

Interpretation Assessment of New Hampshire's First State House

Interpretation Option Scenarios & Recommendations

March 13, 2011

The Cherry Valley Group

Understanding the New Hampshire First State House

- **What are the objectives of the project**
- **What are the cultural resources available**
- **What is the history behind the resource**
- **Who are the supporters and stakeholders for the project**
- **Who are the potential audiences**

Developing a Framework for Interpretation Options

- **Interpretative significance of the resource**
- **The historical record**
- **The Interpretation “utilizations”**
- **Topics**
- **Themes / Storylines to be developed**
- **Methods & techniques of interpretation**
- **Audiences**
 - Potential Market
 - Market Segments
 - Target Audiences

Criteria for Assessing Interpretation Options

- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**
- **Potential Audiences/Market**
- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**
- **Value to Audiences**

Utilization of the Resource: The Potential Spectrum for the Use of the First State House



Full
Restoration



Partial
Restoration



New
Museum



Exhibit in
Existing
Venue



Boarding
House
Restoration



Research &
Training
Lab



Completely
Virtual

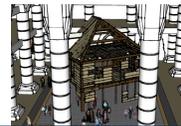
Utilization of the Resource: Selected Interpretation Scenarios for the First State House



The New
Hampshire First
State House
Historic Site



The New
Hampshire First
State House Partial
Reconstruction



The New
Hampshire
First State
House Exhibit



The Virtual First
State House
Museum



First State
House History
Center for Civic
Engagement

The New Hampshire First State House Historic Site



- **Venue/Utilization**
 - Fully Restored to 18th c. appearance, exterior & interior
 - Not in original location
- **Interpretation Method**
 - Living History based w/ furnished interior spaces
- **Themes/Storylines**
 - Law & justice
 - Life in New Hampshire's Royal Capital
- **Interpretation Techniques**
 - Costumed Presenters
 - Tours
 - Historical Theater
 - Educational Workshops
 - Special Events
- **Target Audiences**
 - Resident/regional market
 - Elementary & middle school market
 - Travel Market

The New Hampshire First State House Historic Site



PROS

- Conserves and preserves the surviving original elements of the State House
- Provides an experiential context for learning about the functions of the seat of colonial government
- Provides a variety of interpretive techniques to tell the story of the First State House—meeting multiple visitor learning styles

CONS

- High capital development costs
- Potentially high ongoing operational costs
- Overlap with existing historic sites interpreting the colonial history of New Hampshire in the region
- Conjectural nature of reconstruction may undermine credibility of the interpretation

The New Hampshire First State House Historic Site



Analysis & Recommendation

- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**

- Not a recommended treatment per *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction of Historic Buildings*

- **Potential Audiences/Market**

- Shares the same market as all existing colonial era historic sites in the region

- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**

- Offers a platform for a wide variety of program options
- Provides few opportunities for new interpretation approaches

- **Value to Audiences**

- As a conjectural historic site it will not have the level of “authority” that original building with original artifacts have.

First State House Partial Reconstruction



- **Venue/Utilization**
 - Partial reconstruction of the original First State House as an Historic Site Museum
 - Attached to an existing structure
- **Interpretation Method**
 - Historic Site Museum with period and non-period interpretation settings
- **Themes/Storylines**
 - Law & Justice
 - Life in New Hampshire's Royal Capital
 - Historic Preservation – The Life of a Building
- **Interpretation Techniques**
 - Costumed Presenters
 - Tours
 - Historical Theater
 - Educational Workshops
 - Special Events
- **Target Audiences**
 - Resident/regional market
 - Elementary & middle school market
 - Travel Market

First State House Partial Reconstruction



PROS

- Conserves and preserves the surviving original elements of the State House
- Provides an experiential context for learning about the functions of the seat of colonial government
- Provides some variety in interpretive techniques to tell the story of the First State House—meeting multiple visitor learning styles
- Fewer conjectural elements incorporated into the reconstruction

CONS

- Potential for a confusing interpretation as a remnant of an “historic” building tacked on to another structure
- Less space to orient visitors, explain building context and introduce overall storyline
- Overlap with existing historic sites interpreting the colonial history of New Hampshire in the region
- Less space for special programming and events
- High capital development costs
- Potentially high ongoing operational costs

First State House Partial Reconstruction



Analysis & Recommendation

- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**
 - Not a recommended treatment per *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction of Historic Buildings*
- **Potential Audiences/Market**
 - Shares the same market as all existing colonial era historic sites in the region
- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**
 - Provides few opportunities for new interpretation approaches
 - Presents many opportunities for a confusing interpretation
- **Value to Audiences**
 - As a conjectural historic site it will not have the level of “authority” that original building with original artifacts have.
 - It will be a short stay experience, or be dependant on the host venue

The New Hampshire First State House Exhibit



- **Venue/Utilization**

- Reconstruction of the frame portion of the First State House that presently exists, inside of an existing publicly accessible building
- “Stand-alone” exhibition of the historic fabric of the First State House
- Virtual re-creations of historic exterior and interior

- **Interpretation Method**

- Museum Exhibit

- **Themes/Storylines**

- Historic Preservation – The Life of a Building
- Life in New Hampshire’s Royal Capital
- Law and Justice

- **Interpretation Techniques**

- Interpretive exhibit
- Object theater
- Media presentations

- **Target Audiences**

- Resident/Regional Market
- Travel Market
- K-12 Educational Market

The New Hampshire First State House Exhibit



PROS

- Conserves and preserves the surviving original elements of the State House
- Interprets the entire history of the building, from original construction to the present
- Provides some variety in interpretive techniques to tell the story of the First State House—meeting multiple visitor learning styles
- No conjectural elements incorporated into the reconstruction, with any conjectural elements presented in a theatrical manner that is more honest
- Low staff-based ongoing program cost

CONS

- Potentially high exhibit development, design and construction costs
- High ongoing maintenance costs for multi-media equipment
- A large open span with high vertical space is needed to physically install the original frame

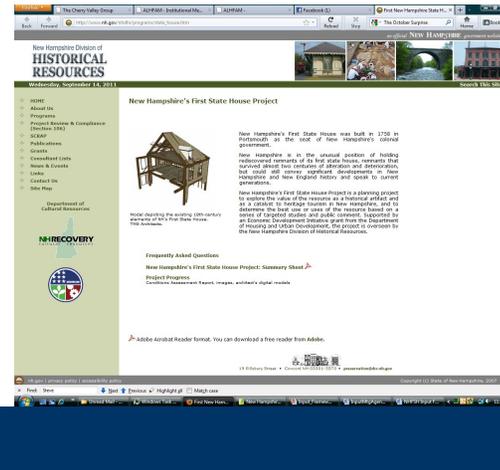
The New Hampshire First State House Exhibit



Analysis & Recommendation

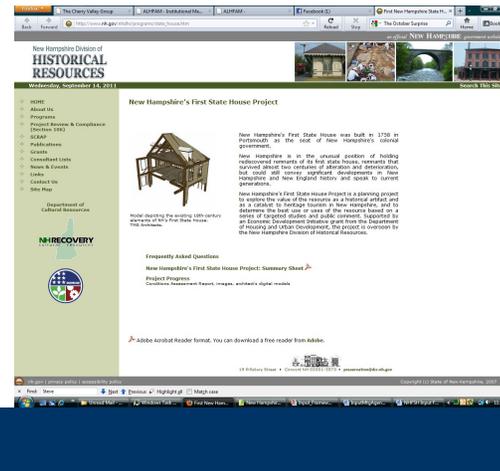
- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**
 - A respectful use of the object that allows it to be seen as it has survived, while using it to tell a complete story of the object's history
- **Potential Audiences/Market**
 - Has the “built-in” audience of the of the host institution, and should widen that audience
 - Has the potential to draw new audiences from a younger demographic by presenting a history-based story in a non-traditional method.
- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**
 - Is designed to tell the complete story of the artifact with modern and compelling interpretation techniques
 - Provides opportunities for multiple interpretation techniques to be employed that can appeal to new young audiences
- **Value to Audiences**
 - Direct access to the real object
 - Provides multiple learning style options
 - The immersive media-based presentation can “compete” with other attractions

The New Hampshire Virtual First State House Museum



- **Venue/Utilization**
 - Digital architectural fragments collection/Historical research database / Learning laboratory
 - Housed at an academic or historical/cultural institution
 - Accessible to general public electronically only
- **Interpretation Methods**
 - Research
 - Virtual Museum via web
- **Themes/Storylines**
 - Historic Preservation – The Life of a Building
 - Life in New Hampshire's Royal Capital
 - Law and Justice
 - Self Government and Citizenship
 - Being New Hampshire
- **Interpretation Techniques**
 - On-line exhibits
 - Educational outreach programs (distance learning)
 - Curricular materials (on-line)
 - Special workshop/seminars/colloquiums (on-line)
 - Laboratory/classroom
- **Target Audiences**
 - Regional & National Market
 - Secondary & Advanced Educational Market
 - Educational community (teachers/professors)
 - Life-long Learners

The New Hampshire Virtual First State House Museum



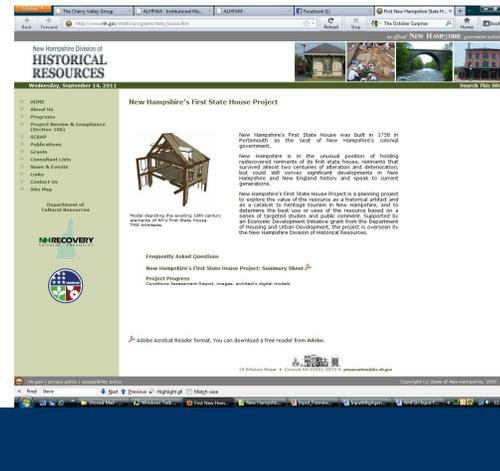
PROS

- Low capital development costs
- Insures the ongoing conservation and preservation of the original historical resources
- Provides the opportunity for a wide variety of interpretation topics and themes
- Can reach a broad and diverse set of audiences, while easily targeting some products for the distinct needs of a particular audience segment
- Does not preclude the use of the historical resource for some other physical interpretation use in the future

CONS

- Eliminates the general public's direct access to the real, physical artifact(s)
- Potentially high ongoing operational costs

The New Hampshire Virtual First State House Museum



Analysis & Recommendation

- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**
 - Takes advantage of the object's historical value and considers its long-term preservation via conservation lab option
- **Potential Audiences/Market**
 - Opens the object up to a state-wide and national audience that is broad and diverse
 - Has the potential to draw audiences from a younger demographic through online accessibility and interactive options
- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**
 - Is highly flexible and allows for the creation of varied online exhibits that explore all of the identified themes of the First state House.
 - Creates opportunities for partnerships with other regional historic site and allows for expanded access to their collections and stories through a single portal
- **Value to Audiences**
 - Widely accessible to New Hampshire's citizen
 - A valuable educational resource tool for the K-12 community
 - Limited direct physical access to the object

First State House History Center for Civic Engagement



- **Venue/Utilization**
 - Educational Outreach Center/Historical research database
 - Centered in a private non-profit library, archive , or association
- **Interpretation Methods**
 - Education Outreach Advocacy Organization / Library and Archive
- **Themes/Storylines**
 - Law and Justice
 - Self Government and Citizenship
 - Being New Hampshire
- **Interpretation Techniques**
 - Mid to long term traveling exhibits)
 - Virtual exhibits
 - Curricular materials
 - Participatory theater
- **Target Audiences**
 - Statewide audiences
 - Middle School/High School Students
 - The legal community (law students, professors, lawyers, elected officials)
 - Life-long Learners

First State House History Center for Civic Engagement



PROS

- Low capital development costs
- Provides the opportunity for a wide variety of interpretation/education programs all based on a well-focused, clear mission
- Can reach a broad and diverse set of audiences, while easily targeting some products for the distinct needs of a particular audience segment
- Has the potential for broad financial support and program partnerships
- Does not preclude the use of the historical resource for some other physical interpretation use in the future

CONS

- Eliminates the general public's direct access to the real, physical artifact(s)
- Does not insure the ongoing conservation and preservation of the original historical resources
- Potentially high ongoing operational costs

First State House History Center for Civic Engagement



Analysis & Recommendation

- **Appropriate Use of the Resource**
 - Uses the object a symbolic icon for self-government in New Hampshire
 - Can use elements of the object for inclusion in the travelling exhibits
- **Potential Audiences/Market**
 - Directs the interpretation to a broad and diverse state-wide audience using traditional and non-traditional techniques
 - Has the potential to draw audiences from a younger “native digital users” demographic
- **Quality of Interpretation / Trends in Interpretation**
 - Focuses on making a link between history and the issues of today
 - Allows for a wide variety of associated programs that can target specific audiences
 - Provides opportunities for interactive engagement of the audience – allows the audience to participate in telling the story and making meaning for themselves
- **Value to Audiences**
 - Reaches out to audiences within their own communities
 - Provides for educational outcomes that will impact the citizens of New Hampshire in their daily lives
 - Meets an identified need to improve civics education in New Hampshire