. At 102, Greeott agreed to an interview that was a “follow-up” to a 1979 oral history project conducted by Windsor Junior High School students. In both interviews, Greeott dismissed Windsor as a small town and focused almost entirely on living in the valley on his family's ranch. "In those days when I’m talking 1928, 1930s, we didn’t look out that way [toward Windsor]. It’s just still a small town where people could do some shopping there, but you had to rely on Santa Rosa or Healdsburg" (Greeott, 2012).

As Windsor grew, Greeott preferred investing within Windsor over other communities. "It finally became a place you could invest in real estate if you were lucky. Part of the reason I live as I do now ... a big part of it is because I bought real estate as a speculation, and it worked for me" (Greeott, 2012). After his investment gains, Greeott refocused on his preference for farming within the Chalk Hill Valley. His choice suggests that Greeott was at the time more interested in monetary gains over community attachment, which changed later in life.
Despite Greeott’s emphasis on being a "homeboy" with a preference for seclusion, his investments, social interactions, and observations of Windsor’s latest "phenomenal" growth all contributed to his emotional attachment to Windsor and the Chalk Hill Valley. Greeott would ultimately commit $100,000.00 to an endowment for the Hembree House Museum. The endowment secured the museum’s future. His experience over time fostered his place attachment by geographic proximity to neighboring entities: other farmers, Chalk Hill Valley’s topographic isolation from Healdsburg, and a growing connection to the Windsor community. Other subjects described shared Greeott’s attachment to Windsor.

In informal and ongoing interactions, I observed two subjects that also associated with Windsor over their nearby residences in Healdsburg and Santa Rosa. This limited range raises the specter of researcher bias; therefore, it would be useful to identify more subjects for further study. Vintner and Windsor Farmers Market director, Glenda Castelli, invested a great amount of time and resources in Windsor activities and events. Castelli preferred Windsor to Healdsburg for the weekly farmers market. She actively socialized at events coordinated by the Town of Windsor, the Windsor Garden Club, and the Windsor Historical Society. Despite her Healdsburg address, Castelli’s proximity to Windsor at the north end of the Russian River Valley supported her identity in Windsor.

The second subject, Robert Schwartz, has intermittently owned and operated an antique store in downtown Windsor since the 1970s. "I live on Old Redwood Highway at the north end of Santa Rosa, but Windsor is what I consider as my community. It’s where I work" (personal communication, Robert Schwartz, October
Working almost daily in Windsor, Schwartz's social interactions at his place of business supported his place attachment to Windsor.

So far, I sought to investigate the wealth of history set within a borderless region including the Windsor community. The investigation exposed the Hembree House Museum's missing narratives, such as immigrant labor, First People, leading women from the community, or any formalized interpretations of the exhibited artifacts, that could better serve community interests in people, place, and preservation. With Windsor's growing diversity, the historical society will likely need to modify their exhibits for a multivocal audience. One question remains: What resources are available to the museum's organizers that will aid in their interpretive programs?

Many resources outlined in this chapter include several that involved only modest investments of time and funds. For purposes of review, a recapitulation with recommendations follows. An inclusive mission for the Hembree House Museum would engage community interests through preservation, conservation, and interpretation of objects, place, and landscape in such a way that would sustain programming, financial support, and management. To do so means seeking resources that help stakeholders frame their mission for closing gaps in community engagement. The most affordable resources start within the Windsor community, whose efforts are supported by academic institutions or local, state, and national organizations. Examples are discussed below.

The first resource is the stakeholders themselves, including the museum organizers, the Windsor Historical Society, and the many volunteers. We have seen
processes utilized by stakeholders to aid their support of local history and preservation. Without their personal interests and place attachments, there would be no museum or community historic register. George Greeott funded a significant endowment, in part due to his personal concern for preserving his art, artifacts, and found objects. Museum organizers and society members actively pursued funding programs, and volunteer docents contributed their time and insight to fragmented interpretive programs. Their combined efforts acted as a catalyst for historic preservation.

Yet their efforts are not enough, as low museum attendance has shown. The second available resource is the Windsor community. Young families, the growing Latino(a) and other ethnic minority populations, First People, and old-timers could contribute to a deeper sense of place that includes multivocality. Their participation and support could nurture new programming. A wealth of deeply layered interpretations should recognize contemporary and predecessor contributions to stories of working class labor, racial diversity, gender, and socioeconomic subjects.

For example, the museum has dedicated both indoor and outdoor exhibit spaces to artifacts relevant to early hops agriculture. By the 1880s, growing hops in Sonoma County involved landowners, farmers, and First People as seasonal laborers followed by competing Chinese labor forces. "Rural newspapers reported extensively on the successful use of Indians to pick hops in Sonoma County at $1.50 a day," but Chinese labor forces were able to underbid at $1.12 a day (Street, 2004, pp. 327–328).
The story of growing hops provides an opportunity to reinforce contemporary interpretations of minority and labor resourcefulness amidst adversity. If introduced appropriately, the exhibit could also be a source of information promoting local microbrewery interests. In turn, interpretive programs and hop-related events funded by local businesses, the local chamber of commerce, and other special interests that would attract more funding and support.

The locally prominent Latino(a) population could share another community of interests with museum stakeholders. This effort depends of course, on how Windsor’s frames its challenging history for today’s audiences. Local author Gabriel A. Fraire referenced early framing in need of a new marketing strategy for today. Storytelling by past generations traditionally rebranded Windsor as "Poor Man’s Flat" due to poor soil conditions. In the 1960s, this moniker was changed to "Tortilla Flat" by neighboring communities. These derogatory references evolved when Sonoma County designated Windsor for low-income subdivisions and mobile home parks populated by working class minorities. At the time, Windsor, an unincorporated town, could not represent itself in community planning decisions conducted by the county.

Negative attitudes regarding Windsor were widespread throughout Sonoma County, compounded by real estate agents from adjoining cities who refused to show their clients property listed in Windsor and discouraged potential new businesses from locating in what was frequently described as a blighted community with no future. (Fraire, 1991, p. 12)

As a resource, the Latino(a) community and its portrayal should have a place at the museum’s proverbial table. Although we cannot easily erase past narratives, new stories of community can contrast past outsiders’ views.
Some examples of a more enlightened storylines include the naming of the community's Rudy Huerta Gymnasium after a well-respected schoolteacher in 1970. The facility, a new school for local students, suggests a shift in direction from "a blighted community with no future" to one with the local community in mind. "Tortilla Flat" stereotyped Windsor but conveniently excluded the development of successful Latino(a)-supported infrastructure, events, and businesses. Several included the well-established Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, the Cali Calmécac Language Academy, festivals like Dia de los Muertos, and a mix of Latino(a)-owned retail, industrial, and professional offices. At the time of this writing, their past and present successes were excluded from Windsor's historical narrative, yet they could provide the community-based engagement needed to ensure the museum's future.

Resources abound within Sonoma County. Sonoma State University's Northwest Information Center is one of ten centers affiliated with the State of California Office of Historic Preservation. Their collected data identified numerous sites throughout Windsor, providing additional resources to inform museum management. Although some sites are not public, others provide an opportunity to identify places of historic significance. Set within the Windsor Historical Society's venues for walking tours, such places will spatially provide context. Too few community members and visitors know about Windsor's history. Walking tours with deeper discussions about Windsor's development over time, the historical figures involved, and an articulation of sense of place should aid in the interpretation of place. At the time of this writing, it was not clear why museum management has not reached out to the university for assistance.
Sonoma State University’s various departments can provide academic support for interpretive programs. For example, several courses, such as “California History,” “Shared Places, Contested Pasts,” and “Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations,” provided an opportunity for this researcher to use the Windsor community and its museum as a case study. Other students could build upon this base material in support of museum management and community interests. At the same time, as the museum continues to build upon its collections, professors could utilize the museum for academic research.

Museum management will find a multitude of local, state, and national organizations to assist with their archives and interpretive programs. Few, however, will be affordable to historic house museums with modest revenues that are dependent on volunteers and donations. Still, the Hembree House Museum’s management will be better served by participating in forums, conferences, and networks associated with organizations like the Sonoma County Historical Society, the California Historical Society, the American Alliance of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the National Parks Service. Most such resources provide online information free of charge. Given their recent founding as a museum, its staff has only recently begun investigating online resources.

Finally, no museum today should fail to take advantage of the mostly free resources of the Internet and social networking. The Hembree House Museum’s involvement has been tested with a free Facebook group page and a preliminary Web site. While attending Sonoma State University’s “Marketing for Nonprofit
Organizations," I developed a preliminary marketing plan for the museum. The plan included the development of the Historical Society’s Web site and a social networking presence.

As of this writing, the Web site contains archival images representing Windsor’s past and present. Links connect viewers to photo albums, services, archives, and events. Everything on the Web site invites viewers to visit, contribute stories, volunteer, or donate. It is unclear if this effort has been successful, because the site content is limited and relatively new. With the aid of volunteers, the Historical Society’s Facebook page posts upcoming events, photos of the events, random archival photos, and discussions about Windsor’s history. When asked about the usefulness of the Web site and the Facebook page, Stephen Lehmann appreciated their value but hesitated to support their effectiveness. In discussing volunteer-driven efforts, Lehmann recognized that "we don’t have anyone that has the time or the know how to keep up with it" (personal communication, Stephen Lehmann, March 28, 2013).

This situation is a challenge to the Windsor Historical Society to market itself toward volunteer groups with special skills, such as marketing, Web design, and social networking. As a result, their success is dependent upon routine participation where uploads, announcements, and open discussions is managed by a volunteer administrator. The good news is that these skills and tasks are quantifiable. From a marketing perspective, the Society has an opportunity to advertise their need for a specific skill set from volunteers assisting for a limited time, such as a few hours weekly, twice monthly, and so on.
In this chapter, I examined three areas of interest, utilizing the community of Windsor, the Windsor Historical Society, and the Hembree House Museum as a comparative subject for house museums throughout the United States. After observing the Windsor community and documenting museum-related activities, I was able to identify the historic house museum as aesthetic. Its typology enabled a critical assessment of how the museum organizers used artifacts and places for their exhibits.

However, no interpretive programs existed. By not interpreting the artifacts, the museum has emphasized a gentile past involving successful white men. The exhibits failed to contribute to contemporary interpretive programs about Windsor's past nor did they respond to its changing demographics.

The community-based resources outlined in this chapter are just a few examples of how museum management could bridge the gaps among artifact, people, place, and story. By establishing greater community engagement, inclusive narratives can motivate others, such as the Latino(a) community or other growing minority groups and young families, in supporting stakeholders' interests. The Hembree House Museum could be key to community engagement in history, conservation, and preservation. An effective symbiosis between community and house museum has the ability to ensure a sustainable future.
V. Conclusion

A finished Museum is a dead museum, and a dead museum is a useless museum.  

Smithsonian Secretary
George Brown Goode (Cited in Starn, February 2005, p. 77)

Since initiating this research in 2010, museum stakeholders, dedicated volunteers, and preservationists have continued to express concern about hemorrhaging house museums. The Albany (NY) Times Union recently reported that the historic Cherry Hill house museum was at risk of permanent closure after 30 years of operation. The 18th-century home houses a collection of 70,000 objects. Its weighty collection was literally compromising the museum’s structural integrity. The problems started years ago, culminating in irregular closures over the past three years. Despite a total revision of interpretive programs, the museum could not bear the weight of a crushing collection that has gone unsupported for decades (Grondahl, 2013).

Less than a week from closure, passionate donors rallied to save Cherry Hill . . . again. The public, private and community foundations, and an anonymous California donor provided sufficient financial support to keep the museum from forfeiting a $736,000 challenge grant. Provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the grant required Cherry Hill to raise $152,000 by July 31, 2013. They did, nearly at the final hour (O’Brien, 2013). The bleeding for Cherry Hill has stopped for a while.
This thesis can in no way provide first aid for emergencies. However, it will complement existing how-to manuals by providing supportive research for house museum staffs to proactively take action before larger problems occur. This last chapter consolidates the research into a practicum of recommendations in support of sustainable processes. Moreover, examples of successful applications will highlight how house museums become vital institutions representing community heritage.

After a review of Chapter 2’s discussion of larger museums’ significance, we can revisit several house museums from Chapter 3 to identify new and inclusive directives with an emphasis on marketing. The chapters laid the groundwork for identifying a deeper mission, as well as goals and objectives for Chapter 4’s case study, the Hembree House Museum. This thesis will conclude its argument that all historic house museums play a key role in place-based narratives that include diversity, sense of place, and historic preservation.

Chapter 2 identified several historiographies that highlighted new and diverse avenues of research. Scholars have identified inclusive narratives that resulted in broader public interest. Armed with extensive financial, academic, and professional support, larger institutions followed suit by upgrading their interpretive programs in anticipation of higher attendance and donor support. Their motivations are due in part to a public demand for greater diversity within the museum experience. Why have they succeeded in what appears to be a stepping beyond the bounds of traditional exhibits? A paradox holds the answer.
Researcher Fiona Cameron (2007) concluded that despite paradigm shifts in public interests, there was still a desire to depend upon authoritative figures for guidance. “On the one hand, audiences want open debate and a range of perspectives, but on the other hand require museums to set the moral standards for reforming agendas that can be used to understand and evaluate societal conduct” (p. 340). If readers accept Cameron’s conclusion, then large or small museums need to find a balance between open discourse and stakeholder interests.

Cameron (2007) referenced an example at the National Museum of American History’s “September 11: Bearing Witness to History” exhibition. Although the exhibit attracted audiences from around the world, curators accommodated the moral boundaries of stakeholders based on “American supremacy and innocence” while setting a standard for “cultural policing of Muslims as potential terrorists” (p. 335). Museum exhibits ultimately cannot travel far from social acceptance. With this stakeholder caveat in mind, house museums must seek guidance by academics and museum professionals wherever possible. Experienced scholars and professionals who have already traveled this path will identify missing narratives in support of diversified programming.

Larger institutions discussed in this thesis have acknowledged that their successful programs needed an interdisciplinary approach to research, interpretation, and management. This is nothing new, as scholar Randolph Starn (2005) notes, “more than a half century ago . . . the confusion of tongues . . . besides museum professionals and historians [included] art historians, social scientists, philosophers, cultural studies scholars, critics, and journalists” (p. 70). What is new
are technologically supported bottom-up approaches that change museums’ relationships with the public. House museums will benefit with higher attendance from diverse audiences who have becomeaccustomed to Web sites and social networking.

Before achieving this benefit, house museum staffs must alter their use of objects as insulated artifacts. Starn (2005) reconstructed the evolution of display case object to collective memory corollary, where the museum object becomes an “abstract unfolding of historiographical narrative . . . inspir[ing] the recovery or outright construction of alternative histories for marginalized or excluded groups” (pp. 83–84). To do so means drawing such groups into the processes of exhibit. Several examples in Chapter 2 highlighted previously underrepresented groups brought to the museum table. By diversifying interpretations of displayed objects, house museum staffs are inviting broader communities of interest to their front doors.

The conduit for gaining this benefit includes the adaptation of the museum experience to include “edutainment” and technologically advanced components, such as audio and video compositions, smart phone games, and live actors. This statement might chafe some museum professionals. Yet we must concede that interactive programming, virtual realities, and social networking have integrated well into the modern American experience. Although many of these technologies involve hefty price tags, all are scalable to the abilities of the institution. Academic collaborations, crowdsourcing, free online social networking groups, and affordable Web page development templates are accessible to novice museum volunteers.
Integrating technology will depend upon the interests of stakeholders, and, if given the green light, finding the talent who will volunteer services or consultations at scalable rate. Embracing, rather than wincing about, technology will ultimately encourage greater accessibility and increase the capacity-building potential of any community-based house museum.

What we have seen in Chapter 2 was greater interest among larger institutions to broaden their accessibility to diverse audiences. Small, community-based house museums will benefit from following their lead. To diversify content and interpretation means having expertise in navigating recursive and overlapping stories of objects and places unrestrained by a linear chronology. Recognizing these challenges will ultimately require house museum organizers to act proactively. They will be required to solicit creative, affordable, or even pro bono assistance by academics and professionals.

In Chapter 3, certain house museums acted as hybrid models between large-scale museums and their humble community counterparts. Although we can never discount the attempt, not all house museums will rise to national or international stature as places of interest like Mount Vernon, Monticello, or Hearst Castle. For those that remain community-based, several initiatives support sustainable futures. These foundation builders include historic preservation advocacy, establishing nonprofit status, and determining typology.

Let us first enthusiastically acknowledge a house museum’s best asset: passionate volunteer preservationists. Regardless of their experience, house museum founders are scrimping, scrubbing, and sweating through the first phase of
saving places that matter. This is the frontline. Leaky roofs, faulty wiring, and building code violations, all in the face of an uninterested public, are but a few examples of challenges facing would-be preservationists. Until the do-it-yourself phase of repairs is complete, it is difficult for any fledging organization to establish structure and support.

If these intrepid preservation pioneers find themselves setting down the toolbox for office ledgers and exhibits, then it is time to establish their legitimacy as a museum. The process of establishing a 501(c)3 or similar nonprofit status is laborious and falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Three significant benefits to establishing nonprofit status are tax deductibility, perpetual existence beyond the life of the founder or founders, and the ability to apply for government and private grants. The challenge, however, is that it may require paying an attorney, as the process can exceed the capabilities of the founding group. For the purpose of this concluding chapter, the focus emphasizes the development of any house museum’s identity with a sound mission and marketing considerations to ensure a sustainable future.

Whether dealing with high profile or community-based house museums, house museum managers appeared to have not addressed Butcher-Younghans’s (1993) typologies from which all else follows. The differences among documentary, representative, and aesthetic house museums run parallel to the national standards for historic preservation criteria. It is not my intention to delve into the complexities of the national register here, but the similarities are worth noting.
Although the National Register of Historic Places recognizes diverse qualities of significance (e.g., archeology, engineering, and culture) as having unique relationships to settings, materials, and feelings, the focus of this thesis will remain upon functional applications. The similarities between preservation criteria and museum typologies are not exact (see Table 5-1). For example, the projects of famed architects, like Fallingwater, certainly represent the work of a master (Criterion C) and a particular style of architecture (representative). Fallingwater is also associated with a famous person (Criterion B) and commemorates Frank Lloyd Write’s fame (documentary). Synchronizing a house museum’s typology with a specific national criterion would give greater clarity to a developing mission, not to mention an increased accessibility to funding sources.

Table 5-1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum Typology</th>
<th>Title 36. Parks, Forests, and Public Property</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter I. National Parks Service, Dept. of the Interior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Part 60. National Register of Historic Places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Section 60.4 Criteria for evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentary: Commemorates a rich or famous individual or family, regardless of the home’s humble or affluent beginnings</td>
<td>Criterion B: Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative: A particular style of architecture from a particular period</td>
<td>Criterion C: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aesthetic: Serves as the setting for special collections, where decorative and fine arts, furniture, and antiques from various periods are displayed, [where] the house serves as a backdrop for the objects</td>
<td>Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history</td>
</tr>
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</table>
For challenged house museums such as the Anne Spencer House and Garden (ASHGM) in Lynchburg, Virginia (discussed in Chapter 3), the links between typology and preservation criteria might be sufficient as a guiding principle. As it happens, Spencer’s home is best suited as a documentary house museum registered as a historic place linked to a significant person. ASHGM’s management has utilized this typology in developing its mission statement: “To engage in a broad range of innovative and traditional educational enterprises that use the Spencer properties, collections, and archives to illustrate and document Anne Spencer’s philosophy, vision, and literary accomplishments” (ASHGM, n.d.). Spencer is the well-known subject that guides the museum’s directive. This clear mission functions as a base for their goals and objectives.

Unfortunately for ASHGM, they have not clearly stated their goals and objectives at the time of this writing. The ASHGM Web site (n.d.) states three objectives, but their tone reads as general goals rather than specific and quantifiable objectives. “To deliver programs and projects . . . to encourage, support, and undertake scholarly research . . . to ensure preservation . . .” are all admirable goals that fall short of any links to the museum’s typology. An astute business planner would note another absence: no mention of increasing revenues, membership, or visitors to secure ASHGM’s future. There is no intent here to rewrite ASHGM’s planning documents, but this case helps illustrate how typology and objectives discussed in Chapter 3 can assist in broadening focus, appeal, and quantifiable results.
So how would a documentary house museum like ASHGM approach Chapter 3’s identified objectives of leading relevant interpretive programs, providing ongoing educational opportunities, integrating accessible technologies, and developing “green” management plans? The first objective directs museum officers to develop interpretative programs based on community relevance and context. As a starting point, the museum staff may wish to research the local African-American community. Thirty percent of Lynchburg’s population is African-American, according to current demographic data by the community (City of Lynchburg, 2013). The status of African-Americans as a minority in the community has changed little since Spencer’s time.

The home is set within a historic district primarily established by African Americans. ASHGM’s Web site (n.d.) recognized that the neighborhood “is more notable because of the people who lived here rather than because of the architecture of the buildings.” Spencer’s home was no exception despite its inhabitants conducting no ordinary and settled lifestyle. In this context, a clear objective might read as, “To interpret the status of African-American playwrights, poets, and artisans of today and contrast their experiences with Anne Spencer’s era,” with “a noted view behind suburban doors of great intellects.” In this example, ASHGM sets a clear agenda that would also include research, revenue models, interpretive advisory assistance, and programming details.

The second objective encourages ongoing educational opportunities. Given Spencer’s past support of the arts, even using her home as a salon for African-American intellectuals, ASHGM could develop programs in support of community
arts and education programs. For example, through its members and fundraising events, ASHGM could establish a formal endowment to fund scholarships for students. If this endeavor seems overwhelming, then ASHGM could seek professional assistance from local consultants like Key Fundraising or other similar resources. By establishing a scholarship fund, the community perceives ASHGM as a significant and serious contributor to education and the arts.

Technology is a necessity for any organization today, so the third objective requires more detail than this thesis can provide. In general, any technology should be cheap, intuitive, and accessible. This research identified many, such as an online presence via a Web site or social networking forums.

ASHGM did manage a Web site and a Facebook page, but they did not complement one another with synchronized information. Spencer’s poetry could act as a catalyst for tying the two together through virtual tours and discussions of her life. One example might include a comparative montage of past figures and places that influenced her work to illustrate how her work influenced contemporary people.

In our final objective, ongoing “green” maintenance practices must support sustainable preservation. Further, a clear objective would recognize that “buildings are the primary contributors to environmental degradation during all phases of service – construction, operation, and deconstruction or demolition” (Carroon, 2010, p. 5). If not for a public relations campaign, adopting “green” maintenance practices and mitigating decline will fiscally and sustainably support ASHGM’s operations and maintenance. We can look again to house museums mentioned in Chapter 3, like
Fallingwater and Monticello, for inspiration, or to books dedicated to assisting preservationists with “green” initiatives, such as Jean Carroon’s *Sustainable Preservation: Greening Existing Buildings.*

The physical function of maintenance also offers an opportunity to compare past and modern practices with visitors. Is maintenance today easier than in the past century? Were housekeeping products more or less pollutant than today’s environmentally conscious cleaners? Should the institution consider including long-term “green” programs like solar array installations, walking/biking promotions, and water conservation? The maintenance and repair process provides an objective that encourages community dialogue.

Another “green” related objective would be to ask the Hillside Garden Club, who helped revitalize ASHGM’s garden, to assist in the development of a management program for the garden of a documentary museum. Its umbrella nonprofit organization, the prestigious Garden Club of Virginia, has a wealth of professional and academic resources available for consult. Part of the program started in 1983 when the Garden Club adopted the site for restoration. The garden was Spencer’s retreat for writing, and hosted other notable talents including George Washington Carver and Langston Hughes. Their next step would be to establish specific management practices to retain the garden’s period integrity while satisfying the demands of a public space.

The most important reason for adopting proactive maintenance objectives is historic preservation, or as some within the field might argue conservation. As we have seen in Chapter 3, most house museums have failed to extend the preservation
dialogue beyond saving the museum itself. Within the act of saving a building from the wrecking ball is a multitude of repairs, maintenance procedures, and policies in support of historic preservation.

As a subset of the primary objectives, further direction by house museum management would extend beyond the successful saving of places and ribbon cuttings on opening day. For ASHGM and for any other type of house museum, this means setting a standard for community-based preservation programs. Examples might include community workshops, paid for by attendees, teaching how to: replace glass in historic windows, research the history of one’s home, or hire a contractor who is sensitive to historic homes. This educational program based on seminars, workshops, and volunteer days could provide greater public awareness of preservation values.

The Anne Spencer House and Garden is only one of many documentary examples that would benefit from the adoption of detailed goals and objectives. Their implementation would expand their mission and make long-term success more likely. Representative house museums could follow the same track with only a few differences. For example, the staff at Fallingwater could set an objective for interpretive programs to highlight more general discussions about an architect’s role in how people live, interact, and respond to various architectural styles and configurations. Be it a famed architect hired by an affluent family or a developer stamping out tract home subdivisions, the architect’s influence on how people experience spaces is worthy of interpretation.
Any representative house museum provides an opportunity for ongoing educational programs. For this second objective, a provision should include introductory workshops to architectural drafting and design, the history of architecture, or the nuances of various architectural styles. Fallingwater’s staff has indeed embraced this objective by providing regularly programmed educational sessions for school-age children.

Some workshops for third and fourth graders included studying historical photographs, examining construction materials specified by Wright, and readings of his letters discussing architectural design. Other courses for older students teach drafting, site analysis, and structural stability. Carnegie Melon University coordinated the programming to include home-schooled children. The long-term rewards include ongoing community-based support and university collaboration.

The third and fourth objectives for documentary house museums model similarly for representative house museums. Fallingwater once again provides a broad-spectrum of technologies for greater exposure and accessibility. Web-based multi-media experiences including live web cams and chat sessions with representatives, easy online shopping and donation capabilities, and a social networking presence on Facebook and Twitter were all successful applications. Certainly, web cams and live chat sessions may be out of reach for modest historic house museums, however basic web sites and social networking are within reach of volunteers who are not intimidated by technology. As an example, this is an opportunity for museum managers to ask volunteers already on Facebook or Twitter to establish an account for their museum.
“Keeping Fallingwater Green” headlines as a key objective under their mission statement. “Fallingwater has set a goal to become a model site that operates sustainably using recognized best practices with minimal environmental impact” (Fallingwater, n.d.). Some specific examples were waste water recycling, reducing paper waste, composting, upgrading heating and cooling appliances, and the use of green cleaning products to name a few. Many common sense practices cost little or nothing to staff, such as using baking soda or vinegar for cleaning instead of costly off the shelf products, or setting up a simple compost bin to reduce kitchen waste, or make better decisions on when to print on paper, turn off lights, and conserve water.

This leaves us with our final house museum type, the aesthetic. Given the broad spectrum of their holdings, aesthetic house museums’ vulnerabilities include the museumification of ordinary objects. Noted in Chapter 3, Villa Finale lacked a deeper interpretive program beyond the sorted objects collected by a wealthy white male. To satisfy the first objective, Villa Finale’s management will need to look deeper into the life of the former owner and present interpretive programs relevant to today’s visitors. Some subjects might include the social status of homosexuals in Texas during Mathis’ lifetime, why Mathis collected particular aesthetic objects, or contrast objects of necessity versus luxury.

Ongoing educational opportunities appeared nonexistent when reviewing Villa Finale’s Web site. Yet, the material culture provided a wealth of opportunity to satisfy this second objective. Programs should include the conservation of decorative arts and historical studies of thematic objects, as in the museum’s
collection of antique musical machines. Routinely scheduled study programs would entice support by community members and outside interests.

Once again, the third and fourth objectives operate similarly for aesthetic museums as the other types. While Villa Finale’s staff managed a webpage and a Facebook presence, management underutilized their capabilities. The webpage would benefit from a virtual representation of the museum’s collection along with a virtual tour. Currently, their Facebook page posted upcoming events but overemphasized the posting of articles unrelated to encouraging visits: preservation policy, the failures of other museums, and general articles from the NTHP. Although relevant to the general field, these postings failed to encourage site visits and place attachment. Management might wish to assign an experienced volunteer to orchestrate online photo albums of objects and related narratives to encourage casual viewers to visit.

At this time, no references to the maintenance practices existed on Villa Finale’s online presence. Many opportunities by way of the historic home create awareness of “green” subjects in support of long-term care, including already identifiable subjects. Landscape maintenance, building repairs, administrative initiatives, conservation activities, and even programming could promote greater interest and participation among the public. Given Villa Finale’s ownership by NTHP, best practices should be a natural extension of NTHP’s support of “green” initiatives.

Even if the above cases adopted more details to their mission, goals, and objectives, they and others like them will still need to advance their directives to articulate sense of place and place attachment. After all, we are talking about places
with relevant settings where people, both past and present, have had personal and emotional experiences. Chapter 3 articulated how “contested meanings of authenticity, boundary, displacement, and influences on diasporas,” will play key roles in how house museum managers communicate to themselves and to the public the significance of place, because place can mean something different to different groups. The stakeholders and how they have defined the visitor experience will determine their place-based narratives.

Chapter 3 also identified a paradox: people would save historic homes without explaining their deep passion for preservation. In most or perhaps all cases in this thesis, interested stakeholders become deeply involved with places. Why? People associate places with meanings, values, and social interactions anchored by a feeling of rootedness. Preservation becomes the means to save one’s rootedness to place. The effect is the successful saving of places and what they represent, which happens to ensure ongoing involvement by stakeholders, volunteers, and visitors.

Thus, we cannot underestimate a sense of place as the primary contributor to historic preservation. A stronger sense of place experienced by participants will translate into place attachments and a desire to save places. Of any type of museum, community-based house museums, not national galleries, science museums, or other large-scaled subject museums, have the greatest opportunity to articulate a localized sense of place in order to encourage community historic preservation and support.

Yet, a sense of place is a difficult subject to disseminate, which suggests that managers should seek out researchers, in particular ethnographers, to assist in
place-based interpretations. Be it documentary, representative, or aesthetic, visitors and stakeholders should seek guidance in understanding their visceral experiences.

My research indicated that there was no guidance for managers. What is the “go-to” resource for fledging house museums? As we have seen, the few available resources did little to help in day-to-day operations, much less provided ongoing mechanisms such as interpretive programming assistance or accessible technologies to maintain relevance. No national organization has taken on this task, despite including house museums in their repertoire of representation.

Yet, the sheer volume of American house museums provides a valuable interest group. Organizations like the NTHP have an opportunity to offer their assistance to start up museums based on specific needs, such as financial planning and grant support, management expertise, or act as a resource for historic preservation specific to historic house museums. Their assistance could help identify type, mission, goals, and objectives (beyond saving a historic place). In return, NTHP would gain members who support their preservation initiatives.

Nor has a national organization collected data on house museums as a unique entity. Jumbled with other museums, including the arts and sciences, house museums are essentially unseen by preservationists and museum professionals as a specific category. Museum assessments have begun within the past few decades, so the timing is right to turn a critical eye toward house museums.

I look toward the NTHP because of their long-time vested stake in historic house museums and their success. Chapter 1 observed NTHP’s president, Stephanie Meeks, witnessing challenges facing house museums at the 2013 conference and
offering ideas when being a museum is no longer an option. This is not the first time that one of NTHP’s presidents has recognized the problem and offered remedies. In 2002 and again in 2012, former President Richard Moe led the call for “a serious conversation that would cause people around the country who love these places to reflect on what the best course might be for such sites in their own community” (Moe, 2012 p. 55). I hear the call, and I invite NTHP to discuss the subject further in support of developing a directory, critique, and support (i.e., limited grants) for house museums nationwide.

So, what can the Hembree House Museum expand upon to reach larger audiences and to retain community relevance? There are four distinct goals: construct a place-based narrative, take an interdisciplinary approach toward research assistance, establish a methodology for continued research, and develop a stronger mission and clearer goals and objectives. The following provides further discussion for each initiative.

Chapter 4 began by recognizing a general lack of place-based narratives or an overt articulation of sense of place. If the Hembree House Museum staff wants to include place as a significant component to their directive, then it will be necessary for them to further investigate the people and place they represent. Rather than endless displays of objects, the Museum will serve the community better by discussing the significance of place. The objects become support material to a greater interpretive program for identifying Windsor’s uniqueness within Sonoma County.
A comprehensive research program will require professional and academic assistance, including environmental studies, sociology, history, and anthropology. The Museum staff lacked the motivation or the interdisciplinary experience to investigate the complexity of the community’s diversity. Until this hurdle is crossed, the Museum’s mission will flounder. The Windsor Historical Society could initiate a relationship with Sonoma State University’s faculty in museum studies, history, and ethnographic studies, and potentially include student participation during regular coursework.

Multiple methodologies introduced key areas of interest but require follow-up for a fuller collection of data. Further research, if sought by the Windsor Historical Society, needs to make of primary and secondary sources such as historic maps, history books, planning documents, interviews, oral history projects, and news articles. Volunteers interested in history could lead this effort with direction by local historians. Such sources will provide a data inventory that could support future programming.

A comparative analysis of the historic home’s past, the Museum’s development and exhibits, and community demographics exposed the Museum’s vulnerabilities in maintaining relevance. The staff of the Museum admitted that the museum received few return visitors. Yet, the home’s history and the community’s diverse population provide ample tools for engagement.

First, the Museum staff must commit itself to a stronger mission statement with a clear set of written goals and objectives. To date, the Windsor Historical Society has not made this commitment. When questioned via email about the status
of this project in July 2013, Stephen Lehmann acknowledged the Society’s focus on small, surmountable tasks rather than long-range planning due to current limitations in funding and a dependency on volunteers over paid staff and consultants. This lack of long-range planning is common among smaller house museums and can influence their eventual success or failure.

Aesthetic house museums like the Hembree House Museum will benefit from conveying a mission beyond “foster[ing] and advanc[ing] collection and preservation of history and historical artifacts relating to the Windsor area, and develop[ing] a place for storage and display of such historical items” (Windsor Historical Society, n.d.). This statement reads better as an initial objective; it needs more detail. A new mission might look like the following:

The Hembree House Museum serves as an aesthetic institution dedicated to exhibiting an inclusive story of people, places, and objects unique to Windsor’s history. The Museum exemplifies a commitment to sharing Windsor’s distinct past for a contemporary and diverse audience. The staff is dedicated to securing the Museum’s future through historic preservation, conservation, research, education, and community engagement in support of a sustainable future. The staff recognizes the strength and value of its volunteers and supporters.

In this example, the mission statement establishes key directives in historic preservation, community engagement, sustainability, and support. Both people and place(s) take precedence to the collected material culture.

Earlier in this chapter, I applied the four objectives to aesthetic museums. Given the research conducted on the Windsor community, we can apply the objectives to the Hembree House Museum in detail. The breadth of the Museum’s
holdings is broad, providing many opportunities in support of a lengthy interpretive program objective. Some examples include:

1. Grow and care for hop vines on the Museum property and provide socially interactive interpretive messaging about the significance of hops. Record all activities and discuss past and modern harvesting technologies, the people behind the labor, and why hop growing was a short-lived Sonoma County product. Discuss changing land use and/or climate change.

2. Develop an interpretive program about the evolution from “Poor Mans Flat” to “Tortilla Flat” to today’s thriving multicultural community. Use photos from various sources depicting Windsor’s people both yesterday and today. Discuss challenging topics such as displacement, gentrification, and historic preservation.

3. Develop an interpretive program on the changing roles of women from settlement to today. Discuss noted women in Windsor’s past, such as the first woman school superintendent, Mattie Washburn, and recognize today’s leaders, such as Mayor Debora Fudge, planner Pauletta Cangson, and leading community volunteers Karen Alves and Glenda Castelli.

To choose any one of these examples will require research by historians and a cost analysis of project materials and services for an exhibit. Once identified, the program and its costs provide background data for grant applications, stakeholder support, and other resources. Fortunately, resources such as Jessica Foy Donnelly’s
Interpreting Historic House Museums (2002), and funding guides provided by national organizations like the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2014), could provide further assistance. All three objective examples draw upon the local community for data, participation, and local significance.

The interpretive programs will benefit by layering ongoing educational opportunities, which was recommended as one of the original four objectives. Expanding upon the above three examples above in the area of education might look something like:

1. Conduct monthly horticulture and gardening seminars in conjunction with such resources as the Windsor Garden Club, the Windsor Farmers Market, or the Sonoma County Master Gardeners. Establish an onsite hops test garden that examines past agrarian practices with today’s sustainable practices.

2. Provide bilingual seminars on community heritage, business development, and culture that promote an inclusive venue. Develop ongoing programming in conjunction with Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Lytton Band of Pomo Indians, and representatives of other minority groups.

3. Act as a source for community-based women’s history in support of educational programs at nearby private and public schools.

By integrating ongoing educational opportunities for today's audiences, the Museum will establish itself as a reliable institution for the community.
Since initiating this research, the Windsor Historical Society has embraced some technologies (see Chapter 4). Although their Web site lacks updates, the Society relies on its online social networking presence to announce events, post old photos of Windsor, and encourage visits. Three other technology objectives, sponsored by community members, grants, or corporate sponsors could include:

1. Establish a “hop cam,” or online live feed from the hop garden, and establish a data collection regarding the care and growth of hops for use by local microbrewers.

2. Assure that the Web site is widely accessible by providing multilanguage translation applications.

3. Provide online educational programs that would easily accessible to students researching local women’s history.

4. Develop an online donation process to simplify contributions and membership renewals.

5. Seek out technology-savvy volunteers to budget, coordinate, and implement virtual tours, calendar of events, Web site updates, crowdsourcing events and funding, and community data harvesting.

6. Establish an online presence for community genealogical assistance.

For today's busy lifestyle, the Museum will only benefit from greater exposure online.
Finally, the fourth objective, which concerns maintenance practices, requires quantifiable results. “Green” initiatives by other house museums provide a sufficient basis for establishing affordable practices that are also good for the environment. For this last objective, several opportunities geared toward general maintenance exist:

1. Research home and garden care products such as floor cleaners and garden fertilizers for low emissions and reduced dependency on chemical ingredients.
2. Use compostable products where feasible. Establish a composter and composting practice in support of garden projects.
3. Investigate appliance replacements to lower utility costs and repairs.

The success of these initiatives will support the bottom line—something that no nonprofit organization should miss.

The preceding objectives offer some examples for the Hembree House Museum staff. Other aesthetic house museums could follow a similar path of research to clarify their objectives and, as marketing professionals encourage, multiple target audiences. The expense would be minimal because the organization would solicit assistance from academics and professionals while seasoned volunteers train new inductees.

Museum managers will also benefit by articulating a meaningful sense of place. By integrating the concept of a sense of place, the mission, goals, and objectives will have enhanced meaning and purpose. The challenge for the Hembree
House Museum staff will be to engage visitors without losing sight of their mission. In this case, an overarching emphasis on a sense of place within a transparent and ongoing process should establish meaning, purpose, and emotional attachments by visitors rather than a shallow experience associated with glass cases and velvet ropes. If we examine once again the sample mission statement for the Museum, we can see that place was integral to the first sentence: The Hembree House Museum serves as an aesthetic institution dedicated to exhibiting an inclusive story of people, places, and objects unique to Windsor’s history. Shared with people and objects, place becomes a critical component for the Museum’s interpretive and educational programs, answering what does it mean and what is its purpose.

Including place only suggests a sense of place, therefore, one key goal for the organization should be to articulate Windsor’s sense of place through the interpretation and study of our collective cultural landscape. The term “cultural landscape” highlights the common denominator, the landscape, for anyone who has participated in the evolution of Windsor. It is also an all-encompassing term to describe everything within the landscape, including buildings, landmarks, and activities.

Establishing this sense of place creates several opportunities and acts as a conduit for objectives relevant to the study and interpretation of place:

1. Establish the Windsor Historical Society and the Hembree House Museum as consultants to placemaking—a term used by professionals for everything from community branding and identity to planning and
building (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). that would draw upon collected data, exhibit, and interpretation.

2. Conduct an oral history project in order to assemble data about Windsor's unique character, and how that character evolved over time and through the experiences of diverse people.

3. Create interpretative programs by local storytellers about Windsor's past relevant for today's changing demographics.

First, the Windsor Historical Society will act as agents in placemaking. In this example, placemakers can engage the Hembree House Museum and the Windsor Historical Society for consultation. Satisfying this objective will elevate the status of the Museum as an institutional resource.

The second objective offers an opportunity to collect data as a bottom-up process. Long-term residents of a specific area are enthusiastic about telling their stories, as we saw with George Greeott. Stories, even though they may be full of bias and misinformation, still provide a wealth of data for the trained ear. Oral histories tell the interviewees that their stories matter as a way of contributing data to an ongoing community investigation. The compilation of these stories will reinforce Windsor’s collective memory, thereby contributing to the multivocality of place.

The final objective of creating interpretive programs for today’s changing demographics responds to the basic interest of closing the gap between exhibit and audience. Let us ask the house museum’s staff to reduce dependency on objects and artifacts that appear linked to famous white men. New programs should eliminate
abstraction, “tell it like it is,” and present interwoven pasts with deeper meaning and purpose.

In return, residents will see the Society and the Museum as dependent upon the community’s involvement rather than dependent solely upon financial contributions. As keepers of this data, the Museum will act as the community’s representative, thus acting as a keystone to community identity. The above objectives are only a few ways in which the organization can utilize a sense of place as an integral component to their mission.

In conclusion, historic house museums appear to come and go without critique or an official analysis. A few consultants and scholars have provided some assistance, but the field has lacked the ability to fund academic and professional guidance. With so little information, it is no surprise why new house museums flounder. Well-established house museums face such challenges as well, such as Cherry Hill’s emergency, noted at the beginning of this chapter.

Although this thesis has focused upon what small house museums can learn from larger institutions, there is merit in investigating successful community-based house museums, such as the Peralta Hacienda Historical Park in Oakland, California. Their mission represents many goals identified in this thesis: “… promote understanding, historical healing and community amid change and diversity… untold history… giving voice to many cultures that have created—and are still transforming—California” (Peralta, 2014). Their online representation places historic figures side-by-side with contemporary people associated with the museum, a calendar of events not limited to history, and opportunities to shop. How many
other successful small house museums are out there is beyond the scope of this thesis.

If historic house museums are going to contribute successfully to our nation’s story, then a proactive approach by management, professionals, leading scholars, and institutions is necessary. Their assistance could make the difference between managing a poorly operated ruin and a sustainable institution. Are we the people required to step in at every emergency, as in the Cherry Hill example, or can small institutions like the Hembree House Museum find accessible resources to assist with their missions, goals, and objectives?

At a basic level, this thesis serves to assist the direction for one community-based historic house museum. My hope is that others will take this information as a foundation for further research and institutional assistance. Historic house museum have the potential to achieve a symbiotic relationship to its community. If successful, house museums should become representational leaders in community diversity, place-based narratives, and advocates for historic preservation.
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