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MODELS OF SUCCESS:
AN EXAMINATION OF
THREE PHILADELPHIA HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUMS

N. Elizabeth Farthing Bitterman

A THESIS

in

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Advisor
Roger W. Moss
Adjunct Associate
Professor of Architecture

Reader
Peter Cappelli
Chair & Professor of
Management

Graduate Group Chair
Frank G. Matero
Associate Professor of Architecture

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Chapter One

The Successful Historic House Museum Defined and Its National Historical Context

Introduction

At a time when most house museums across the country are struggling to survive, a few can be held up as exemplars in the field. These are the sites that are professionally managed; which have high levels of public and community support; and which are likely to be viable into the next century. In short, they are the house museums which are successful.

The purpose of this thesis is to test a hypothesis about what constitutes success for a historic house museum by examining a number of sites to determine why a few among many are successful. Defining success for a historic house museum and identifying commonalities among successful house museums may provide a framework usable by other sites that are struggling to survive, or wishing to push forward to become more successful. Before beginning an examination of the successful historic sites, it is useful to define what a house museum is; to formulate a definition of success for a historic house museum; and to place the historic house museum in the context of the preservation movement in the United States.

A Definition of Success for Historic House Museums

The late Charles Montgomery defined a historic house as "a house whose structure and furnishings constitute an historically accurate document; that is, the furniture, pictures, and objects should be related to and consistent with the architecture, life, and status of the house, the people

who have lived in it, and the community of which it is a part."[1] In addition to memorializing certain individuals–owners, builders or architects–some house museums are established to depict lifestyles at various socio-economic levels during certain periods in American History. Other house museums serve to document a historic event. Still other historic house museums are established as examples of significant architecture. But most of these house museums, regardless of why they were established, struggle to survive, perhaps because as the fastest growing type of museum,[2] more historic house museums exist than the public can support.

To identify commonalities among successful historic house museums, it is first necessary to define what constitutes success. It is probable that such a definition would be: An educational organization that is professionally managed; that has identified a target market niche and appeals to that population with an authentic interpretation based on current scholarship; that possesses a high degree of community support; that is fiscally healthy, and has an on-going conservation program to ensure the maintenance and preservation of all historic objects and structures which comprise the site.

Museum Standards: An Important Measuring Tool

The American Association of Museums established its Museum Accreditation Program in 1970. Developed by the museum profession for the museum profession, the process includes a self-evaluation by the

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[1]Charles Montgomery, "The Historic House–a Definition," *Museum News* 38, no. 1 (September 1959): 13.

[2]Sherry Butcher-Younghans, *Historic House Museums: a Practical Handbook for their Care, Preservation, and Management* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993): v.

museum being considered for accreditation, as well as a review by other museum professionals outside the institution being considered for accreditation. Accreditation means that a museum meets or exceeds a certain level of quality and professionalism, ensuring the quality of our country's museums as well as the quality of the experience of those who visit our museums.[3]

In its publication, *Museums for a New Century: A Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century* the AAM outlines a set of recommendations for museums. Some of the recommendations deal with the growth, organization and care of museum collections and the function of museums as institutions of learning, while other recommendations are designed to foster effective leadership and professionalism while working toward long-term financial stability. These recommendations, while developed for all types of museums, can be applied to historic house museums as they seek to reach new standards of excellence. For example, one recommendation urges museums to set clear, rational and appropriate goals for the contribution it can make toward the stewardship of our cultural and material heritage. It states that museums must collect both carefully and purposefully, and calls for a periodic review of the collections policy to ensure that the policy is in keeping with current professional standards and the purposes of the museum.

House museums were the earliest results of the historic preservation movement in the United States. To understand the importance of historic

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[3]The American Association of Museums, *Museums for a New Century: a Report of the Commission on Museums for a New Centur* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1984): 75.

house museums in the United States, it is necessary to understand the history of the Preservation movement.

The Historic House Museum at the Beginning of the Preservation Movement in the U.S.

Preservation is an idea that has been with us for centuries. Indeed, preservation is written about in the Bible.[4] The question of why we preserve is a complex and highly emotional one with as many different answers as there are preservation practitioners. Motivations range from a desire to memorialize a person or an event, to the desire to create an attraction to encourage outside tourism, to the desire to try to recapture a way of life now remembered as being more gentle and idyllic than perhaps it was in reality.

The Preservation movement blossomed in the United States during the last century, while other countries such as Italy, England and Poland, have a centuries-long history of preserving their buildings. While it is difficult to compare the Preservation movements in the United States and Europe (for obvious reasons), it is interesting to note at least one striking way in which they differ: the focus of the early movement in the United States revolved around memorializing our country's founding fathers. The desire to establish shrines to individuals important in our nation's history drove the preservation movement in its early days, with preservationists in

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[4]Isaiah 58: 12 "And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell." *New American Standard Bible* Red Letter Edition, Paragraphed. (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company, a Division of Lippincott, 1977): 559.

the South attempting to follow the model offered by the Mt. Vernon effort in the 1850s.[5]

Historian Mike Wallace writes that by 1895, there were 20 house museums in the United States. By 1910, there were 100. He attributes the rapid increase in numbers of house museums partly to immigration and the impact it had on attitudes toward history, arguing that there was a perception that immigrant aliens with subversive ideologies were destroying the public. According to Wallace, the result was that the upper classes fashioned a new collective identity for themselves, because they wanted to be able to disassociate themselves from immigrants. It was during the 1880s and 1890s that several societies were founded for this reason: Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, Mayflower Descendants and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. [6]

Preservationists in England, on the other hand, had strong opinions about preserving architecture for its own sake. John Ruskin (1819-1900), a 19th century architecture critic and art theorist, viewed architecture as the key to humankind's memory and advocated an approach which allowed only aiding buildings from further deterioration, rather than restoring them. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin cites memory as the sixth lamp, "...there are two duties respecting national architecture whose importance it is impossible to overrate; the first, to render the architecture of the day

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[5]Charles B. Hosmer, Jr. *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: Putnam, 1965): 63.

[6]Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996): 6-7.

historical; and, the second, to preserve, as the most precious of inheritances, that of past ages."[7] Regarding restoration, Ruskin wrote,

> Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction of which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered; a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture.[8]

Ruskin's radical approach to preservation dictated no intervention to restore a building. Rather, Ruskin advocated making visible repairs to buildings –when needed to prevent further deterioration–so that the on-looker would not be misled into thinking that he or she was viewing original building material.

Ruskin's French contemporary, Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), was another proponent of preserving architectural treasures, yet he advocated a very different approach, opting to restore buildings, replacing deteriorated elements with like pieces, to enable the on-looker to view a building the way it was originally intended to be seen. In his writings about the restoration of Notre Dame Cathedral, Viollet-le-Duc wrote:

> In this case, it is necessary not only that the artist apply himself to propping up, strengthening, and conserving; he must also make every effort to restore to the building through prudent repairs the richness and brightness of which it has been robbed. It is

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[7]John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1961): 169-170.

[8]Ruskin, 184.

> thereby that he can conserve for posterity the unified appearance and the interesting details in the monument that has been entrusted him.[9]

While preservationists such as Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc worked to conserve what they considered national architectural treasures, preservation in this country began as a way to memorialize certain individuals important in the founding of our nation, and indeed continued much in this vein until fairly recently. The historic house preservation movement began in this country as early as 1850 with the establishment of Hasbrouck House in Newburgh, NY, General George Washington's wartime headquarters, and Mount Vernon, his estate located on the Potomac River, as historic house museums. Both structures were under threat of demolition and had been badly neglected over the years. These buildings were preserved and opened as historic house museums because of their association with a powerful and famous national icon–the first President of the United States of America. Saving buildings because of their association with a famous person continued to be the most common motivation behind preserving and opening historic house museums. But houses opened for this reason can be problematic–particularly for small communities–given their focus on a single person or family, which may elevate the individual above his or her true historical context.[10]

Even so, it is possible for museums founded for the purpose of memorializing an individual to shift their interpretive efforts into a broader

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[9]M.F. Hearn, Editor, *The Architecture and Theory of Viollet-le-Duc: Readings and Commentary* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990): 279.

[10]Warren Leon, and Roy Rosenzweig, Editors, *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago 1989): 98-99.

context. The consideration of roles of domestic servants in great houses is an example of this expanded vision. Lindenwald, President Van Buren's retirement home in Kinderhook, NY, uses the role of domestic servants within the household to examine 19th-century social structure and the influence of Irish immigration, thus broadening the house's interpretation and it's context.[11]

Historic house museums were the beginning of the preservation movement in the United States and continue today to be a significant component of the museum and historic preservation fields.

[11] Leon and Rosenzweig, 99.

Chapter Two

The Historic House Industry Today and Traditional Measures of Success

An Industry Overview

Historic house museums as an industry in our country is surprisingly large. In fact, it is the most numerous kind of museum in the United States, numbering 6,000 and growing daily.[12] Most of these house museums do not achieve a high degree of success. A survey of the house museum industry across the nation discloses that:

- 65% of historic properties museums have no full-time paid staff.
- 19-27 % employ only one full-time staff person.
- the majority of house museums operate on budgets of less than $50,000 per year.
- More than half receive fewer than 5,000 visitors per year.[13]

In short, most house museums would find it difficult if not impossible to meet the standards of the museum profession: most are too small in terms of budgets and staff; the majority operate on a skeleton crew of volunteers–most of whom have no formal training.

12Butcher-Younghans, v.

13Butcher-Younghans, 6.

Economic Impact of Historic House Museums

Historic house museums have the potential to bring tourist dollars to their local economies. The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park, IL, conducted a study of the impact that site has on its local economy. The home and studio operate on a budget of $1.6 million, with annual visitation at 74,000.[14] In preparation for a capital campaign in which site administrators planned to seek support of local corporations and business people, they sought to determine the role that a museum plays in a local economy, the tangible benefits to a community that a museum provides, and what a museum can give back to the community that supports it. The results of the economic impact study concluded that the home and studio have a $26 million annual impact on the Chicago area, and a $5.5 million impact on the local economy of Oak Park.[15] These figures were useful to the organization in generating support from local business leaders as they embarked on their capital campaign.

The visitor profile generated by the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio economic impact study showed that 66% are visitors from outside the Chicago area; 20% are from foreign countries; 19% are repeat visitors. By bringing in such a large number of visitors from outside the Chicago area, the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio generates an impact on the local restaurants and hotels where these visitors seek accommodations and

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[14]Sandra Wilcoxon, "Historic House Museums: Impacting Local Economies," *Historic Preservation Forum* 5, no. 5 (May/June 1991): 11.

[15]Wilcoxon, 11.

meals as well as local shops frequented by tourists during their visit to the Chicago area.[16]

Historic house museum staffs must advocate their site's role in the economy and tangible benefits to the community. Documenting a site's economic impact can also be a valuable tool for doing so, creating strong arguments for further support of a site and increased marketing opportunities.

Traditional Indicators of Success: Are They Useful in Determining Success for a Historic House Museum?

When examining historic house museums to determine whether they are successful, several criteria are often used by private funding agencies and government organizations when deciding whether or not to give grant funds to an organization. But some criteria may not be a true measure of success. What follows is an analysis of traditional criteria used to determine success and why some of these criterion may be flawed.

The Mission Statement

Administrators of most historic house museums that are dependent on outside funding sources must understand the role of their site in serving the public and must justify to the public their need for long-term support. Many house museum administrators wonder why they aren't reaching the people in their communities as well as they should. Traveller's Rest, a historic site in Nashville, Tennessee, was owned and run by the Colonial

[16]In her article, Wilcoxon reports that a poll of the seventeen sites owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation estimates that their aggregate impact is near $200 million and account for 1,300 jobs.

Dames and was staffed by volunteers. When management of the site was transferred from the volunteers to a professional staff, the site's new managers spent two years working to identify the site's purpose/mission, expand awareness of the site within the community, establish a long range plan, and secure the necessary funding to implement the long range plan. Site administrators retained an outside consultant to assist them in determining what was truly important about the site historically--why it was worth preserving and worth visiting.[17]

Finding answers to these questions–what is our purpose? why are we important historically? what do we wish to accomplish? keeps a site focused. The mission statement articulates the answers to these questions. The successful sites being examined in the following pages have carefully crafted, focused mission statements, explicitly articulating their purpose and audience. It is not sufficient simply to draft a mission statement; it is important frequently to ask: Is our site accomplishing the goals of its mission? Do we meet the needs of our audience? To this end, a site may wish to conduct market research and test with focus groups the product it delivers, whether in the form of education or entertainment. In addition, a site's board of directors must periodically re-examine the mission of the organization. Wyck's board of directors, for example, have recently revised their mission statement to include their interpretive and research programs. But other organizations' mission statements are less focused. So while a mission statement is a blueprint for the site's activities and can be an important element in a site's success, it does not in itself serve as a good

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[17]Will Hendricks, "To Build the Support You Need, Hold Fast to Your Mission." *Museum News* 69 (January/February 1990): 73-74.

indicator of success: it may be outdated or may not be followed in day-to-day operations.

Budgets and Endowments

Another traditional criterion used to measure the success of a house museum is the size of its budget and whether or not it possesses an endowment. Most sites operate on small budgets. One survey of historic house museums discloses that 52% operate on less than $50,000 per year; 22% operate on more than $100,000 and 18% operate on between $50,000 and $100,000 per year. Over one third of the houses surveyed (36%) reported revenues under $5,000 per year.[18] At these sites money is a constant frustration. According to Dr. Roger Moss of the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, a professionally run house museum becomes viable at the $250,000 budget level.[19]

Ironically, the relationship between money and success is that to attain one, the other must usually be present. At issue is whether success begets money or money begets success. What is certain is that access to funding, be it earned or contributed, is an underlying condition for a historic house museum's success. However, an organization can possess a large budget and still have financial woes if it is overspending, or if a single project or program exerts a drain on resources. Consequently, a large budget does not automatically indicate success.

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[18]Peggy Coats, "Survey of Historic House Museums," *History News* 45, no. 1 (January/February 1990): 26-28.

[19]Roger W. Moss, Lecture to Historic Site Management class, University of Pennsylvania Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. January 16 1996.

Whether the site balances its budget is also a consideration. Granting agencies typically will not fund an organization that can not balance its budget. But by requiring a balanced budget, granting agencies create a potential disincentive for preserving the site: a site may indeed have a balanced budget but it may have achieved this goal by delaying much needed conservation of buildings which comprise the site and house its collections.

While money is truly key to most successful organizations, the size of an organization's budget may not be a truly reliable measure of its success. What may be more telling is the source of funds, for example, whether a house museum possesses an endowment. A large endowment can provide as earned income a substantial percentage of an organization's budget making it less dependent on gifts and grants. Thus it makes infinite good sense for an organization to build its endowment as much as it possibly can. On the other hand, an organization which through bad management is forced to spend its endowment, is an organization that is far from fiscally healthy. Spending the endowment may provide short term relief from financial woes, but it only serves to handicap the organization in the long run.

Visitation

Many funding agencies are interested in the annual of visitation to a site, but those numbers are easily skewed. For example, many sites are now on the World Wide Web. This means individuals may have access to the site and its collections without physically visiting the site. He or she may glean valuable information on a "virtual tour" of the site. While a "virtual tour"

can't replace the experience of visiting in person, it can help overcome problems of accessibility limited due to time or geographic constraints. A historic house administrator may not with a clear conscience include the people who access a web site in their tally of visitors, but certainly a large number of people are being reached and educated through the presence of historic house museums on the World Wide Web.

The numbers can also be skewed by events only tangentially related to the museum. A site may receive a large part of its visitation during an annual event where those who come never actually tour the house or learn about its importance. At Cliveden, for example, only 32% of its visitors to the grounds see the interior of the house.[20]

While visitation is certainly important to a historic house museum, there are many ways to reach the public. Many sites sponsor off-site educational programs for both children and adults, with museum personnel traveling to area schools or by hosting lectures regarding the site. Taking the site "on the road" enables museum staff to educate large numbers of people about the site and its mission. Lectures may also be a source of income for the site. In short, site visitation does not necessarily tell the true story of its success, and therefore is not a reliable indicator of whether a site it truly thriving.

Governance

The way a site is owned and governed has a profound effect on its success. For example, ownership by an organization in a separate geographic area may have an adverse affect, as the local community may be

[20]Interview with Jennifer Esler, Executive Director, Cliveden, November 6, 1997.

unmotivated to support the site, feeling that their money goes elsewhere. Hope Lodge, in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania is owned and run by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It has a friends group that consists of about 100 people. Its neighbor, The Highlands, is also owned by the state. However, The Highlands Historical Society, a local group established for the purpose of running the site, has a board which governs the sites and consists of about 450 members. Local support and involvement at The Highlands exceeds that for Hope Lodge, a resulting from how these two sites are governed.

The Board of Directors for a site has the ultimate responsibility for oversight of the historic house museum, including fiduciary responsibility. These trustees must be sure that they have acted, at all times, in the best interest of the site. One aspect of their role is to hire an executive director to oversee the day-to-day management of the site. Because of this responsibility, the board of directors is ultimately responsible for the success of a site. Conversely, the board of directors can have a negative effect. For example, having some of a house museum's original founders on its board for a number of years can be a disadvantage to some sites. In some instances, the beliefs of the original founders who may have spearheaded efforts to save the historic house, can continue to influence policy for years even after the house has become a museum. It is not surprising for founders to wish a house museum's interpretive efforts to improve community moral or glorify a community's past. While these wishes are understandable, they should not constitute the sole reason for establishment of a house museum. Many dedicated foundation members, once a house museum has been established, are unwilling to give control over to a paid museum

professional who may well be new to a community, but the organization's proud local founders may not be aware of the broader field of history museums, and may therefore lack a complete understanding of a house's educational responsibility.[21] The Philadelphia Chapter of the Colonial Dames oversees Stenton, a museum in Germantown. In the past, the Colonial Dames' historic sites have had a reputation as old-fashioned, run by an organization of society matrons. At Stenton, however, the Dames are interested in current scholarship. They have allowed site administrators to update room arrangements based on recent scholarship and to use authentic textiles in the second floor bedchambers. On the other hand, long-term trustees may be a true asset to the organization, providing historical knowledge of what has been attempted by the organization in the past, as in the case of Wyck's governing board.

Important roles of board of directors are to provide funding to the organization either directly from their own resources or through contacts with others, to provide professional expertise–lawyers, accountants, or financial planners–who are willing to do work for the site pro bono or at a reduced rate, and to provide expertise in the form of museum professionals or individuals in fields relating directly to the historic house museum. Because governance precipitates success, its board of directors is a good measure of success. If an organization's board of directors is in disarray, it can not possibly guide the site to success.

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[21] Leon and Rosenzweig, 100-101.

Personnel

Instead of using budgets or visitation, a more effective measure of success for a historic house museum is the staff and their professionalism. As stated above, most house museums are run by volunteers who are not trained as site administrators, curators or historians. But a house museum with no trained, salaried, professional personnel cannot hope to thrive, for it is the museum professionals who have their fingers on the pulse of national museum trends and management practices.

First, a site must hire a director with professional training or experience if it hopes to be successful. That director must build a relationship of trust with the board of directors in order for the site to truly thrive. While long-range planning and the setting of goals is mainly a trustee role, the effective site director will be a major player in developing strategies for accomplishing the goals.

In addition, a site's approach to the care of its collections is an important means of determining success. The presence of a curator or a curatorial-trained director on the staff of a house museum is an indicator of the degree to which the site's board members are committed to the care and development of the site's collections, that is, the tangible objects which serve to educate the public about life in the house as it was lived by the inhabitants.

A successful house museum must also have well defined, written policies regarding the scope of the collections. It is important that house museums define what they will collect. A historic house museum's collections may be actively or passively assembled. Active assembling ensures the most authentic type of collections for the house's interpretation,

as key pieces are actively sought. Passively assembled collections have been assembled through donations, highlighting the importance of well defined collections policies. To prevent becoming a repository for all types of objects which have no value to the house's interpretive program, a house museum's collections policies must be focused and explicit.

Research Efforts

Another indicator of success is the amount of on-going research at the site and the degree to which the site serves as a learning laboratory for professional and avocational inquiry. A site must be able to utilize and convey new information about itself.

Maintenance and Preservation

Yet another indicator of success is the extent to which the site is being preserved, whether the governing organization is able to perform necessary maintenance to the house rather than balancing the budget at the expense of delaying critical maintenance. Maintenance is critical to a site's success, ensuring that the collections comprising the site remain protected. To this end, successful sites have regular maintenance programs which ensure that maintenance is carried out on a routine basis.

Despite the poor state of many house museums in the country, there are many historic house museums operating successfully, adhering to museum standards, and working to reach a wide public audience interested in history. This study tests a definition of a successful house museum as an educational organization that is professionally managed, with an authentic interpretation based on current research, a high degree of community

support, that is fiscally healthy, with an on-going conservation program to ensure the maintenance and preservation of all historic objects and structures which comprise the site. Three house museums–Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck–serve to substantiate this definition of a historic house museum, in an era when so many house museums are struggling solely to survive.

Chapter Three

Successful Historic Sites–

Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck

Philadelphia and its surrounding suburbs contain a wealth of historic house museums other historic and cultural resources. A report by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission maintains that the primary market for the Philadelphia tourist is historic attractions, boding well for the many historic house museums in the area[22] But a great disparity exists between the well-managed, adequately funded museums and the non-professionally managed, cash-strapped house museums comprising the majority of the industry. An examination of the three successful sites–Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck–provides insight into why these sites are thriving, tests the definition of success and sheds light on the management of these institutions as well as management at some less successful historic house museums.

[22]Philadelphia City Planning Commission, *Destination Philadelphia: A Strategic Plan for the Visitor Industry* (Philadelphia: The Commission, 1993): 10.

The House at Bartram's Garden. Photograph by the author.

Bartram's Garden

Historical Overview and Interpretive Focus

In West Philadelphia, Bartram's Garden is America's oldest Botanical Garden, and this is the focus of the site's interpretive efforts. As the Royal Botanist, John Bartram and his son, William, identified and cultivated many plant species in the new world. They planted a garden directly in front of their house on the banks of the Schuylkill River, and expanded it over the years to include other acreage on their land. Indeed, Bartram has been called one of the earliest ecological conservationists, advocating

reforestation as an adjunct to farming.[23] Bartram kept copious notes about his travels to search for plants unknown in Europe. He carefully recorded what he found, leaving behind a body of documentation about his life's work.

John Bartram purchased his farm property in 1728. On it was a small farmhouse two rooms long by one room wide, two and a half stories in height. By 1731, Bartram had added a kitchen with a bed chamber above it, and in 1770, he extended the house toward the river, by a depth of one room, faced the house in stone, and changed the gambrel roof to a peaked roof. After John Bartram's death, the house remained in the Bartram family where William and other members established the first plant nursery at the site. The last owner of the house died in 1879, insisting that the remaining 27 acres of property be kept intact, and in 1891 the property was sold to the City of Philadelphia. In 1893, Bartram descendants formed the John Bartram Association to work with the City to maintain and preserve the house. Today Bartram's Garden is a Mecca for horticultural enthusiasts across the country. Its focus is on the garden that John Bartram planted and that his son, William, maintained and expanded after John's death, with the house a major component of the interpretation.

Bartram's Garden from a Visitor's Perspective

As a student of the Historic Site Management class during the Spring of 1996, I visited the site in order to prepare a critique of it. My

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[23]Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley. *The Life and Travels of John Bartram: From Lake Ontario to the River St. John* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1982): 13.

introduction to Bartram's Garden was through the World Wide Web. The site has information on a web page maintained by LibertyNet, which gives the reader an overview of the site and its importance as America's first Botanical Garden.

The trip up Woodland Avenue was through a badly decayed part of Philadelphia. The location of the site could be its demise, yet it has managed to thrive despite the disadvantage. My mind would have rested easier if there had been one or two signs along the way to assure me I was on the right track, although keeping them graffiti-free would be difficult.

I joined the tour a few minutes late. There was one guide who had started a tour, so the shop keeper suggested I join the small group, rather than wait up to an hour for the guide to return. There was no orientation video, so had it not been for the information I gleaned from the Web, I would have approached the house and grounds with very little information about the site or its historic significance. The guide was dressed in contemporary clothing that resembled a uniform (all khaki). She is paid by the association which administers the site, and has a horticultural background.

The house contained a collection of furnishings that were appropriate for John Bartram's middle-class status. The scope of the furnishings collection is well defined and the collection has been actively assembled rather than passively assembled, allowing only appropriate pieces to be included, rather than becoming a repository for people who wish to donate items that are not appropriate to the collection. The guide was very respectful of the house's *historical*

collections, the term the used to differentiate between the site's furnishings and historical papers and the plants and grounds comprising the *living collections*. At no time during the tour did she touch or handle any object in the house. The house was equipped with security detectors, smoke detectors and humidity registers.

Bartram's Garden also concentrates on its living collections. One of the tour group members was an avid gardener. She and the guide practically conversed in Latin. I was truly impressed with the guide's knowledge of the garden and the different species of plants it contained. It became quite clear to me at this time that the draw to Bartram's Garden is indeed its historic botanical garden and grounds, appealing to botanists, gardeners and environmentalists.

A special exhibit inside the house, called "A History of the Flower Pot," was informative and eye-catching, with old pots of various sizes mounted to attract attention. As the site of America's first nursery, the exhibit related directly to the site. The site was also using its barn to stage an art exhibition, but this wasn't open during my visit.

The site is visited mainly by tour groups who have arranged beforehand a visit to the site, and by school children. I asked the guide if they conducted any special programs/tours for the community or local schools. She indicated at that point that she serves not only as a guide for the site, but also as it's education coordinator, and that they do a lot with one grade school in particular in the community and have many school groups visit. She said she has tried to start programs for middle-school children, but once they've reached that age, it's too late; they're no longer interested as the younger ones are.

When I finished the tour of the house, I wandered back to the gift shop/visitors area. The gift shop contains a sophisticated selection of books with publications for sale that are directly related to Bartram. His biography, for example, and transcribed correspondence are available. There are also trinkets that children can buy, and an easy-to-use map of the grounds which describes important plants and other points of interest.

This site serves an important function in its active outreach to the community and it has successfully targeted a particular audience: environmentalists and garden enthusiasts. With gardening one of the fastest growing hobbies in this country, the potential audience for Bartram's Garden is vast.

Governance

The Board of Directors for Bartram's Garden has undergone a transition in its recent history. Originally composed primarily of non-working women active in their suburban garden clubs, the board is now more balanced with various professional representation. Like other boards of successful sites, it now has lawyers and individuals from financial professions who can provide their expertise. In addition are individuals from the horticulture and related professions, and the board has recently added a well-known member of the museum profession who works for the Franklin Institute, a science museum.[24]

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[24]Interview with Toni Brinton, Former Chair, Board of Directors, John Bartram Association, June 12, 1997.

This addition will strengthen Bartram's Garden's science focus and perhaps broaden the context of science history interpretation.

Bartram's Garden makes an attempt to train its board members when they first join, using a professional training organization. This has helped Bartram's board better understand their role in overseeing the site; the board formerly did not recognize its responsibility to provide funding, but the last few years has seen a change within the board, and its members now actively contribute funds.

Personnel

Bartram's Garden employs three full-time staff members and eight part-time staff members, during the spring and summer seasons. Full-time positions are the site's Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, and Director of Education, who leads tours for visiting school children as well as for adults. Part-time positions are Public Relations Coordinator, Curator of Living Collections, Curator of Historical Collections, and a Membership Coordinator. Each of the individuals occupying these positions have professional experience. Other paid personnel include a custodian, a gardener, and additional garden personnel.[25]

Martha Wolf is the Executive Director of Bartram's Garden. She believes that the public has come to have very low expectations of the experience they will have at a historic house museum, and tries on a daily basis to change this perception. She counts Bartram's education program as one tool which can help change the image of historic sites.

[25]Interview with Martha Wolf, Executive Director, Bartram's Garden, June 10, 1997.

Martha Wolf has been the administrator at Bartram's Garden for more that 10 years, allowing time to build a relationship of trust between herself, the board of directors, the community, and funding sources.

Education Initiatives

Bartram's Garden has about 10,000 adult tour takers per year, with an additional 5,000 school children coming to the site.[26] It's a popular venue with kids because of the hands-on nature of the education program. Every child who visits the site on a school-related trip actually does something at the site. Activities include pressing flowers and cutting herbs, allowing each child to carry something away from the site with him or her. Children can become members of the "Puc Puggy Club" at Bartram's Garden. (Puc Puggy was the Native American name given to William Bartram on an expedition in search of native American plants. It means "Flower Hunter.") For a small fee, children can join the club and receive admission to the site, discounts on shop items, and invitations to special educational programs at Bartram's Garden.

The site is fortunate to have a renovated barn which serves as an education center and space for special exhibits. The renovated coach house has additional facilities that can be utilized as education space.

[26]The total number of visitors to Bartram's Garden is about 25,000. However, only around 15,000 are paying tour-takers. The grounds of Bartram's Garden are free and open to the public for extended hours, making it difficult for the site to keep track of all of its visitors.

Community and Public Relations

Community outreach is an important activity for the site. As stated before, the location could truly be a handicap, but the site works with the surrounding community instead of building walls around itself to keep the local population at bay. Last summer, the site had a grant-funded, part-time gardener to serve as a resource for residents of the public housing development that is the site's nearest neighbor. The gardener assisted residents in planting and growing their own gardens, in a community garden-like area between the housing development and the historic site. Residents grew vegetables and flowers. The ability to grow food for oneself and one's family and the ability to grow flowers is a powerful enabler that has contributed to the good feelings and cooperation between the residents and the historic site. This program is an example of active and valuable outreach by the site to its surrounding community.

Budget

In 1996, Bartram's Garden operated on a budget of $421,500 including funds restricted to certain projects. They consistently balance their budget. They have a small endowment which generates about 4% of their income, but the main source of income for the site comes from foundation support. Bartram's garden receives approximately 46% of its income from 44 foundations and 13 corporations.[27] The site's Executive Director is highly effective at securing grants for the organization's activities, and she has carefully developed credibility with funders over several years. Bartram's

[27] John Bartram Association "Recent Funding Sources" June 3, 1997.

Garden also receives funding from other organizations and government agencies.

Entrepreneurism at Bartram's Garden: New Ways to Bring in Money

While Bartram's Garden receives most of its income from foundation and corporation support, Martha Wolf and others involved in the organization acknowledge that the site has the potential to generate more income from entrepreneurial ventures. Currently, Bartram's Garden runs a plant sale and a greens sale each year to generate income. As entrepreneurial ventures, these sales make sense, directly relating to the site's horticultural focus, as well as the site's historic plant nursery activity. In addition, the site coordinates Hidden River Tours during Philadelphia Open House each year. The Bartram's Garden executive director is working with the City of Philadelphia to locate permanent boat docks at the site, thus allowing Bartram's Garden to expand this entrepreneurial venture. Other avenues for increasing earned income are a native plant seed business as a division of a larger seed company, or developing a garden catalogue featuring seeds, tools licensed from the collection, and other garden implements. With gardening and ecology the site's focus, the site has a number of entrepreneurial activities that may make a substantial contribution to the site's finances.

Research Efforts

As a visitor, I had a sense that the site is always undergoing research; it's a treasure trove that is still being mined. Evidence of this active on-going research effort is the recent exciting discovery of a mural on an

interior wall of the house beneath several layers of paint. The mural depicts an exotic scene featuring Palm trees, very likely a location happened upon during one of the Bartrams' travels to collect Native plants. In the near future the house will undergo a conservation survey to include a general architectural survey; a environmental monitoring needs survey; a survey of all the building finishes; and a survey of the buildings' stone.

Bartram's Garden is indeed a successful, thriving site. The site educates the public about botany and science, has a number of highly effective professional staff who oversee its operations. There has been a great deal of historical research conducted about the site, and the people it documents made significant contributions to our country through the botanical, scientific, and agricultural research that they conducted. The site has been successful in securing funding for its activities and it works with its community.

Cliveden. Photograph by the author.

Cliveden

Historical Overview and Interpretive Focus

Cliveden is owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and managed by a local independent organization. Located on Germantown Avenue in Germantown, Cliveden was built between 1763 and 1767 by Benjamin Chew (1722-1810), a prominent Philadelphia lawyer. He acquired an 11-acre tract of land in 1763 and built Cliveden upon it.[28] He

[28]Ray V. Shepherd, Jr. "Cliveden," *Historic Preservation* 24 (July/September, 1972) : 10. The grounds eventually totaled 60 acres. The house now occupies a six acre piece of land.

built the house as his country seat, occupying also a fine townhouse on Third Street in Philadelphia. Among other things, the house was the site of the Battle of Germantown in 1777. Cliveden was occupied almost exclusively by the Chew family until 1972, when the house and many furnishings were given or sold to the Trust. It exists primarily as it was built, with an addition to the rear, constructed in 1868.[29]

Cliveden receives about 17,000 visitors per year: 2,000 of these are school children, and 7,000 of these come for the two large events held annually on the grounds of the house, Mount Airy Day and the Re-enactment of the Battle of Germantown. Most of the visitors who come for these two events do not tour the house. About 10,000 people tour the house.

Cliveden from a Visitor's Perspective

Cliveden presents a thoroughly professional tour to its visitors. Upon arriving at Cliveden, one is directed by signs to the carriage house which serves as an education and visitors' center for the site. The door to the carriage house leads directly into the museum shop area consisting of a small collection of gifts and books addressing a wide range of interests such as gardening and various historical subjects. There is also information available on the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a book regarding the history of all the National Trust-owned sites. The site is free to members of the National Trust. Adult non-members pay $6.00.

After browsing through the museum shop my partner and I proceeded to the next room in the carriage house to watch an

[29]Shepherd, 5.

orientation video. The video featured actors who portrayed Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Chew as they recalled "memories" about the building of Cliveden, their house in the country, and the time they spent there. While the Colonial period-costumed actors in the video were somewhat distracting, the overall presentation was very successful, informing the visitor about the history of the house, it's function as the family's country house in Germantown, and the role it played in the Battle of Germantown during the Revolutionary War. The video effectively heightened my anticipation to see the actual house as I viewed the rooms and their superb furnishings on tape. As we approached Cliveden from the visitor center, I felt I had gleaned from the video a good background for what I was about to see and why it is significant.

We entered the house through the front door. The guide entered through a side door to let us in, which gave us a moment to admire the main facade. The guide was not dressed in costume as were the actors in the video. He gave a brief review of the house's history and conducted a very informative tour of the rooms on view with special attention to some of the paintings depicting particular historic events at the house. The guide emphasized the collection of documents located in the house at the time it was given to the National Trust, making the point that the papers documented many of the house's furnishings, and he gave information about the activities of many of the family members. The tour also emphasized later members of the family, with stories about certain family members during the 19th century, and their importance in Philadelphia society.

The guide was knowledgeable and was respectful of the collections, pointing out the famous sofa attributed to Philadelphia cabinetmaker Thomas Affleck, and calling our attention to the masterfully-carved looking glasses in the room. He also spoke of the research that was conducted regarding some of these pieces, telling us that the looking glasses were indeed the correct color; that the paint had been analyzed and that researchers knew that the room in the Chew's Philadelphia townhouse where the looking glasses originally hung was painted Prussian Blue, enabling the bone colored looking glasses to stand out magnificently.

The guide also spoke about research on the house and showed us evidence in one room that there were once panels on the wall flanking the fireplace by pointing out the shadow that existed. He then showed us the drawings featuring an example of such decorative paneling in another house and an architect's rendering of the way the panels looked, based on the profiles of the mantle and other moldings in the room.

There are two bedchambers open to the public on the second floor of the house. In one of these chambers is displayed information relating to the "Mischianza," an elaborate party given in honor of General Sir William Howe by John Andre, an important and popular British officer. Peggy Chew, one of Benjamin Chew's daughters, was John Andre's guest at the party. There is also a photograph from a re-enactment of the party one hundred years later in which a member of the Chew family portrays her ancestor, Peggy, during the celebrated event.

Benjamin Chew's importance and the house's role in the Battle of Germantown form the foundation for the house's interpretation through the introductory video, but stories regarding the family during the 19th century were colorfully illustrated through the display of certain furnishings and artwork during the tour of the house. The point was clearly made that the family handed down the important furnishings that were brought by horse-drawn carts out to the house each year from the townhouse by Benjamin Chew and his family, and that subsequent generations of the family added to this collection, careful to keep the many records that documented the family's history along with the objects passed down.

The contents of the house span three centuries, creating a breadth and scope of materials documenting how one family lived. This has enabled Cliveden's Executive Director, Jennifer Esler,[30] it's Curator, Elizabeth Laurent, and it's former Director of Education, Sandra MacKenzie Lloyd, to renew the house's interpretation, based on recent research and scholarship. The house's current interpretation focuses on the latter half of the 19th century, when the house was occupied by a descendant of Benjamin Chew and his young family. The focus of the house's interpretation is a departure from its original revolutionary-period focus. The change in interpretation occurred as a result of a National Endowment for the Humanities self-study,[31] when Cliveden's director and other professional personnel re-evaluated what time period would be best for interpretation.

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[30] Jennifer Esler departed Cliveden at the end of June, 1997, to accept a position with another organization. Elizabeth Laurent serves as Interim Executive Director, but for the purpose of this thesis, I have retained their titles as they were when I conducted interviews with them.

[31] Interview with Elizabeth Laurent, Curator, Cliveden, June 3, 1997.

Changing the interpretive focus of a historic house museum can be met with resistance by any number of the organization's stakeholders–its board of directors, the guide staff, the surrounding community, and the visiting public. The most effective way to mitigate this resistance is to carry out very careful scholarly research on the house, and to base any new interpretive efforts on the resulting documentation. In any situation where a house museum strives to move forward resulting in necessary changes, unified leadership is a key to ensuring a smooth transition.

Leadership, the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals, is essential to business, government and to the vast numbers of groups and organizations that influence how we live work and play.[32] Effective leadership by key board members and Cliveden's professional staff enabled the site to re-focus the stories which are told by the house's interpretive programs. By choosing the late 19th century, the house's interpretive efforts could focus on a time period during which the house was occupied by a family with children and include a layering of the house's stories which couldn't otherwise be accomplished if the house was interpreted strictly to the 18th century. This allows for children today to learn about the lives of children who lived 100 years ago, and it provides a richer interpretive opportunity. The average visitor's experience is also enriched. The focus on late-19th-century social history enables the rich stories and Chew family traditions that are well documented to illustrate how one wealthy Philadelphia family lived during the last century. What makes the tales so engaging is the fact that the furnishings they lived with,

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[32]Robbins, Stephen P. *Organizational Behavior: Concepts, Controversies, and Applications.* Annotated Instructor's Edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall: 1989): 302.

the implements of life they used daily are still on view in the house today, and they play an important role in conveying the story of Cliveden to its visitors. The stories captivate, allowing a glance into family life, sometimes not always happy, by visitors to the house today.

Personnel

The employment of museum professionals by a house museum is imperative to its success. Cliveden employs two such professionals–its director, and its curator, with a third full-time position, the Director of Education, recently vacant. Other professionals bring expertise in other disciplines, such as public relations and events coordination. In addition, Cliveden's guides are paid. Guides receive $7.00 per hour and must work two shifts per month to ensure that they remain current and practiced in giving tours of the house. Paying the guides makes them more accountable to Cliveden as their employer; a good employee doesn't fail to show up for work, whereas a volunteer may not feel bound to adhere to "good employee" practices. Cliveden also hires and pays customer service staff. They receive a lower pay rate than the guides, fulfilling services such as staffing the museum shop.

Collections Care

Cliveden has many strengths that contribute to its success as a historic site not only in Philadelphia, but on a national level. One of its major strengths is its collection of important 18th- and 19th-century furniture, made in Philadelphia. The 18th-century high-arched back sofa in the parlor is one of the most important pieces in the collection. This piece is attributed to Thomas Affleck, a noted Philadelphia cabinetmaker, who trained in

London and made furniture for a number of wealthy Philadelphians.[33] Other important pieces include a pair of looking glasses and girandoles, a mahogany desk and bookcase, and a chest on chest in an upstairs bedchamber with the label of Philadelphia cabinetmaker Jonathan Gostelowe (1745-1795).[34]

One of Cliveden's strengths as a historic house museum is the documentation that the Chew family maintained about the house and it's objects. The wealth of material at the house calls for the care of a professional curator. The presence of a curator on the staff of a historic house museum, whether full-time or part-time is a sign of the commitment a historic house has to its objects and mission. Under the tenure of Elizabeth Laurent, Cliveden's curator, systems for organizing collection records at Cliveden have been meticulously designed and maintained, employing both electronic and hard-copy record keeping on each object at Cliveden. Cliveden's curator is in charge of the objects inside the house, as well as some building and maintenance issues concerning the structures themselves.

In many house museums, fund-raising and marketing sometimes take place at the expense of the collections. The appeal of having events inside the house using objects from the collections as implements during the event–serving punch from an important punch bowl, for example–proves too strong a lure for many house museums to resist. Adding in the extra income that renting the space for parties generates results in a strong disincentive to exercise the most stringent collections care. Cliveden is

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[33]Shepherd, 11.

[34]Shepherd, 11.

fortunate in that its carriage house serves as rental space for income-generating special events such as wedding receptions. But there is one yearly fund-raising event that allows guests to enter the house and tour it with their drinks in hand. Cocktail food is served outside the house and guests are not allowed to enter the house with food. To mitigate damage to the house during this event, Elizabeth Laurent has developed appropriate strategies which include roping off some of the chairs to ensure that guests do not sit in them, carefully selecting foods to serve at the party which will not stain floor coverings if spilled, in the event that someone does enter the house with food; and covering tables particularly susceptible to damage due to their location with glass table tops made especially for this purpose.[35]

Another crucial role that comes under the direction of the curator at Cliveden is the emphasis on life safety issues that comprises a vitally important function at any historic site or museum. Cliveden's curator is responsible for the security and fire alarm systems, coordinating with office staff, the site's caretakers, and the guides to ensure that protection of lives is the most important goal in the event of a fire or burglary.

Ms. Laurent's goals for Cliveden as they relate to the collections illustrate that the site administrators continue to plan for improvements in the site's future. There are plans underway to construct interpretive exhibits in the carriage house utilizing images of the objects in Cliveden's possession; the Board of Directors has approved funding for redecorating part of the house's interior, making changes to some of the paint and wallpaper in the house to more appropriately reflect its interpretation of the

[35]Interview with Elizabeth Laurent, June 3, 1997.

late 19th century. As Ms. Laurent points out, this will be a difficult change to make in terms of the docent staff; they have a great love for the house as it is. Changing directions in interpretation and interiors is always difficult. It is Ms. Laurent's goal to redecorate and make the transition to the new interiors as smoothly as possible, educating the guide staff about the changes being made to facilitate their acceptance and appreciation of the changes.

Initiatives in Education

Cliveden's visitors are a widely varying group, from school children to professionals in the field of decorative arts. School children comprise about 25% of the visitors to the site who receive a tour of the house. The Director of Education Programs geared tours to this group of visitors, including information on what the late 19th-century children did–how they lived, what they liked, what games they played, where they slept and what they ate.[36] While school children are not the most sophisticated visitors to the house, it is imperative that museums make the effort to involve and engage them. Youth today have increasingly more distractions and increasingly fewer reasons to become interested in history and historic house museums. By appealing to them at a young age, the seeds for future interest can be planted, thus ensuring their interest and support of historic sites in the future.

Cliveden as a house museum was founded on solid foundations of documentary evidence and an abundance of historical fact. The importance of the objects at Cliveden, and the fact that they can be viewed in the

[36]Interview with Elizabeth Laurent, June 3, 1997.

environment for which they were designed, rather than in an exhibit at a museum of decorative arts, has provided this site with an obvious focus and target audience. As an attraction for aficionados of 18th- and 19th-century furnishings and decorative arts, Cliveden sponsors an annual series of lectures and demonstrations, known as the Cliveden Institute. This series is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and features noted experts in the field of historic preservation and museum professionals as its presenters. The series takes place in the renovated carriage house which serves as gallery space and an education center with an auditorium.

But decorative arts appeal to a relatively small percentage of the public. Cliveden's important collection appeals greatly to furniture connoisseurs, and the education and curatorial staff have designed special programs and tours geared specifically for this sophisticated tour-taker. It could certainly survive as a result of appealing to this small part of the population, but to really thrive, the site must appeal to a wider audience. In order to do this, Cliveden relies on some of its other strengths, such as its role in the Battle of Germantown, as noted earlier. This event draws a large number of visitors to Cliveden's grounds. While most of the visitors who come for the event do not tour the house, they are nevertheless exposed to the site and its role in the revolutionary war. The re-enactment of the Battle of Germantown is an important educational tool. In conjunction with the re-enactment each October of the Battle of Germantown, Cliveden hosts its largest annual fund-raiser, a cocktail party the evening preceding the re-enactment of the famous battle.

Research At Cliveden

Cliveden continues to carry on research about the site. The house's administrators have moved toward a new interpretation of the site, after conducting research and examining their findings in order to determine the best interpretation of the historic house to incorporate more information about the 19th century and how the residents viewed what occurred 100 years before, during the period of the Revolution.

Public Relations and Community Outreach

Cliveden's administrators are also involved in the community in which Cliveden is located, but in a different manner than at Bartram's Garden. Cliveden has made itself relevant to its local population by mentoring the Johnson House as it conducts research into the role the house and the area played in the underground railroad during the last century. The Johnson House happens to be owned by a Mennonite organization, but research into the site determined that it made much more sense to interpret the site not as another 18th-century house museum, but as a stop on the underground railroad.

Cliveden's administrators have worked with the organization that owns the Johnson House as it has evolved a new management structure and undertaken a re-interpretation of the site, providing consultation on how to conduct the necessary research to determine the best interpretation, and how to implement the necessary changes in interpretation.[37] In addition, Cliveden provided leadership, guidance, and other resources to Loudoun, another Germantown site, after it suffered a devastating fire in the early

[37]Interview with Jennifer Esler, Nov. 6, 1996.

1990s. Cliveden also has a paid, part-time Public Relations Coordinator to spearhead public and community relations efforts. Her role is an important one, ensuring that information about Cliveden and its activities reaches the local public, as well as other local organizations.

Cliveden's Budget

In 1995-96, Cliveden operated on a budget of $385,328 including restricted funds, with an impressive 45% of that income earned. One of the keys to Cliveden's financial stability is its substantial endowment, given to Cliveden when the Chew family sold the house and grounds to the National Trust. In addition, Cliveden receives income from the National Trust endowment. These endowments give Cliveden a significant advantage over most other sites–although administrators at Cliveden must still bring in money from outside organizations, the endowment income ensures a steady flow of funding to the museum.

Entrepreneurism at Cliveden: New Ways to Bring in Money

Administrators at Cliveden have faced the reality of recent National Trust budget cuts head-on. Jennifer Esler has realized that she must operate more like a business than in the past, engaging new ways to raise revenue and taking cost-cutting measures, much in the way American businesses have done in recent years. Cliveden has an advantage due to it's endowment, but the site's administrators recognize the importance of increasing earned income through entrepreneurism. They have incorporated into the site's long range plan detailed strategies for increasing earnings through establishing long-term consulting relationships with a

limited number of area sites, like the Johnson House, and also through a commitment to market their carriage house and grounds as a site for special events, meetings, conferences and lectures.[38] This income-producing activity can be promoted without compromising the site or its collections.

Cliveden is professionally-managed by well-trained, experienced staff. Its interpretation is based on current research and has been recently renewed and updated in a manner that gives a richer learning experience. Cliveden is a leader among the many cultural organizations, and particularly the house museums, located in Germantown. Through the benefit of an endowment coupled with able grant-writing, Cliveden's finances are in order.

[38] "Cliveden of the National Trust, Long Range Plan, FY 1995-96-FY1999-00," 29.

Wyck. Photograph by the author.

Wyck

Historical Overview and Interpretive Focus

Wyck is also in Germantown. Wyck was erected in stages beginning in 1690, with significant alterations made in 1824 by architect William Strickland. Wyck was the home of nine generations of the Haines' and Wistars, a Philadelphia Quaker family. The survival of thousands of the family's manuscripts together with their furnishings make Wyck one of the most comprehensive historic houses in the country. In 1973, the house was

given to the Wyck Charitable Trust, which has worked with the Wyck Association, established in 1980, to preserve and interpret the house.

Interpretation of Wyck focuses not on one particular time period in the history of the house, but on the layers of generations of the Haines and Wistars, the family who owned and occupied the house for nine generations. Visitors view the remarkable assemblage of collections resulting from the continuous presence of one family at a single site and learn about their role in business, natural history and science, education, and Quaker social responsibility.

Wyck From a Visitor's Perspective

Wyck is located at Germantown Avenue and Walnut Lane in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. While there are no signs that direct the driver to the house, the expanse of attractive stone and wooden fencing makes it is easy to locate when driving up Germantown Avenue.

Wyck primarily gives tours of the house to groups that have arranged their visit in advance. It has little drop-in visitation, but it is of course always prepared to accommodate walk-in visitors. The house is open for tours from April through mid-December, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The guide who led us through the house wore regular clothing rather than a uniform or period costume. Upon entering the house, there was a good deal of printed information on Wyck as well as information on some of the surrounding attractions, such as Cliveden and the Maxwell Mansion. The information was nicely designed and helpful in orienting the

visitor. Their was no orientation video. The guide simply started the tour.

Unfortunately, the guide assumed that everyone on the tour already knew about the house. She did not give a thorough overview of Wyck's significance and the significance of the family who lived there, in essence, the reason Wyck exists as a house museum open to the public today. Perhaps since most tours are pre-arranged the visitors indeed are already familiar with Wyck and its significance when they arrive. The guide was, however, effective in describing the evolution of the house from the earlier structures that existed on the site, and the renovations executed around 1824 by William Strickland. She did not, however, explain the architect's significance, assuming that all the members of our small tour were familiar with Strickland and his work.

The rooms we toured were filled with family furnishings and science-related instruments. It was well conveyed that the house was occupied by so many generations of one family whose members kept things throughout the years. They chose to re-use and recycle, rather than throw away and purchase new, a characteristic consistent with their Quaker beliefs. The guide conveyed that they were an illustrious family, interested in education and in science, with various business investments, some relating to innovative scientific techniques.

The room arrangements did not reflect a particular time period. They were furnished instead to show the multitude of possessions accumulated as the house was occupied through time, mixing pieces from the 18th century with pieces from the 19th and early 20th centuries in the same room.

What would have enabled a better understanding of the house and its significance is if the guide had given, at the tour's beginning, a comprehensive overview of the family's history, including information on what the house represented, as well as what it did not represent.

Wyck has no separate museum shop, but it does have some items for sale on display in the kitchen. There was informational material for sale on Germantown and a history of Wyck with photographs. Other items for sale included coffee mugs and post cards. There was not a large selection of material–there simply was no space–and what is there is not terribly eye-catching.

The exterior of the house is well preserved and maintained, having recently undergone a conservation effort. The project was well researched and well executed, utilizing outside consultants and students from the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. The gardens are also well preserved and well maintained with an emphasis on the variety of roses cultivated during the middle of the 19th century, and planted by Jane Bowne Haines between 1814 and 1829. The rose gardens at Wyck are the main attraction for many of the visitors who find their way to the site.

I believe that the general public expects to see a historic house interpreted to a particular period of significance in its history. The fact that Wyck is not interpreted in this manner is important and needs to be communicated and emphasized to visitors. Wyck's interpretation allows it to draw on its main strength, that is, the continuum of occupancy by one Quaker family and the collection of items they assembled during that period, but this was not well communicated by

the tour guide. She was very knowledgeable about the furnishings and implements in each room, but did not provide the overall context for them. Another disappointment was that there was no access to any of the second floor rooms, as that space is used for offices.

Wyck's Budget

Wyck operates on a budget of $280,630 (FY 1996). This amount includes funds restricted to particular projects, but does not include funds pledged and realized during their current capital campaign.[39] Wyck has a small endowment that generates about 6% of its earned income. Part of the capital campaign is dedicated to building that endowment to enable it to produce a higher percentage of income. Of the three successful sites studies, Wyck has the largest percentage of contributed income, a feat worth mentioning in an era when funding agencies are becoming more and more selective.[40]

Personnel

Wyck employs an Executive Director, an Assistant to the Executive Director, a Curator/Collections Manager, a Horticulturist and has one

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[39]The Wyck Association, "Wyck's Statement of Income, Expenses, and Grants," December 1996.

[40]"Losers of Pew Grants Wonder Where to Turn Next for Arts Funding," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 15, 1997, D1. This article details how granting foundations, such as The Pew Charitable Trusts, are requiring that organizations demonstrate financial viability and sound management practices if they hope to be awarded funding. In some respects, the historic house museum community has been aware of this trend for sometime: the Institute of Museum Services in their grant application, began asking tough questions about the way in which house museums are being managed, even moving the budget and financial information to the front of the grant application, according to Martha Wolf, during a telephone conversation on July 16, 1997.

resident on the site. Of these employees, only the Executive Director is employed full-time. Jeff Groff has been Wyck's Executive Director for seven years.

Collections Care

Wyck is a remarkable historic house museum due to the scope of its collections assembled over a period spanning three centuries. The collections include over 10,000 objects which are rotated through the house, plus 100,000 manuscript items. The values of the Quaker family who resided for nine generations at Wyck are revealed through the house's extensive collections of objects and through the Wyck Papers, detailing their interest in scientific experimentation, and many other learned subjects. It becomes clear to the visitor through viewing the collections that Wyck's residents valued education, science, and horticulture and they advocated abolition of slavery and neutrality during times of war, in accordance with their religious beliefs.

Wyck has a part-time curator to care for its collections, and has developed a Collections Care Long Range Plan which calls for a collections/interpretation self-study in Wyck's near future and a resulting new interpretive plan in the year 2000.[41]

Research Efforts

Wyck actively engages in on-site research. The Collections Care Long Range Plan calls for the writing of scripts for tapes on various

[41]The Wyck Association, "Wyck Collections Care Long Range Plan," February 20, 1997, p. 1.

subjects such as the Strickland renovation, Family Life, Agriculture, Women At Wyck–all using a great number of quotations and other information contained in the Wyck Papers. This effort calls for further research and examination of the Wyck Papers and its collection of objects. As further evidence of Wyck's commitment to research, the Board of Directors at Wyck has recently revised the Association's Mission Statement to include a phrase stating that part of Wyck's purpose is to "continue to be a research center for students of American material culture and social history from the late 17th-20th centuries."[42]

Entrepreneurism at Wyck

Wyck has limited space and already uses the upper floors of the house as offices and storage. Unlike Bartram's Garden and Cliveden, Wyck's barn is no longer a part of the property; it was sold and converted in the 1890s to a house by architect Mantle Fielding. If the Wyck Association is ever presented with the opportunity to re-purchase this structure it would be a viable education and visitor center that could also serve as space to be rented to groups for meetings, conferences, and other special events, thus creating what might be a strong source of income for the site.

Wyck's main source of earned income presently is its annual fall benefit, the Wyck-Strickland Award Dinner, which each year honors an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of historic preservation in the Philadelphia area. In addition to honoring an individual

[42]The Wyck Association,"Statement of Purpose." Draft Version, May 16, 1997.

currently working in the field of preservation, it also honors the work of William Strickland and his contribution to Philadelphia architecture, specifically at Wyck.

Initiatives in Education

There are educational programs geared toward different segments of the population. Two different tours are designed for school children. "Three Centuries of Life in One Family" is geared toward 5th-7th graders while outdoor special programs in gardening, the historical landscape and farming appeal to all ages. The programs were designed and are presented to the children by Wyck's horticulturist who possesses a background in education.[43] Wyck also has varying programs for the adult tour-taker, ranging from a tour given by the curator or director for groups with a special interest, to a tour known as "Cappie's Tour" named after Wyck resident Caspar Wistar Haines, which features members of the Haines family as the tour guides. This is a less in-depth tour, lasting only 30 minutes.

Governance

One reason Wyck is a thriving historic house museum is due to it's board of directors. Wyck's board of directors functions well together, making the objectives and goals of the house their guiding principals. According to J. Randolph Williams, Jr., the Chair of Wyck's Board of Directors, the museum's mission is well-defined. Board members understand and work for common goals. He indicates that the Quaker influence is still strong at Wyck: each board meeting begins with a moment

[43]Interview with Jeff Groff, Executive Director, Wyck, June 5, 1997.

of silence. In addition, board members respect one another and as a result, meetings are cordial affairs. The board accomplishes its actions through consensus. Everyone has the chance to express his or her views and those views are respected by the other board members. But this was not always the case at Wyck. The organization went through a period of difficulty, forcing the board to make critical changes that impacted Wyck's future.

During its first six years as a historic house museum, Wyck was administered by a committee of the Germantown Historical Society, prior to the establishment of the Wyck Association in 1979. The goals of the Wyck Association were to make the organization more professional and to broaden its outreach. At this time Wyck's first full-time Curator/Administrator was hired and Wyck began moving forward, undertaking conservation, cataloging family papers, and inventorying the contents of the house. The mid-1980s was another critical period for Wyck, with the addition of key museum and education professionals to the Board of Directors, whose involvement led to the publication of information about Wyck. This period was one of forward progress. Nonetheless, money was constantly a problem, and the organization ran a deficit during some years. In 1986, its first full-time administrator left, and a succession of administrators followed, none of whom were able to provide the leadership that Wyck required. By 1988, as a result of financial trouble, there was no curator and no garden staff at the historic house. The site lacked leadership and vision, and the situation was exacerbated by a contentious board.

At this critical period, the board undertook a museum assessment survey by the National Trust. The result of that assessment was a strong recommendation to hire a full-time Executive Director, to revise the by-laws

and to develop a long range plan for the site. In the spring of 1990, the board hired Mr. Groff as Executive Director, and undertook a complete strategic planning process. As a result of the changes made, the site began to win more and more grants, gaining strength along the way. The right actions were taken at a critical juncture in the site's governance due to the strength of the individuals who were on the board and their professional expertise. Instrumental in the actions that led to the changes were board members Marigene Butler (Philadelphia Museum of Art's Conservation Department), and Rebecca Thornberg (a graduate of the Wharton School, with a focus on non-profit management).[44]

An advantage for the board today (in Mr. Williams's view) is the fact that there are some board members who have been involved with Wyck since its inception as a house museum. They provide organizational memory and can help focus original goals, mission and objectives of the museum for today's board. Further, the board itself is comprised of individuals with complementary expertise. On the board of directors at Wyck are lawyers; members of the investment community; persons who are involved in the local schools, providing links to others in the education community; and museum professionals.[45] While the people who serve on Wyck's board do provide financial support for the organization, it is more important that they are connected to the house in ways other than simply being able to provide large donations. Donating to a historic house museum is one way some organizations select board members, but Wyck has abstained from determining its board by this practice, choosing instead

[44]Interview with Jeff Groff, July 14, 1997.

[45]Interview with J. Randolph Williams, Jr., Chair of the Wyck Board of Directors, May 28, 1997.

to invite individuals with demonstrated and legitimate interest and love for the house and what it seeks to accomplish.

Often, other boards do not work as collegially as does Wyck's board. Many boards have members with competing agendas for an organization, providing incentive for some individuals to carve out certain territories or aspects of governance which they wish to control. The Quaker culture of Wyck's board has enabled it to mitigate these situations which can seriously undermine the success of a house museum.

Wyck easily fits the definition of a successful house museum. Jeff Groff provides true leadership in his position of Executive Director, the site cares for its collections as well as for the house, buildings, and grounds that make up Wyck. While the site's operating budget is small, its ability to garner funding from outside resources is impressive. Like, Cliveden, Wyck plays a key leadership role among the cultural and historical organizations in the Germantown area, active in various organizations to promote Germantown as a tourism destination.[46] Further, Wyck's focus on serving students and practitioners in the field of conservation is innovative and beneficial to the site. Wyck is indeed a successful house museum.

[46]Interview with Jeff Groff, July 14, 1997.

Chapter Four

Some Sites That Do Not Fit the Model of Success and Why

Unfortunately, the vast majority of historic house museums fail to meet the definition of success. These house museums are organizations without a professional staff that depend on volunteers; they may not have a targeted market segment and may lack an authentic interpretation based on current scholarship. Finally, they lack community support, choosing to be insular, rather than including the community to generate local support. Perhaps the site's finances are precarious, or it has fallen into disrepair.

The Deshler-Morris House, also located in Germantown, is an example of a site that lacks professional involvement and community support, even though it is owned by the National Park Service. During a recent visit to the site, it was clear that the tour was not based on the latest research. Rather, it was an old-fashioned tour given by volunteer guides who read straight from index cards. Indeed, the volunteer guides at this site had not been trained in a formal fashion by the site administrators: both guides felt at liberty to handle fragile objects and impose their own tastes upon the house's interpretive displays, explaining that they disagreed with changes imposed by a new curator. The site is owned by the National Park Service, which shares its resources, including its curator, with the Deshler-Morris House. The Park Service seems not to pay much attention to the house in Germantown, naturally focusing its resources on Independence National Historical Park.

In addition, the house seems not to be involved at all in the Germantown community, perhaps a result of federal government ownership. The guides were surprised to receive a pair of visitors from the area. A glance at the guide book showed that no local visitors had come to the site. The house had received only out of town visitors, who probably had picked up literature on the site while visiting Independence Hall or the Liberty Bell at the National Park. The Deshler-Morris House does not meet the criteria set forth for successful sites because it does not possess an up-to-date interpretation and because it does not work within the community to foster support for itself and its neighborhood.

Another organization not meeting the definition of success is Landmarks, which operates four house museums: the Samuel Powel House and the Physick House in Philadelphia near Independence Hall; Grumblethorpe in Germantown, and Waynesborough in East Town Township, Chester County. The organization was founded in the 1930s by Frances Anne Wister, a prominent member of Philadelphia's society, and her friends, to save important residences under threat of demolition. Today, the organization's budget is around $737,000.[47]

At first glance, this organization appears to be financially sound. But upon closer examination, one discovers that nearly one-third of the budget is generated by a program the organization runs through Elder Hostel, an international organization which coordinates travel and educational programs for senior citizens.[48] While the program certainly has merit, it

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[47]Interview with Michael Lane, Executive Director, Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, June 5, 1997.

[48]The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Budget, Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1996." September 26, 1996.

distorts Landmark's resources. The program generates 28% of the organization's income, but costs 26% of the income to run, leaving a profit of only 2% of Landmarks' budget. That profit no doubt is somewhat helpful to the organization, but it comes at a great expenditure of resources in the form of time and energy taken away from the actual administration of the houses owned by Landmarks. While the Elder Hostel participants may visit some of Landmarks' properties, the program does not grow out of any particular relevance to Landmarks' properties.

The main tourist attraction in Philadelphia is the Liberty Bell, which had 1,490,280 visitors in 1990.[49] Independence Hall received 753,452 visitors, and the Betsy Ross House received close to half a million visitors.[50] Two properties, the Samuel Powel House and the Physick House, owned by the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, are perfectly situated to attract a large volume of visitors from these sites. *Yet the combined visitation for all four Landmarks properties* is between 10,000 and 12,000.[51] While visitation is not a make or break characteristic of success, it is curious that the houses have such low visitation, given the area in which they are located.

The Physick house, once lived in by Philip Syng Physick, a successful early 19th-century surgeon, is beginning to develop a very narrow market niche, targeting medical conventions in Philadelphia,[52] but the Powel House, despite being one of Philadelphia's most significant surviving 18th-

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[49]Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 23.

[50]Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 23.

[51]Interview with Michael Lane, June 5, 1997.

[52]Interview with Linda DiMarco, Chair, Physick House Committee, June 16, 1997.

century townhouses, has yet to identify its particular "hook," preventing it from targeting a particular market segment. Landmarks has instead chosen through its focus on the Elder Hostel customer, to market to a particular age group.

Landmarks seems to have the largest budget, as well as the greatest amount of earned income of any house museum organization in Philadelphia, but the Elder Hostel program accounts for 28% of its income and 26% of its expenses, leaving only 9% of the organization's revenue as earned revenue, rather than contributed revenue. To increase earned revenue, the organization rents out its houses for parties and other gatherings, which is a direct violation of generally accepted museum practices and endangers both the houses and their collections.

Many sites are tempted by the extra income that on-site special events can generate. These special events are held, at many sites, at the expense of the site's collections care. They create a fire hazard by utilizing catering kitchens located inside the historic structures, and they create peril for furnishings and objects within the house by utilizing its rooms for functions where food and drink are served. Landmarks' plan for earning more income is to increase its special events rentals at some of the properties it owns,[53] but it does this at great risk for the houses: unlike Bartram's Garden and Cliveden, the organization owns no satellite facilities for special event rentals.

In addition, Landmarks makes clear in the information published about the organization that it relies on volunteers for managing its properties, developing interpretive programs and fund-raising through

[53]Interview with Linda DiMarco, June 16, 1997.

special events.[54] This presents an "agency problem": volunteers, no matter how dedicated to the cause, have no incentive to act in the best interest of the organization, while employees are more like agents who can be compelled to act in an organization's best interest.[55]

Under direction of an executive director who has been at Landmarks for two years, the organization is undergoing change in a number of areas, trying particularly to make each of the four committees which oversee a house more autonomous. But these committees are composed of volunteers, and while each site has a resident manager, those persons are not paid museum professionals.[56]

Organizational change can be an uphill battle, especially among individuals who have a long association with an organization. Resistance to change normally results from the prospect of losing the known and tried, from concern over personal loss,[57] or because an organization's board may simply not recognize the need for change. An Executive Director who approaches an organization in need of change is faced with difficult decisions: to push too hard may cost the individual his or her position. To fail to respond to the organization's needs further imperils the organization.

The root of the problem is a lack of money. To improve Landmarks' prospects for success, it must begin to bring in more money to allow it to hire more museum professionals to run the operations of each house

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[54]Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, "Mission and Organizational Statements," September 28, 1994.

[55]Conversation with Peter Cappelli, Chair, Wharton Management Department, July 17, 1997.

[56]Interview with Michael Lane, June 5, 1997.

[57]Robbins, 528.

museum, including a collections care professional, and to pay their guides, creating accountability among them. Further, the organization must identify a "hook" or particular attraction for each of its houses so it can market to particular segments of the population.

Chapter Five

Why Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck Fit the Model of a Successful House Museum

Bartram's Garden, Cliveden and Wyck each possess strengths which foster success. Bartram's Garden documents the lives and important work of John Bartram and his family; Cliveden was the site of the Battle of Germantown and possesses a highly important collection of decorative arts; and at Wyck, the collections spanning 300 years and nine generations, document how one Quaker family lived in Philadelphia. These sites are significant and they serve a purpose; they were not established as house museums simply because local community leaders wished to save them from demolition and there was nothing to do but establish a house museum once each was indeed saved from the wrecking ball. But these houses are also successful because of the way they are governed and administered.

Governance and the Role of the Board

All three historic house museums studied here have board members with varied and complementary professional backgrounds, including museum professionals. The members of the boards recognize and take seriously their governance role. Cliveden's board has traditionally acknowledged their role in fund-raising, while the board of Bartram's Garden has only in the last five years recognized that an integral function of the board is to bring in funding, either from outside sources or directly from board members' contributions. Wyck's board consists of individuals with only an average ability to contribute large sums of money individually, choosing instead to assemble those members who can

contribute in other ways. (In one instance, the board of Wyck even discouraged inviting on the board an individual interested in making great financial contributions to the house, because they feared his motivations in doing so.[58])

Each of these sites is owned by different entities. The City of Philadelphia owns Bartram's Garden, but provides support to the house only through its payment of electricity and oil for heating.[59] Wyck is owned by an independent organization formed specifically for that purpose, and is managed by the Wyck Association. Cliveden is a co-stewardship property, owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation but managed by a local organization. The Cliveden administrator feels that managing the house locally has played a role in the amount of community support that the house generates. She feels that if the Trust managed the house, individuals may not be as apt to contribute to it, perceiving that their money is going to support other organizations outside the community, rather than to support a local landmark.[60] For each of these sites, management by an independent, local organization is beneficial, allowing each to increase its tie to its local community. In contradistinction members of Landmarks seem not to contribute to the entire organization in favor of the one house in their area.

Another key to success for these properties has been in the amount of community support that each house receives, a result in part of active advocacy of the properties by their staffs and boards. Bartram's Garden

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[58]Interview. with J. Randolph Williams, Jr., May 28, 1997.

[59]Interview with Martha Wolf, November 26, 1996.

[60]Interview with Jennifer Esler, November 6, 1996.

could arguably be considered the most handicapped due to its location. The site is along the banks of the Schuylkill River, which is lined by oil refineries, storage and transfer facilities, waste treatment and recycling operations, manufacturing plants and abandoned industrial sites. Two rail lines cut through the sites's acreage, and the entrance to the site is also the entrance to Bartram's Village, a public housing development with 2,000 low income, mostly minority residents.

Rather than working against their industrial and residential neighbors, the Association strongly believes that building positive, productive relationships with these communities is integral to the site's growth: the Bartram Association sees fostering community environmental awareness as one if its goals, actively working to reverse the decline of the surrounding community to attract investment and public support for Bartram's Garden.[61]

All three of these historic house museums are actively involved in the communities in which they are located, asking their neighbors, "What contribution can we make to better our community?" rather than asking, "How can you help us?" Cliveden and Wyck, located in the same community, work with local organizations to promote Germantown. Cliveden's long range plan includes ensuring that Cliveden is represented at meetings of various Civic Associations, cultivating the site's leadership role in the present and future promotion of Germantown as a historic and cultural resource in the city.[62] Bartram's Garden's role in its community helps soothe any ill will that might arise between the historic house and

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[61] "Long Range Plan for the John Bartram Association, 1995-1999," 15.

[62] "Cliveden of the National Trust, Long Range Plan FY 1995-96 Thru FY 1990-00," 5.

what it represents to the blighted neighborhood surrounding it. Interaction with the community is essential to a historic house museum's success because it generates community support in the form of goodwill and funding for the site by local businesses and individuals. In management theory, this is known as a resource dependency model: the organizations need the resource of their communities' good will and they find ways to attain it, working in their communities in a variety of fashions.[63]

The Importance of Identifying a Target Market

Bartram's Garden draws 10,000 paying visitors per year, with an estimated 25,000 total visitors to the house and garden,[64] which is open to the public for longer hours and is free. Wyck, however, attracts only 2,400 visitors per year. Of those, 10% are students, 10% come for communtiy events, 40% are regular tour takers, and 40% attend lectures and other special programs.[65] Cliveden receives the most visitors of these three sites, with approximately 17,000 per year. Of those, however, less than half come to view the house. The rest of the visitors come to Cliveden for the annual re-enactment of the Battle of Germantown or attend Mount Airy Day, an annual community event that Cliveden co-sponsors or other special events held on the site.[66]

The tourism industry in Philadelphia and its surrounding counties is a vital component of the area's economic health, with historic sites and

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[63]Conversation with Peter Cappelli, July 17, 1997.

[64]Interview with Martha Wolf, June 10, 1997.

[65]Interview with Jeff Groff, June 5, 1997.

[66]Interview with Elizabeth Laurent, June 3, 1997.

buildings the best-liked features by tourists to Philadelphia.[67] But visitors seem usually to have in mind Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, Betsy Ross and Valley Forge. While visitation does not constitute a viable litmus test of success, it is helpful to bear in mind the locations of these successful organizations in relation to the main historical attraction district when looking at their visitation numbers. While Germantown offers a wealth of historical and cultural attractions, it is perceived as a high crime area. Organizations in Germantown and the surrounding communities, such as the Northwest Alliance, work together to change public perceptions of Germantown and to promote tourism in the Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill sections of Philadelphia. Bartram's Garden is in a very disadvantaged location in Southwest Philadelphia, yet still it receives more visitors than historic house museum properties that are well situated to take advantage of the main tourism district in the City.

Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck have identified what exactly appeals to the public about each site, and has cultivated certain segments of the population, or niche markets, to target as the sites' audiences.

Wyck's visitation is the lowest of the sites examined, yet it is a thriving site that generates a great deal of community support and has a very high degree of foundation support. With its rose garden containing many varieties of antique roses, the site appeals to garden enthusiasts, and will continue to expand that niche as it develops a garden master plan. Its strong connections to Quaker ideals appeals to Quaker groups of today. The 300 year history of Wyck makes it the oldest historic house that serves as a

[67] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 19.

museum in Philadelphia. The continuity of one family and the scope of their collections is unusual in America, and attracts visitors to Wyck.

The niche customer base for Bartram's Garden is natural–the site targets as its audience people who are interested in botany, horticulture, and the environment. Because of its focus, the site appeals to teachers in the Philadelphia School District and beyond. With widespread interest in the environment and in gardening as a hobby, this segment of the population continues to expand, ensuring a strong customer base for Bartram's Garden into the future.

Cliveden has three market niches, each appealing to a very different customer. First, its fine furnishings collection is one of its major strengths, appealing to individuals interested in 18th-century Middle Georgian furnishings. While this is not a huge market niche, it is nonetheless a stable niche, with Cliveden benefitting by being in the same geographical region as one of the country's foremost decorative arts museums, the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum. To serve this market niche, Cliveden has created the Curator's Tour, in which groups may arrange in advance a specialized tour of the site with the site's Curator, Elizabeth Laurent.[68] There is a special charge of $10.00 per person for this tour.

A second niche market that Cliveden has identified is that of the museum profession, offering guide training, long range planning, and other aspects of historic site management to other house museums.[69] The Cliveden Institute, a five day program held each year at the site draws area museum personnel and decorative arts audiences to hear the lectures and

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[68]Interview with Elizabeth Laurent, June 3, 1997.

[69]"Cliveden of the National Trust, Long Range Plan, FY1995-96 Thru 1999-00," 3.

workshops given by leaders in the field of museum management and historic preservation.

The third market niche for Cliveden are people interested in Revolutionary War history. With its annual re-enactment of the Battle of Germantown, Cliveden attracts a large number of both re-enactors and spectators to the site each October. The site also tells the story of the Mischianza to illustrate an important social event during the British occupation of Philadelphia.

The identification of market niches is imperative to the success of a historic house museum. Like other businesses, historic houses must market their product to a specific, targeted group, in order to obtain the best results. In addition, targeting a market niche creates opportunities for business ventures, thus ensuring continued viability of the site for the future.

Budget Analysis Information

Financial stability is a hallmark of a successful site, and can be gained by either earning income or by securing significant funding from charitable sources. But if a site can not illustrate that it is financially stable, it will have difficulty obtaining foundation funding. The relationship between money and success prompts the question, "Which came first?" For two of these successful sites, Bartram's Garden and Wyck, money and success came hand-in-hand, each arriving as a result of the other. During the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, the sites were able to leverage each grant to attract additional funding. Successful performance was rewarded as funding agencies beame more confident of the site and staff.

Bartram's Garden has the largest budget of the sites studied, but earns only 37% of its income. The table on the following page shows the relationship of earned income to contributed income for each organization, as well as how much each spends on personnel.

Wyck has the smallest budget of these sites, and the highest level of contributed income at 82%. These sites over and over again, have secured significant funding from outside granting organizations such as the Institute of Museum Services, The Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation. But in a time when funding sources are cutting back it will be prudent to develop sources of earned, rather than contributed income

Cliveden, with its budget of $385,328 may be considered the most financially stable of the successful museums. Cliveden consistently earns a larger share of its income than the share that is contributed, as a result of its large endowment: in fiscal year 95-96, Cliveden earned over 60% of its income.[70] Bartram's Garden and Wyck do not possess large endowments. Therefore, they must each attempt to maximize their earned income through entrepreneurial ventures that will realize a good return.

[70]Cliveden's Proposal for Grant from Philadelphia Cultural Leadership Program, 1997.

	Bartram's Garden	*Cliveden*	*Wyck*	
Total Budget	$421,500	$385,328	$280,630*	
Public Support	**63%**	**38%**	**82%**	
Contributions				
& Memberships	17%	5%	10%	
Foundation & Corp. Giving	46%	33%	72%	
Revenue	**37%**	**62%**	**17%**	
Admissions	8%	2%	1%	
Endowments	4%	45%	6%	
Investment Income			1%	
Fund-Raising Events	6%	7%	10%	
Special Event Rentals,				
Shop, & Other Sales	13%	7%		
Other				
Miscellaneous			1%	
Key Expenditures				
Personnel	68%	35%	20%	
Other				
			*Does not include	
			Capital Campaign	
			Funds	

Entrepreneurism

One of the keys to the success of Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck is that they initiate entrepreneuial activities that are a natural outgrowth of their respective histories and missions. While Cliveden seeks to increase its use as a site for special events, in can do so without compromising the integrity of the historic house or its interior collections because its renovated carriage house provides adequate space for such events. Bartram's Garden's entrepreneurial activities–its sales and River Tours, relate directly to the site. As the nation's first nursery, the site has a number of other entrepreneurial options to explore. Wyck, too, is venturing into entrepreneurism with the recent licensing of a sled in its collection which can be purchased as a kit and assembled.[71] The entrepreneurial activities of these sites will become more and more important as these efforts pay off in new revenues.

Site Interpretation and Educational Initiatives

Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck have all made educational progamming a priority. Interpretations at the three sites are varied and successful, and, most importantly, they are based on current research. There are different interpretive programs targeting different audiences and age groups, and the tours are given by paid tour guides, ensuring that the guides are accountable to the site which employs them and providing incentive for periodic re-training about the site and its interpretation.

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[71] Interview with J. Randolph Williams, May 28, 1997.

The Role of Personnel

Perhaps the single-most important component of a successful historic house museum is the site's executive director, responsible for hiring other personnel, overseeing day-to-day operations, and developing the site's long range plan. Bartram's Garden, Cliveden and Wyck have executive directors who are visionaries who see their sites' potential as centers for interpreting history, conducting research, engaging the community, undertaking entrepreneurial ventures, and training others in the field of historic site management. While not all of these executive directors hold formal training in the field of museum management, they all possess extensive experience in managing non-profit entities. Each of these executive directors has served his or her respective site for a minimum of seven years, allowing time to build a strong and trusting relationship between the executive director and the site's board of directors, the community, and funding sources.

In addition to the executive director, each site employs other museum professionals, whose presence ensures that the site is being managed by individuals who are up-to-date on current museum practices, that the interpretation reflects current research, and that the site takes a comprehensive approach to the preservation of its buildings. The presence of an energetic, effective, engaged executive director, supported by a team of professional personnel has the most profound impact on a site's success.

Future Potential: The Germantown and Schuylkill River Heritage Corridors

Cliveden and Wyck are successful despite the disadvantage of their location in not being near Philadelphia's main historic sites district. But they have the potential to draw in more visitors, reaching a larger local and

regional community through the establishment of a Germantown Heritage Corridor, currently being developed under the direction of the TriState Coalition, an office within the Preservation Alliance.

As a part of the Germantown Heritage Corridor, Cliveden serves an important role as the northern anchor for Germantown's many historic sites, with another important house museum, Stenton, at the southern end. Between these are several historic house museums and other cultural institutions, many of which are struggling to survive. Cliveden and Wyck are positioned to play important leadership roles in the development of this historic corridor, assisting their neighboring institutions as the northwestern portion of Philadelphia begins to realize its heritage tourism potential.

Bartram's Garden faces a similar situation. Plans are currently underway to develop a heritage trail that would include the historic garden along its path. Like Cliveden and Wyck, Bartram's Garden is a strong force in the future development of the blighted neighborhood in which it is located, and plays an important leadership role in the development and improvement of that area.

These three sites have demonstrated that it is not necessary to be in a traditional tourism district to be successful. Perhaps as a result of their locations, they have gained strengths through their community outreach efforts, giving them added value to their surrounding neighborhoods. Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck are each important members of the community in their respective areas.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

A Framework for Success

Each of these historic house museums offers a rich experiential opportunity for the visitor, and each site is successful in an industry where the vast majority of sites struggle to survive. Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck share certain characteristics which can serve as a model of success for other historic house museums.

Successful sites have paid, full-time professional personnel, in the form of a site director who has training in the museum management field and/or extensive experience in non-profit management, coupled with extraordinary energy and focus. Successful sites have paid professional staff full- or part-time, in addition to the site director.

Successful sites appeal to a wide range of people but they have identified and developed a particular "market niche" or attraction which in turn attracts a target audience, or customer base. Successful sites develop educational programs to cater to the general interest visitor, young and old alike, as well as educational programs that satisfy the most sophisticated member of its targeted or niche audience. The house museums studied know their customers and deliver a well-defined product in the form of educational programming.

In addition, like the three model historic house museums, a successful site has a stated mission or purpose for existing to direct the site in its activities and guide its governing organization in shaping plans for the future. A cyclical planning process lays out the goals the

site for the forseeable future and details the strategies for accomplishing these goals.

The interpretation of a successful historic house museum reflects current research and accurately presents the information in a manner that holds the visitor's interest. Much thought has been given to determine what interpretation is most suitable for the house museum and what stories best educate the public about the museum. Guides at successful houses are typically paid, not volunteer, making them accountable to their employer, and providing an incentive for additional training.

Successful sites have a board of directors that works cooperatively and effectively with one another and with the site's administrator to reach the goals of the site as they relate to the site's mission; a high degree of respect and trust accorded the site administrator by the board of directors is an essential element of a successful site. Building this relationship takes time, which means that historic house museum directorships should not be a revolving door with a new site director coming into an organization every few years.

Successful sites are relevant to their neighboring communities, be it inner city public housing or a suburban neighborhood, and they typically enjoy support from the community. Successful sites make an effort to reach out and educate the community about its contributions to the community. Those responsible for managing the site recognize the value of the community's support.

Successful house museums are entrepreneurial, with adminstrators who are willing to think creatively in terms of new

approaches to raising funds and reaching new market sectors, thus further developing the customer base. Many, not all, successful sites run satellite business ventures that relate directly to the site's niche market and may serve to further develop that market. These business ventures increase the percentage of earned income over the percentage of contributed income, protecting the site in an era of budget cuts for agencies who traditionally provide a great deal of operating support for house museums and other cultural institutions.

Successful historic house museums such as Bartram's Garden, Cliveden and Wyck, embrace technological advances that can be utilized for scholarly research on the site as well as for reaching the public. For example, presence on the Internet can provide a great number of people access to the site that they may otherwise not have.

Above all, in order to accomplish the things that make a historic house museum succesful, the site must be fiscally healthy. This means a site has a budget that is balanced and that it spends its money in ways which directly benefit the site, putting resources toward professional personnel, for example, rather than toward activities which don't relate to the site. Money and success for a historic house museum are so closely related that it becomes unclear whether success begets funding, or vice versa. In the case where a house museum possesses a large endowment, the site generates enough income to hire competent museum professionals who will steer the museum to success. Historic houses which do not have a large endowment or other source of earned income, on the otherhand, must secure substantial contributions from funding agencies to ensure continued success. As evidenced in a recent *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, cultural organizations such

as historic house museums must first demonstrate that they are well-managed and financially stable in order to secure funding.[72] In this situation, success begets money.

Bartram's Garden, Cliveden, and Wyck are all successful educational organizations that have identified target market segments and appeal to that population with authentic interpretations based on current research. Each advocates the community in which it is located, which in turn generates support from the local community members. Each is fiscally healthy, with an on-going conservation program to ensure the maintenance and preservation of all historic objects and structures which comprise the site.

But beyond fitting the difinition of a successful historic house museum, the sites have commonalities among them that are also highly significant. First and foremost, each of these successful sites possesses a master practitioner of historic site management in their executive directors who are highly effective grant writers. Each site employs additional professional museum personnel to provide support to the executive director, and each site has a board of directors with varying expertise who are committed to the mission of their site. Each site has also developed, along with its niche markets, entrepreneurial ventures to generate earned income that will in the future make the site less reliant on contributed income from foundations and corporations. This in turn will allow the sites to develop in ways they determine to be the most valuable to their mission, rather than having their activities determined by what granting agencies wish to support. Last, they are able to make a contribution to the

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[72] "Losers of Pew Grants Wonder Where to Turn Next for Arts Funding," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 15, 1997, D1.

professional field of museum management, serving as models for other sites in their innovative approaches to management challenges.

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