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Building a Green Community: The Woodlands as an Experiment in Urban Landscape Interpretation

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Building a Green Community: The Woodlands as an Experiment in Urban Landscape Interpretation

Abstract

From its origins as an eighteenth-century pleasure ground, to its conversion into a rural cemetery, to its modern day potential as parkland, The Woodlands has raised questions and debates about land use in West Philadelphia. Now consisting of fifty acres of William Hamilton's 600-acre estate, The Woodlands is the largest and most significant green space in the University City neighborhood. The Woodlands, a National Historic Landmark, Landscape, and District, is managed by The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation. The mission of the Trust is "to preserve, enhance and interpret its nationally significant cultural landscape, historic buildings, and cemetery, and to make them available to the public as vital educational, environmental, and civic resources." I posit that The Woodlands is not fulfilling its educational mission to the greatest extent. Factors contributing to this limitation are lack of attention to user values and community collaboration, and absence of a cohesive interpretive plan to provoke visitors and convey the palimpsest of narratives present at the site. Furthermore, I claim that evolving experiment of urban landscape interpretation comprises the heart of The Woodlands, and contains untapped potential to strengthen a community dedicated to the site's sustainability.

To solve this problem, this thesis creates the framework and recommendations for an interpretive plan for The Woodlands, through a prospectus emphasizing a resource-and-objective-based planning approach. I map efforts that inform and encourage local regular users, strengthen the professional network with fellow organizations, integrate natural and cultural resources, and attract attention of travelers visiting other Philadelphia sites.

Keywords

collection, property ownership, semi-public space, university city, development

Disciplines

Historic Preservation and Conservation

Comments

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BUILDING A GREEN COMMUNITY:
THE WOODLANDS AS AN EXPERIMENT
IN URBAN LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

Courtney Elizabeth Allen

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

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Dedication

*To my family, who taught me
pride in hard work,
trust in my abilities,
joy in following my callings,
and desire to improve the world*



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Introduction

From its origins as an eighteenth-century pleasure ground, to its conversion into a rural cemetery, to its modern day potential as parkland, The Woodlands has raised questions and debates about land use in West Philadelphia. Now consisting of fifty acres of William Hamilton's 600-acre estate, The Woodlands is the largest and most significant green space in the University City neighborhood.

The Woodlands has been awarded countless accolades; the mansion, considered to be one of the country's finest early examples of Adamesque, or Federal Style architecture, was one of the first structures to be listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1968. Similarly, the property is designated as a National Historic Landscape and part of the Schuylkill River National Heritage Trail, and most recently has been identified as hosting several state champion trees. The Trust for The Woodlands was established in 1998, for which "The mission of the Woodlands is to preserve, enhance and interpret its nationally significant cultural landscape, historic buildings, and cemetery, and to make them available to the public as vital educational, environmental, and civic resources."¹ It is clear in the mission statement that the goal is to forge and maintain bonds with the public, and that a critical method for doing so is interpretation.

Yet as a cursory examination of the site makes clear, The Woodlands does not currently provide a world of discovery, or even an indication of welcome, to potential visitors. Visitors coming from the university area must cross the 40th Street trolley portal in order to get to Woodland Avenue, where they then must cross a busy street without a crosswalk. After all that, they approach a cemetery with no indication of where they should go or why they should be there. Rather, they encounter is a sign: "private prop-

1 Vicki W. Kramer. *Strategic Plan for The Woodlands* (2004).

erty” and a plaque with perfunctory information about William Hamilton – one of only two signs on the fifty acres.²

When questioned, many West Philadelphians know The Woodlands only as “the graveyard near the trolley hub.” For those locals who are familiar with the site, they know it on a superficial basis; most of the tours presented by the small staff are to groups of two or three people, who after years of using the land for walking their dogs, finally notice the mansion and decide to see if there is anyone inside. In most cases, people are intrigued and enthusiastic, but without direction. Because the site has no pro-active interpretive plan, The Woodlands misses that window of opportunity to encourage and benefit from that local interest.

Significant research has been conducted on the architectural significance at The Woodlands National Historic District in West Philadelphia, as well as on the landscape significance within the past two decades. This literature has created a thriving academic dialogue between different perspectives on the legitimacy of continuity. However, this theoretical framework has yet to be synthesized in an applicable manner for the benefit of current site management and planning. There is a severe lack in scholarship surrounding site management of The Woodlands as contributes and pertains to current values and community engagement by the recently founded Trust. As a result of the lack of strategic planning, particularly as relates to stakeholder analysis and interpretation for the public, the neighborhood users have little knowledge of the site’s historical significance.

Based on these observations and provoked by the gap in applicable management guidance, I posit that The Woodlands National Historic Landmark, Landscape, and District is not fulfilling its educational mission to the greatest extent. Factors contributing to this limitation are lack of attention to user values and community collaboration and

2 See Figures 0.1-0.4.

absence of a cohesive interpretive plan to provoke visitors and convey the palimpsest of narratives present at the site. Furthermore, I claim that evolving experiment of urban landscape interpretation comprises the heart of The Woodlands, and contains untapped potential to strengthen a community dedicated to the site's sustainability.

To solve this problem, my goal is to create the framework and recommendations for an interpretive plan for The Woodlands, through a prospectus emphasizing a resource-and-objective-based planning approach. I intend to map efforts that will inform and encourage local regular users, strengthen the professional network with fellow organizations, integrate natural and cultural resources, and attract attention of travelers visiting other Philadelphia sites.

In addition to the site-specific problems outlined, this issue merits exploration because it is a case study of the increasing small house museum failure phenomenon, and grassroots efforts needed to ensure sites' sustainability. It is also a unique case because of its grounds, history and business as a cemetery, and recognition as an NHL and HALS site. This thesis will examine how The Woodlands can improve its chances of thriving in an environment with high competition, by creating an interpretive plan that pivots the story from a stagnant one about a wealthy individual, to a story about public and private land use and how it relates to the local community.

To gather and analyze data in support of the prospectus, I consider three spheres that contribute to the thesis landscape framing and education. The first is a History of Land Use, Values, and Management at The Woodlands, in which I establish a baseline and precedent by which to plan future landscape evaluation, management, and interpretation within the larger context of change over time. Key topics addressed include historical discontinuity argument, and an ongoing tension between civic and economic values.

The second chapter evaluates Rural Cemetery Comparables, in which I choose

appropriate models of twenty-first operation and extract plausible applications through four points of comparison: management, programming, funding, and community interaction.

The third chapter examines Stakeholders and Values-Based Planning, creating a foundation of fieldwork through several quantitative and qualitative data-collecting methods, thereby determining user trends, perceptions of significance, and site priorities and visions. Evidence and conclusions from all three chapters then contribute to the formation and direction of the prospectus.



Chapter One History of Land Use, Values, and Management

The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation was founded in 1998 “to preserve, enhance and interpret its nationally significant cultural landscape, historic buildings, and cemetery, and to make them available to the public as vital educational, environmental, and civic resources.”¹ However, the Trust has not achieved the full potential of the site’s mission, as reflected and perpetuated by the gap in literature analyzing the history of management of The Woodlands, particularly as pertains to landscape preservation and interpretation. This thesis intends to benefit The Woodlands by conducting a comparison and evolution of values and principles, as demonstrated through the history of the site’s landscape management decisions. In so doing, I hope to establish a baseline and precedent by which to plan future landscape evaluation, management, and interpretation within the larger context of change over time.

The story of The Woodlands is a story of debate, ambiguity, strong desires but sometimes less clear intentions; it is an attempt to define and stabilize a meaning of “semi-public space,” to draw boundaries around the site’s presentation, access, and activities in an attempt to balance owners’ satisfaction and users’ satisfaction. How can a landscape serve both civic and financially beneficial purposes? Furthermore, how can the site’s managers do this while also respecting and incorporating the heritage of the landscape? These were the key questions during William Hamilton’s time, and they remain the central debate for the Trust and Cemetery Company of The Woodlands. In the sense of pertinent and fundamental questions, there is undeniable continuity; however, the following examination of management priorities throughout the site’s eras will bring to the forefront a discontinuity of approach over the past 250 years. While this thesis

1 Vicki W. Kramer. *Strategic Plan for The Woodlands* (2004).

will not use value analysis to presume future managerial intentions or actions, it will provide a framework for thinking about the site and use it to formulate recommendations for the future of The Woodlands' landscape preservation, primarily through management models, stakeholders, and interpretation.

In examining The Woodlands, we must begin by asking: what is this space, and how has it been made into place? How has it been defined – legally, physically, through its uses and functions, its reception and interpretation? As both Wunsch and Long cite, Hamilton set about “to make a small park...endeavoring to give it as much as possible a parkish look.”² Long uses this original intention for the land as proof of the landscape's continuity, identifying the site as a proto-type to such urban land reform efforts as Fairmount Park.³ But does the consistent use of the word “park” necessitate consistent meaning? What constitutes a park? How have the associations of the word evolved? And is it sufficient to claim that the “park” has been continuous due to certain representations of aesthetics and superficial functions?

When Hamilton referred to a park, the word was synonymous with “pleasure ground,” a highly constructed ideal in the picturesque tradition reminiscent of the English country estate landscape designs of Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton, with additional influences of architectural philosophy from John Plaw and gardening advice from Thomas Whately, among others.⁴ The aesthetic quality of the picturesque relied on two fundamental principles: first, the balance and contrast of composition (such as color, form, texture, material, lighting, etc.) and second, the framing of scenes.⁵ Also crucial

2 Wunsch, Aaron V. “The Woodlands Cemetery Company.” HALS PA-2 (2004), 23; Timothy Long, “The Woodlands: A ‘Matchless Place’ (Master’s Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1993), 84, both quoting William Hamilton to Tilgham, April 1779, Society Coll., HSP.

3 Long 308; Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 2. Wunsch lends skepticism to Long’s stance.

4 Long 22-40. See Figure 1.1.

5 Bruce Robertson. “The Picturesque Traveler in America,” in *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830*. (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art), 189. See Figure 1.2

was “the blending of architecture and scenery which was at the heart of the picturesque movement.”⁶ To create this impressive and refined image, key features of the picturesque included physical separation or retreat; alternating clumped vegetative screenings and sprawling lawns for closed and open spaces; house vistas from a hill or bluff, oriented toward a body of water; and meandering circulation through floral gardens, leading upward and designed for grand final effect.⁷ It was a cultivated nature.

The picturesque ideal was an intellectual one, a European one, a privileged and privatized one. It was designed for an estate owner, to impress and entertain genteel company.⁸ Both the word and the design simultaneously presented and concealed. It is not far-fetched to presume that William Hamilton made a conscious choice to identify his land as a park, rather than his grandfather’s reference to “The Woodlands Plantation” in the will to Andrew Hamilton II, William’s father.⁹ The plantation form exemplified the ornamented farm, and projects the ideals of strict geometry.¹⁰ However, “plantation” also implies enforced hierarchical power, labor, and productivity. (Furthermore, “plantation” plausibly had both political and aesthetic overtones of a burgeoning American nationalism that was undesirable to Hamilton.¹¹) Hamilton’s estate was certainly organized to work the land for profit, and was designed with labor systems in mind: he rented hundreds of acres to farmers, and he had servants for whom he designed specialized

6 Long 24, referencing David Watkin. *The English Vision: The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape and Garden Design*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 79.

7 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 23-31; Karen Madsen, “To Make His Country Smile: William Hamilton’s Woodlands,” *Arnoldia* 49 (1989): 14-24

8 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 90, emphasizing James Mease, *The Picture of Philadelphia, Giving an Account of Its Origin, Increase and Improvements In Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, Commerce and Revenue* (Philadelphia: B. & T. Kite, 1811), 348.

9 Long 72. Referencing Will, 1747, no. 187, Andrew Hamilton II, 27 August 1747, Philadelphia Municipal Archives.

10 Therese O’Malley, “Appropriation and Adaptation: Early Gardening Literature in America,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (1992): 406, 412.

11 Long 3.

circulation systems separating them from genteel company.¹² In fact, he stated clearly that The Woodlands was not only for beauty, but for use.¹³ While current interpretation of The Woodlands often focuses on Hamilton as ostentatious, this evidence suggests a somewhat more balanced and pragmatic mindset.

However, balance does not indicate an overlap of beauty and use in a way evident to the visitor; the division of pleasure and work spaces casts doubt on the estate's adherence to the qualities of *ferme ornée*, Stephen Switzer's farm-like way of gardening and blending of estate functions.¹⁴ The gentleman presented garden, and separated the reality of the landscape's functioning and maintenance from the visitor in such a way that it appeared to run itself. As landscape sightlines alternated between enclosed and obscured, to open and awe-inspiring, so did Hamilton manipulate people's perspective of how his power shaped the land. Company, from presidents to professors to wealthy gentlemen, was impressed and enchanted.¹⁵ This is the first understanding of The Woodlands as "semi-public" – land owned and landscape created by the wealth of one individual, who wished to share it with his countrymen as both an educational resource and a credit to his own collecting dedication.

From this complex relationship, beginning with Hamilton's crafting of his 250-acre inheritance in 1766 to his death in 1813, we can identify the social boundaries reinforced and imposed on this park by the owner who created it. Hamilton had an enormous amount of imagination and ambition in both the scale and details of his park; it is not even so far astray to suggest he desired to create his own fantasy world. This extended to such projects as Hamiltonville, an early real estate subdivision named

12 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 24, 28, 35-36.

13 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 25. Referencing William Hamilton to Benjamin Smith, 30 September 1785. Long 118-136.

14 Long 20-21; Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 31.

15 For reception compilation, see Madsen. See Figure 1.3.

after himself at the northern edge of the 600 acres in West Philadelphia.¹⁶ But we must concede that, while there were people living on the land, renting it, farming it, stewarding it, admiring it, and learning from it – ultimately, the permission to use this park as a resource was entirely within the power and decision of the owner Hamilton.

What did The Woodlands landscape look like under this form of ownership and management? There is much to be said for a passionate and invested patron, who designs an attraction of his own land and takes pride in it. While there are no comprehensive primary sources representing the full physical layout of the landscape design (such as a plan), documents such as letters, inventories, and diaries have been pieced together to project a vision of The Woodlands. At its peak in 1789, there were ten acres of ornamental garden surrounding the breathtaking mansion; winding paths with impressive trees, strategic knolls, ha-has, screenings, and vistas; a greenhouse with 10,000 exotic plants; a fruitful kitchen garden and orchard; among other delights at the estate's core.¹⁷ With reliable and sufficient funding, a clear vision with ample sources of inspiration and motivation, and skilled workers, The Woodlands had no excuse to look anything other than ideal.¹⁸

Moreover, this ideal, because it was conceived by a single person, was planned holistically, though it was constructed in stages.¹⁹ The elevated views and sightlines (one of the key features of picturesque) permitted visitors to understand the entire public presentation of the pleasure garden as more than the sum of its parts.²⁰ Yet, even with this carefully constructed design, Hamilton's estate was highly experimental – in landscape gardening ideas, but also in building techniques, farming technology, and artistic

16 *A plan of the village of Hamilton c. 1800-05*. [Philadelphia: 1804]; Long 168.

17 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 30-37. See Figure 1.4.

18 Long 114-117 demonstrates that Hamilton's finances were not always positive while trying to support his deceased brother's children, but considering the margin of wealth, we can consider him capable of patronizing an estate with lavish.

19 Long 90.

20 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 36.

reference.²¹ This was the true beauty of The Woodlands: a malleable vision that could be constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed by the owner. Hamilton could envision The Woodlands with Brown's endless capabilities; he could shift the landscape, both physical and psychological, as he pleased for the most powerful impact on observers. And yet, ultimately, only Hamilton had the right to leave a mark on The Woodlands.

In sum, during The Woodlands first era, under the vision, financing, and management of William Hamilton, the land was constructed most prominently as a pleasure ground, sprouting from imagination and an old World foundation of property as reinforcing social power. Decisions could be made and implemented quickly; the appearance generally did not suffer for lack of patronage. The land was semi-public in that it was controlled by one person, and open to those he discriminated appropriate. It was used practically by many (through leases for agricultural production, for instance) and recreationally by elite. In constructing landscape, value was placed on aestheticism, botanical knowledge (particularly of newly imported plant species), socialization within the upper class, and to a lesser degree, profit.

Upon William Hamilton's death in 1813, his nephew James and niece Molly became directors of the estate. After a brief time of service as a fort during the War of 1812, The Woodlands went through a period of dormancy as the relatives strived to maintain the status quo of the land. In 1826, the husband of Hamilton's niece invested in repairs to the structures with the intention of selling the remaining 92 acres. After a series of auctions from 1827 to 1829, by which all the livestock and furnishings were disbursed, and tracts sold for Alms House development, the property was sold to a Thomas Flemming.²²

It is clear that during this transitional period, as the Hamilton family released the property that had been in their possession since 1724, preservation was not a prior-

21 Long 3, 79, 92, 103.

22 Long 171-176.

ity – or rather, it was a priority only insofar as it could keep the real estate value high enough for respectable resale. We can but conjecture William Hamilton’s opinions on this matter. On one hand, he might have been dismayed to see the estate he had spent a lifetime to build pieced off without consideration for its holistic design, by the family for whom he had nurtured it for domestic bliss.²³ On the other hand, we must recognize that Hamilton did to some degree consider his property as real estate, as evidenced by his capitalization on the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge, constructed in 1800, to establish Hamiltonville.²⁴ However, neither this nor any of his other profit-making attempts were financially successful. Ultimately, we must conclude that Hamilton only sought sales and investments in order to contribute to funding his pleasure garden, and probably would have been dismayed by the favoring of economic value over aesthetic value.

When Thomas Mitchell purchased The Woodlands from Thomas Flemming in 1831, it was entirely with economic value in mind. As West Philadelphia entered a period of rapid development in the 1830s, two new land uses threatened to encroach on The Woodlands, the first of which was industry. As coal mining exploded in areas west of the city, the Schuylkill River became a channel for the materials. Mitchell endeavored to construct and rent wharves for this purpose, hoping ultimately to complete the Philadelphia Canal. However, the scheme spent the better part of 1834 to 1837 in legal conflict negotiations, and its subsequent failure, combined with the Great Panic and depression of 1837, sent him deep into debt.²⁵ At this point, Mitchell was forced to consider alternative uses for The Woodlands that would also have the possibility to turn a profit. He decided to accept an offer from three men – Garrick Mallery, Samuel Edwards, and Eli K. Price – to form a trust with them with the intention of paying off the debt on the land to create a rural cemetery.

23 Long 99-100.

24 Long 166-169.

25 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 39, 91-96.

The second driving force in 1830s West Philadelphia, and throughout the United States, was reform institutions. Rural cemeteries were a product of this urban improvement effort; in fact, they could be considered “the first physical expression of the evolving definition of urban form and culture in antebellum America.”²⁶ Inspired by one of the four initial Parisian municipal cemeteries, Père la Chaise, the rural cemetery movement sought to relocate cemeteries from their traditional urban context in church graveyards to the open green space of the countryside, frequently adapting and reusing former estates. Contributing factors to this impetus were “the disrepair of existing churchyards, the belief that urban cemeteries endangered public health, the insatiable demand for city land that often resulted in the desecration of older cemeteries, and acknowledgment of the psychological impact of scenery.”²⁷ The first rural cemetery in the country was Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, founded in 1831; soon followed Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia in 1836, and Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York in 1838.

Yet, while the rural cemetery movement was national, the atmosphere in Philadelphia was unique and entrepreneurial. Unlike in Boston and New York, where all profits from the cemetery business were invested in improving the grounds (the reasons, results, and processes of which we will explore in the following section), rural cemeteries in Philadelphia drew in sizable revenue.²⁸ This was incentive for the four original trustees when they formed The Woodlands Cemetery Company in 1840. While the land could not be purchased until 1843, and though the business did not begin to make reasonable profit until the early 1850s, the investors understood the potential economic

26 David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 37.

27 Schuyler 41.

28 Aaron Wunsch, “Hawking Hallowed Ground: Utopianism and Its Discontents at Philadelphia’s Woodlands Cemetery” (paper presented at annual meeting for the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, July 21-24, 2005), 4.

value of this unique form of real estate. In a joint-stock arrangement comprised of 600 shares (“each valued at \$250 dollars and entitling the bearer to 1,000 square feet of ground plus a fraction of company profits”), The Woodlands spent much time the first few years developing policy on voting rights and dividends of its stakeholders, trying to connect and integrate the conceptual economic aspect of the company with the land it represented.²⁹

This division of power in board management (consisting of seven managers elected by the incorporators), shareholders, and lot owners brought issues of competing ownership to the forefront, and this was evident in the landscape layout. Most fundamentally, company land developed through private initiative of incorporators; though surveyor Philip Price had prepared a plan for the cemetery in 1841, different sections were in reality designed by Thomas U. Walter (Mitchell’s choice for section F), and Philip Price and Edward Roberts (broader choices for sections C, D, and E).³⁰ It was not until 1866 that James C. Sidney was hired as master planner by the board for sections K, L, and M.³¹ The piecemeal design in the cemetery’s early years was quite a disjuncture from Hamilton’s holistic landscape ideology.

Majority of literature on landscape design of rural cemeteries claims that the aim to evoke feelings of peace and hope (to ward off death’s terror) was accomplished by accentuating the curvilinearity of the natural topography, associating aesthetics with mental repose and setting the space as a pastoral counterpoint to the city grid.³² Yet, more recent literature has reconsidered the romantic notions of a direct continuity and purity from estate aesthetics and a simple dichotomy with urban design: “it is evident that the rural cemetery was a fully urban place, not only in the obvious sense of its urban origins

29 Wunsch “Hawking Hallowed Ground” 5-6.

30 Wunsch *Historic American Landscape Survey* 13, 41, 46. See Figure 1.5.

31 Wunsch *Historic American Landscape Survey* 13, 14.

32 Schuyler 50, 53; Long 228.

and connections but in the spatial imagination that shaped it...the foundation of the rural cemetery on a grid of private property."³³ While the geometric layout recommendations of John Claudius Loudon may not have been visibly applied, they were indicative of ownership approach and mindset of The Woodlands Cemetery Company.³⁴

In this grid of private property, users were learning how to share space in a new context, consistently negotiating relationships to each other and to The Woodlands Cemetery Company. The first indication of enforcing property boundaries was the company's construction of a fence, a process they started in 1840, years before they even had the title to the land. The insistence on the fortification was unusual for rural cemeteries and could possibly be attributed to the adjacent almshouse; however, it could simply be the prospective owners' fear of an overly public appearance.³⁵ Displays of territoriality became common with individual lot owners during the 1850s, from fences to plantings to increasingly impressive monuments.³⁶ Similar to houses or other forms of real estate, the burial lot became a sign of social status.³⁷ In fact, the tension between the parts and the whole incensed trustee Eli Price to set firm (if condescending) policy:

Managers must reserve and exercise a paramount control as to all interference that may mar its scenery. The owners of their little plots naturally look only to them. It requires care to explain to lot holders in a way to conciliate their feelings and judgement; but the Managers should be firm, otherwise a great purpose of taste and beauty will be gradually but certainly overruled.³⁸

33 Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Space in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 232.

34 J.C. Loudon. *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (London: Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1843).

35 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 39-40.

36 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 65-66.

37 John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 111; Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 107.

38 Long 267. Referencing Price, Managers to Corporators WCC, 3 January 1852.

Yet in the midst of these divisions and claims, there was an active attempt on the part of the company to emphasize communal infrastructure, most importantly integrated road systems on and approaching the property.³⁹ This infrastructure became imperative as locals and tourists began taking omnibuses to The Woodlands to experience this landscape “attraction,” to such a point that the managers required and limited tickets for entrance.⁴⁰ Indeed, The Woodlands, like other rural cemeteries, bolstered civic pride, served as an attraction to compete with landmarks in other American cities, and to some even embodied an American exceptionalism of rural luxury land rare in Europe.⁴¹ However, it is also true that encouragement of tourism was to The Woodlands Cemetery Company’s benefit, as it created a sort of “open house” to advertise for business. Hamilton sought supplemental income to support his aesthetic vision; conversely, the cemetery sought an aesthetic appeal to generate income.

The popular enthusiasm for rural cemeteries often caused complications for the managers, as what had been designed with the intention of passive contemplation became sites of active recreation.⁴² Picnics, noise, animals, and general revelry were considered inappropriate for sacred resting place – unlike at the rising park cemeteries and public parks movements, which engaged more with lawns and designated areas for activity.⁴³ It is at this point that we must again consider the meaning of “semi-public space.” The land was managed by a profit-making venture, but paid for by thousands of people; it was created as a didactic spiritual green space most especially for those trapped by industry and in need of repose; and it claimed tax exemption on the basis

39 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 49-50.

40 Sears; Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 65. See Figure 1.6.

41 Long 191-192.

42 Schuyler 54-55; Blanche Linden-Ward, “Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries,” in *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1992), 317. See Figure 1.7.

43 Sears 116-118.

that it was fulfilling a public good for the government.⁴⁴ And yet there were restrictions of decorum, and divisions and preference by socioeconomic, reputational, racial, and familial status, enacted by the developers. It is here for the first time that we see The Woodlands trying to assert policies of mission and image, and yet creating situations in which they are at odds with their own stakeholders.

It is because of this distribution of power and interest that a continuity argument for values at The Woodlands throughout its history does injustice to the radical transformations that have occurred there. Values of a site derive from the owners' desires, the managers' choices and interpretations, the users' reception, and the ways they all interact. The Woodlands experienced a deep shift as a place envisioned, designed, constructed, presented, and maintained by the direction of a single person, to a place of collective ownership with diverse managers, funders, and visitors. Interpretation to this point has presented Eli Price as a kind of successor of William Hamilton, channeling his legacy and mission for stewardship and love of the aesthetic, environmental, and education goals of the landscape.⁴⁵ It is true that Eli Price was highly influential and respected as the head of the cemetery board, and that his stances and principles for addressing The Woodlands' problems demonstrated an astute balance of civic, natural resource, political, and economic values.⁴⁶ But the reality is, Eli Price was not the inheritor of the estate and he was not commanding landscape's shaping single-handedly. And while all historical figures may be products of their time, it would be an error in scholarly judgment to imbue the actions of individuals versed in real estate with the Romantic ideologies of the period's cultural trends.⁴⁷ As argument for the continuity of the landscape is predicated on its continuity of practices as enforced by the management's intentions,

44 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 91, 122-123.

45 Long.

46 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 125.

47 Linden-Ward 295.

we must consider it invalid and acknowledge that the company's development of The Woodlands was indeed a rupture that irrevocably altered the context for the landscape under consideration.

With discontinuity in mind, and amidst the balancing act of desire for financial profit with desire to serve the city public, we must ask: what did The Woodlands Cemetery Company deem worthy to salvage from its past, and what insight does that give us into the values of the company during the early years? The charter for the company stated as part of its mission the preservation of the grounds:

Whereas the practice of crowding the dead within small spaces in populous cities is repugnant to the feeling and prejudicial to the health of the living, and is becoming yearly more inconvenient, expensive, and dangerous. And whereas, a number of citizens of the Commonwealth hereinafter named have associated for the purpose of establishing a rural cemetery at The Woodlands in the neighborhood of Philadelphia, intending to appropriate the greater portion thereof for the purpose of interments, **whereby the beautiful landscape and scenery of that situation may be perpetually preserved**, and its ample space for free circulation of air, and groves of trees afford a security against encroachments upon the dead, and health and solace to the living: and whereas, The said associators have petitioned to be incorporated with the necessary powers for effecting the important objects aforesaid.⁴⁸

The sentiment is certainly noble, at once civic-minded and proto-conservationist. It is true that the charter presents the character-defining features of the former Hamilton landscape (such as groves and vistas) as a historic artifact.⁴⁹ This demonstrates that the company was indeed considering their responsibility to the previous purpose of The Woodlands with a new awareness. While Hamilton had designed his estate with conceptual historical reference, the land itself had been a tabula rasa for him. The company

48 *Charter, By-Laws and Regulations of the Woodlands Cemetery Company* (1845 ed.).

49 Wunsch *Historic American Landscape Survey* 129.

understood that their mission was drastically different, now involving stewardship of natural and historic resources.

However, every act of preservation is a current interpretation of a past authenticity; moreover, in light of the motivation for economic gain, the company made compromises and choices according to what material they believed to be either a) less integral to the history of the site; or b) difficult to adapt to immediate user needs. The mansion they transformed into a funeral chapel, capitalizing upon the period connections of spirituality with domesticity.⁵⁰ Yet simultaneously came the demolition of Hamilton's greenhouse in 1854 and its replacement with a large octagonal carriage shed.⁵¹ This management decision, like the auction of the interiors collection, may be considered short-sighted and detrimental now. But rather than simply viewing it as a bad decision, we might ask what it can tell us about the management's values. Perhaps it demonstrates that, while historic value was increasing, informational value was not as high a priority, and rather was trumped by a social value that could develop into an economic value.

The Woodlands Cemetery Company during the mid-nineteenth century chose to preserve an image or a distinct atmosphere of the landscape (such as the vibrant greenery), more so than its historical specificities.⁵² A large part of the reason for image preservation was the surrounding community, who advocated for The Woodlands due to memories and attachments to the site, particularly during times when the future of green space in West Philadelphia was at risk. In the early 1860s, when The Woodlands Cemetery Company attempted to utilize part of the landscape for a speculative real estate subdivision, the lot owners successfully lobbied against the project's authorization,

50 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 127.

51 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 63.

52 Long 244-5.

considering it a disrespectful use of the green memorial space.⁵³ Conversely, even after the care of individual lots waned in the later nineteenth century, when the University Avenue route was planned in the 1920s and 1930s at the expense of four acres and The Woodlands gatehouse, preservationists from civic organizations mobilized (albeit on behalf of the cemetery-era building, and not on behalf of the Hamilton landscape). Advocates included the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Civic Club, and the City Parks Association.⁵⁴ While the campaign was not successful that time, it proved a community commitment to the welfare of The Woodlands.

In choosing to invest in a cemetery as a reliable source of profit, perhaps the board and shareholders did not realize that they were becoming permanently connected to people, to families, to a community – one that would advocate for its own agenda, whatever they believed would be best for the property. While the company placed emphasis on economic value, and the visitors and community placed emphasis on social value, there was a mutual understanding that this site had clear historic and environmental significance.

Yet as West Philadelphia expanded, The Woodlands Cemetery Company continued to sacrifice land to other public projects. No longer in a pastoral setting, the rural cemetery became an isolated green space among construction. Besides the sales of land for University Avenue in 1933 and 1942, there was a strip of land at 42nd Street sold in 1946, and then the condemnation for the Veteran's Hospital on the eastern border in 1949. There were additional condemnations for the hospital in 1952 and 1953, and finally a sewer easement from the city in 1958. The cemetery received considerable compensation for the seizures, about ten percent of which contributed to the general

53 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 69-70.

54 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 78.

trust and maintenance fund.⁵⁵ While these were worthy projects, and The Woodlands perhaps served its civic duty in supporting them, they also cut the grounds nearly in half. There is little evidence of discussion of management regarding limitations of what they would permit, or pro-active plans about how to proceed in dire scenarios, perhaps reflecting a sense that the institution itself was in decline.

The purpose and context of The Woodlands was shifting yet again in the early to mid-twentieth century. The Woodlands could no longer obscure industry easily, as it had in previous lives with the 1854 railroad and the Mill Creek mills before that; the landscape was now surrounded by industry, no longer a retreat examining the bustle from a distant hill.⁵⁶ The fences that had once attempted to keep out riff-raff and vandals now protected the last of the territory. At fifty-four acres, and having peaked in burial business during the Gilded Age, it was more crucial than ever to determine a plan of action the landscape's change.⁵⁷ In 1957, The Woodlands Cemetery Company hired landscape architecture firm Wheelwright, Stevenson & Langran, who designed a vegetative screening plan for the borders in an attempt to lessen the jarring effect of the ad hoc twentieth century alterations (such as the land seizures and new design and relocation of the gate).⁵⁸ While this project made minor physical landscape improvements, it did nothing to re-center the management for a long-term vision or identity of The Woodlands. As a result, caretakers and superintendents had varying interpretations of the site's image and implemented them in ways that today would be considered unsound by historic preservationists.⁵⁹

As the landscape changed, so did The Woodlands' relationship with West Philadelphia; the site began to accept visitors and clients of a wider demographic, particularly

55 *Record of Sales of Land other than Lots*. See Figure 1.8.

56 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 76.

57 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 73.

58 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 80, layout drawing 5 of 8.

59 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 80.

racially and religiously. This was a move of economic necessity, and was never part of the reform mindset of either Hamilton (who admitted only “genteel” company) nor the Cemetery Company’s founders or trustees (who sought recognition by aligning their business with Philadelphia’s wealthy established families);⁶⁰ however, the turn in approach to social interactions and a broadening meaning of “semi-public space” lent The Woodlands a new awareness of its history. Thus, when the historic preservation movement countered urban renewal so rampant in Philadelphia and established the National Register of Historic Places, The Woodlands mansion was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1968 as an exemplary model of early Federal architecture. While there had been some documentation of the site’s history before this point (primarily through New Deal projects), this was the point at which retaining historic value became an active management priority.

Yet, while historic value of the mansion was a high priority for The Woodlands management in the second half of the twentieth century, there is no indication that this was the aspect eschewed by the surrounding community. Furthermore, the designation, important though it was, identified the building as an isolated work, rather than considering it integral to the landscape, as it always had been. Perhaps it even gave a false impression that the mansion was the cultural resource, and the grounds the natural resource, when in fact the landscape is a historical palimpsest itself, from the design patterns to the plant materials to the statuary. The integration of the grounds and the mansion were not fully articulated until Long’s thesis in 1991, and the landscape was not nationally acknowledged for its significance until the new designation of National Historic Landscape in 2004, with the research of Wunsch.

The Woodlands Cemetery Company became a non-profit organization in the 1980s. Inspired by the neighborhood revitalization of University of Pennsylvania’s West

60 Wunsch Historic American Landscape Survey 81.

Philadelphia Initiatives in the 1990s, The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation was founded in 1998, with a mission emphasis on historic value. The Trust has a joint board of about twelve members with The Woodlands Cemetery Company, and has six committees: Executive, Cemetery, Landscape, Finance, Buildings and Monuments, and most recently, Education and Outreach.⁶¹ The site is managed by an Executive Director (a position created in 2005), with the assistance of numerous volunteers from the West Philadelphia neighborhood. A strategic plan was initiated in 2004, through Vicki Kramer & Associates and subsequently through The Nonprofit Center at La Salle University; the beginning phases for a new plan are currently under consideration by Fairmount Ventures, Inc.⁶² Strategic plans to this point have identified needs, set goals, and implemented methods to accomplish those goals; however, many of these goals have addressed only short-term needs and pertain to day-to-day operation (ex. sell graves, create brochures and signs, maintain plantings, etc.). The plans have not included an examination of the identity of The Woodlands (particularly of The Trust) and designed ways to accomplish the Trust's initial vision:

The Woodlands will be known, valued, and used, and will be considered a desirable year-round destination for both residents and visitors to the Philadelphia region. Its important role as an early rural cemetery and the identities of the people buried there will be widely understood. Its historic buildings will be restored and adapted for multiple uses. The house, grounds, and monuments will be well maintained and the site will be alive with various activities. It will be a recognized educational and recreational resource for Philadelphia-area residents and institutions, particularly those in its University City neighborhood. An

61 The Woodlands. *Committees*. Electronic folder, server.

62 Vicki W. Kramer. *Strategic Plan for The Woodlands* (2004); Jean K. Wolf. "Review of The Woodlands Strategic Plan 2004" (2007); Adrienne B. Jenkins, The Nonprofit Center at La Salle University, to Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation, Philadelphia, 12 September 2008; "State of The Woodlands Strategic Planning Session" (Philadelphia, 18 Nov 2008); Jason D. Alexander. *Strategic Plan 2009-2011: The Woodlands* (2008); Don Kligerman to Jessica Baumert, October 28, 2011. All in Director Files at The Woodlands.

active board and professional staff, working together, will guide its future. Support from income-generating activities and contributions will ensure its viability.⁶³

While it takes many small steps and attention to details to run a historic site, it also requires a consistent perspective of the larger picture, and establishment of and adherence to a set of principles which the organization believes it represents. As of 2008, a survey of the board and staff of the site indicated significant uncertainty as to the clarity of the mission, vision, and core values; no one strongly agreed that the site was fulfilling its mission.⁶⁴ Furthermore, there is no identification of roles and tasks to incrementally attain the vision; there is a lack of clarity regarding authority and responsibility.

The Trust has made a considerable amount of progress in the past fourteen years; however, The Woodlands is still far from reaching the vision articulated in the strategic plan. Obviously, this is because the vision is rooted in strong relationships with the community, and yet, until this thesis, there has been no stakeholder or user analysis. If the vision is to attract and educate visitors about the historic value of the site, then it is first necessary to know who the audiences are, who the potential audiences are, and what these constituencies value about The Woodlands. Interpretation can then build upon that knowledge, guided by comparable models of community engagement from other rural cemetery historic sites.

What can we divine about the changing values of The Woodlands as demonstrated through the landscape management decisions and uses analyzed in this foundational chapter, and how might it contribute to future site planning? We have concluded that the managerial and environmental context enabled (though did not necessarily cause) a transformation from aesthetic priorities to economic priorities to historic and

63 Vicki W. Kramer. *Strategic Plan for The Woodlands* (2004).

64 "The Woodlands Strategic Planning Project 2008 – Survey Results."

informational priorities. While these were all present and debated throughout, they were emphasized according to which assets of the collection were most desirable at any given time. However, in every stage of The Woodlands, social value (which could also be considered civic or reform value) has been critical in an evolving understanding of semi-public space. Though it was exercised for different purposes and ends (reputation, financial gain, community-building, etc.), it is the core that draws people to The Woodlands – to find the cultural resources within the natural resources, and to discover those with other people. By re-examining the history of the site from a user reception and advocacy framework, as above, we can create a better way to connect with, interpret, and plan The Woodlands' landscape preservation for visitors.



Chapter Two Rural Cemetery Comparables

To fully understand the land use, values, and management in context, it is necessary to examine The Woodlands' place in the rural cemetery movement, how its evolution and overall management choices created different trajectories, and how other models are now engaging the public and interpreting their sites. The three comparables selected are Mount Auburn Cemetery, Laurel Hill Cemetery, and Historic Congressional Cemetery. Each of these has a distinct identity, a unique relevance to The Woodlands, and a recent track record of success as the individual sites define it. All three are still active cemeteries, with grounds open and free to the public, and are also designated as National Historic Landmarks. As a strategy for comparing appropriate models and extracting plausible applications, we will review a justification for each selection and a brief history of that site, followed by four points of current comparison: management, programming, funding, and community interaction.

Mount Auburn Cemetery

Justification for comparison

As the first rural cemetery in the United States, Mount Auburn served as the prototype by which other American cities conceived of and judged their later examples. It was the standard for touristic interest, local distinction, and elegant design.¹ However, there were several fundamental ways in which the formation of The Woodlands Cemetery Company consciously diverged from Mount Auburn: first, the financial na-

1 John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 99-121.

Blanche Linden-Ward, "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries," in *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1992).

ture of the project. Mount Auburn was clear from the onset that it was a not-for-profit organization, and that all income contributed directly to landscape maintenance. The Woodlands, on the other hand, established the cemetery as a business, designed as a real estate venture; this was the common financial model for rural cemeteries in Philadelphia, but atypical in the larger national trend.²

The second significant divergence that justifies comparison is the aesthetic influences and choices on the landscape layout and atmosphere. In the beginning stages of laying out The Woodlands Cemetery, Eli Price the trustee and his brother Philip Price the surveyor, along with the landscape committee, traveled to Mount Auburn; while the visit was ostensibly to gather influences for their own project, the report presented to the board (and which was later included in business pamphlets) claims superiority of The Woodlands. The committee preferred The Woodlands' gentle sloping topography, gravel soil, viewsheds, and plant material arrangements.³

Thirdly, the different regional form of authority and governance structure impacted the purpose, business, and management at Mount Auburn and at The Woodlands in distinct ways. The Puritanical tradition emanating from Boston enforced a class hierarchy in the site's management, but also encouraged transparency; as a result, everyone was aware of how the finances were being addressed. The Philadelphia Quaker tradition, on the other hand, advocated an egalitarian approach; while democratic in theory, this often resulted in uncertainty of leadership, which enabled some people to financially benefit surreptitiously.⁴

2 Aaron Wunsch, "Hawking Hallowed Ground: Utopianism and Its Discontents at Philadelphia's Woodlands Cemetery" (paper presented at annual meeting for the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, July 21-24, 2005), 4

3 The Woodlands Cemetery Company. *Reports Relative to The Woodlands Cemetery* (Philadelphia: C. Alexander, 1843), 14-15.

4 E. Digby Baltzell. *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publications, 1996).

And finally, Mount Auburn has proven exceptional as a rural cemetery in that the surrounding neighborhood has been consistently safe, and therefore the grounds have maintained their constituency. This is not the case for The Woodlands in West Philadelphia in the twentieth century, nor for the other two comparables.

Selective History

Mount Auburn Cemetery was founded in Cambridge by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1831, through the impetus of Dr. Jacob Bigelow. The initial 70 acres were primarily designed by the Society's president, General Henry Dearborn, to accentuate the extreme rolling hill topography of the land north of Boston. In order to create artistic and naturalistic improvements, he relied on heavy screens of plantings, terracing, winding circulation, and breathtaking views at the top.⁵

As at The Woodlands, Mount Auburn Cemetery's founders wished to educate through an experimental garden; though the Society and the Cemetery became separate corporations in 1835, the cemetery retained the garden as part of its mission.⁶ Also similar to The Woodlands, Mount Auburn focused in the mid-nineteenth century on grand memorializations, such as those of the Boston Brahmins; however, compared to The Woodlands, there was minimal discrimination on the basis of class or religious affiliation.⁷

However, unlike The Woodlands, Mount Auburn Cemetery did not capitalize on the history of the estate as an attraction; they desired to display the picturesque tradition as a testament to art and nature, without significant attention to the style's background.⁸ The history of Stone's Farm and Sweet Auburn played little role in the cem-

5 Blanche M.G. Linden, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery*, rev. ed. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 155-159.

6 David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 43-44.

7 Blanche Linden-Ward, "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds" 300.

8 Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Space in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 229.

etery's presentation. Also unlike The Woodlands, Mount Auburn has grown significantly. Whereas The Woodlands estate was 600 acres at its peak, 92 acres at the cemetery's founding, and currently 54 acres, Mount Auburn Cemetery began with 70 acres, quickly increased to 110 acres, and is now 174 acres.

Management

Mount Auburn Cemetery is significantly larger than The Woodlands, with 93,000 burials and 5,500 trees. Visitation guidelines and amenities are stated clearly for the public. The current President has served since 2008 and has been involved on the site for twenty years; the previous President held the position for twenty years.⁹ There is a fourteen-person board and a large staff involving specialized directorships for preservation and facilities maintenance, interpretation, etc. The primary support group is The Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery,

established in 1986 to promote the appreciation and preservation of this important cultural and natural resource. In 1990 it was designated as a non-profit educational trust. Since its founding the Friends has provided vital support for Mount Auburn, raising funds for preservation, horticultural rejuvenation, and educational projects.

our mission is preservation and service with excellence and innovation...

our goal is to conserve the natural beauty of Mount Auburn and promote the appreciation of our cultural, historic, and natural resources...

our passion is to protect Mount Auburn and share it with future generations.¹⁰

9 Isaacson, Miller. "President Search, Mount Auburn Cemetery." 2008. PDF. Travis Andersen. "New Mount Auburn Cemetery president isn't cryptic about his vision." *Wicked Local Watertown*, October 2, 2008. Web.

Jane Roy Brown. "Preservation Case Study: Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge and Watertown, Massachusetts." *Library of American Landscape History, Inc.*, 2006. Web.

10 *Mount Auburn Cemetery*. Web.

Programming

Programming at Mount Auburn is extremely active and includes numerous themed tours and workshops each month; structure and instruction for guided tours; a book club; open forums for preservation planning; lectures and collaborations, both on-site and at surrounding educational institutions; and wildlife observing groups. The site also advertises very clearly as an active cemetery, as well as for other private events such as weddings and meetings. All programming is advertised digitally and through newsletters, and the site also supplies numerous relevant publications for sale. Mount Auburn also has accessible online tools for genealogical studies and burial location inquiries. Finally, the site keeps an updated blog addressing recent research projects and resources available to researchers. However, all these efforts are managed with sizable staff and funding.

Funding

Mount Auburn Cemetery was founded as and maintained as a non-profit; all income from burials contributes to maintenance of landscape. While there are no publicly available statistics regarding the income breakdown, the site is sustained through the fees for its programs, the burials, the still-active “experimental garden” (now a plant nursery with expansion plans), and donations. They have also been successful with grants in the past due to their proof of activity and income.

However, the vast majority of their maintenance is enabled by a \$150 million endowment, which allots an annual budget of \$10 million. The funds support a staff of about 100 people. Thus, while the Mount Auburn strategic plan cites initiatives similar to The Woodlands (enhance visitor experience, preserve structures and landscape, etc.), there is staggering support with which to pursue goals.¹¹

11 Isaacson, Miller. “President Search, Mount Auburn Cemetery” 1, 4.

Community Interaction and Interpretation

Though Mount Auburn is also located on a busy street, it is much more attuned to visitor needs and access. There is ample and apparent parking inside and nearby; clear signage directs visitors to a center at the entrance to cemetery, where a member of the strong volunteer network provides further direction. The site is highly navigable.

Information for visitors is also provided through monthly newsletters through the Friends organization, social media, and a highly informative, visually appealing and legible website, on which the site identifies numerous areas of significance. These areas of significance (categorized as history, people, plants, art, and wildlife) encompass current uses and values as well as past uses and values. There is also space in the online formats for visitor comments.

Interpretation planning and techniques at Mount Auburn are also exemplary; besides having a variety of programming topics and formats, there is a curriculum fulfilling the elementary and secondary school American history standards, which was designed in collaboration with the National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative.¹²

Applications

Mount Auburn Cemetery has created a clear identity through listing and reasoning their priorities, stating historical and current uses, and visioning of their responsibilities to the community. Because the management involves the public in planning decisions and has a structure for feedback, there is a higher promise of awareness of occurrences and issues onsite, as well as strong volunteer support for day-to-day operation. Transparency and community involvement increases capacity for programming and visitation. Furthermore, leadership is selected from within the site and neighborhood

12 “Mount Auburn Cemetery: A New American Landscape. About this Lesson.” *National Park Service Historic Landscape Initiative*. Web.

community.

Mount Auburn also excels at communication, both onsite and digitally, through clear, welcoming signage and human contact as soon as the visitor enters the site. Though the landscape is larger, more topographically differentiated, and more complex circulation-wise than The Woodlands, the progression of experience at Mount Auburn orients the visitor in such a way as to feel guided and safe.

Clearly, the impeccable level of maintenance and involvement at Mount Auburn is dependent upon its ample funding. However, this does not mean that The Woodlands could not pursue similar programming, on a smaller scale and budget, to engage visitors. Additionally, Mount Auburn demonstrates the importance of endowments in site preservation, a strategy which The Woodlands could invest greater focus cultivating.

Laurel Hill Cemetery

Justification for comparison

As the first rural cemetery in Philadelphia, Laurel Hill pioneered the concept of rural cemeteries as revenue sources, setting a precedent for the movement's unique manifestation in Philadelphia as blatant real estate. Splitting the proceeds among four partners, the company encouraged commodification through grids of private property and security of those plots.¹³ The Woodlands financial model was based on Laurel Hill.

Furthermore, Laurel Hill is comparable to The Woodlands both in size (at 78 acres) and in its adaptation from a former private river estate.¹⁴ However, while Laurel Hill has little available space left for burials, The Woodlands has ample opportunity. Additionally, regarding similarities in design and accentuation of certain features, Philip Price worked as a surveyor on Laurel Hill before acting as chief surveyor for The Wood-

13 Wunsch "Hawking Hallowed Ground" 4. Upton 232-235.

14 Aaron Wunsch. "Location and Conception." *Building a City of the Dead: The Creation and Expansion of Philadelphia's Laurel Hill Cemetery*. The Library Company of Philadelphia and The Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery. 2010. Online exhibit.

lands.

Laurel Hill and its near contemporary, Philadelphia's Woodlands Cemetery, both established in existing villa gardens, owed more allegiance to Philadelphia's local landscape tradition than to the dramatic picturesque aesthetic espoused at Mount Auburn. Moreover, as business entrepreneurs eager to attract investors and customers, the managers of the new rural cemeteries were often willing to allow large-scale lot holders and stockholders considerable latitude in designing their own sections of the cemetery.¹⁵

Selective History

Laurel Hill Cemetery was founded in 1836 by John Jay Smith, adapting Joseph Sims's 32-acre Schuylkill River gentleman estate. Designed by John Notman, the site strove for a tout ensemble effect to blend nature and culture, with a more constrained and geometric form than Mount Auburn and gardenesque features such as parterres and terraces.¹⁶ The site was immediately successful as a business venture, selling half its original 800 lots in the first three years, and ultimately requiring annexes.¹⁷

Yet, during the twentieth century, Laurel Hill gradually shifted from a sales company to a maintenance company. The post-World War II era brought decline to the site as the original Permanent Fund failed to meet needs. Though the cemetery is now a non-profit, it continues to struggle with a surrounding decaying neighborhood.¹⁸

Management

Laurel Hill has a staff of about six, including a President, Director of Development and Programs, Volunteer Coordinator, and Superintendent. There is also a strong

15 Upton 237.

16 Schuyler 45. Linden-Ward "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds" 307.

17 Aaron Wunsch. "Execution and Expansion." *Building a City of the Dead: The Creation and Expansion of Philadelphia's Laurel Hill Cemetery*.

18 Wunsch, Aaron V. "Laurel Hill Cemetery." HABS PA-1811 (1999), 80-83.

Friends board of about a dozen people:

The Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery is 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the historic character of Laurel Hill as well as developing and implementing educational programs and public outreach. Supporter level members of the Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery have the benefit of free genealogical research services.

The main missions of the Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery are to:

Prepare, implement and promote educational programming, public outreach initiatives and research resources that emphasize the historical, aesthetic, architectural and cultural significance of Laurel Hill Cemetery

Foster and support the restoration and preservation of the Cemetery's monuments, statuary, historic Gatehouse and grounds

Raise funds and seek contributed services to accomplish these goals¹⁹

Programming

Laurel Hill's programming is based strongly around a recent marketing scheme branding the site as "Philadelphia's Underground Museum"; exhibits and project displays, such as this season's commentary on the Civil War, attempt to fulfill this new role. Numerous events each month, which are well-advertised via social media, often focus on themed storytelling, capitalizing on the brand of "mysterious, lost stories."

Funding

Laurel Hill's funds come from their recent revival of cemetery as tourist spectacle – storytelling events charge admission, and there is an active store selling memorabilia merchandise. The site has also recently instated a fundraiser called "brand a brick," by which a donation to the restoration of the cemetery's pathway will qualify a name on

19 *Laurel Hill Cemetery*. Web.

the brick in remembrance. Laurel Hill also tends to have fundraising efforts for individual monuments, such as the Silent Sentinel. Most recently, Laurel Hill was awarded the Preservation Achievement Award from the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, for the restoration of the Medallion Garden.²⁰ Then there is an income from burials (minimal, as the space is quite filled), and charges for genealogical requests. The site also receives grants, and the arboretum is funded through an endowment called the John Jay Smith Society.

Community Interaction and Interpretation

Laurel Hill puts great emphasis on its purpose to educate visitors about local and site history, and does so through collaboration with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, among other partners. The cemetery focuses aggressively on public image and information; they actively seek volunteers to act as tour guides, for which they have a certification program. Laurel Hill also keeps the community informed through newsletters and social media.

Applications

Like Mount Auburn, Laurel Hill is excellent at updating visitors; however, the messages are sometimes unclear, as the recent extreme branding as Philadelphia's Underground Museum has caused serious confusion. Yet, while the approach to the branding has not been entirely successful, the idea of focusing on unified image could prove helpful for strengthening The Woodlands' identity (if done tastefully). Additionally, while Laurel Hill does not tap into the potential of all its varied resources and audiences as Mount Auburn does, it is selective in its determination of significance and programming

²⁰ Amy Z. Quinn. "Laurel Hill Cemetery restoration effort wins preservation award." *Plan-Philly*, February 27, 2012. Web.

surrounding it, and thus has created a niche for itself. This focused approach could be helpful to The Woodlands, especially for fundraising purposes.

Yet, there are several advantages that The Woodlands bears as compared to Laurel Hill. These include more available burial space; an active and interested surrounding neighborhood; and the continued involvement and guidance of the historic founding families.

Congressional Cemetery

Justification for comparison

Unlike Mount Auburn, Laurel Hill, and The Woodlands, Historic Congressional Cemetery predates the rural cemetery movement; it was religiously affiliated, catered to a particular sector for business, and for a time received preferential governmental treatment. However, the recent revitalization as a result of community effort and organization, and the similar current audiences, stakeholders, and dilemmas as The Woodlands qualifies this site as a critical model.

Selective History

Congressional Cemetery was founded as Washington Parish Burying Ground in 1807, and was designed with Pierre L'Enfant's classical stylistic influence. Benjamin Henry Latrobe crafted numerous gravestones for congressmen in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The site became the resting place of numerous politicians from all over the country, and thus fulfilled the common District role as a national landscape, rather than a landscape associated with a particular city pride, such as Mount Auburn. Due to the service the burial ground provided to the federal government, Congress began to fund maintenance needs in 1824.²¹

21 Cathleen Breitreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery." The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery, 2-14.

With the birth of the American rural cemetery movement, Congressional Cemetery's layout did not fit the romanticized images and was not changed to do so, but public opinion frequently superimposed the ideal onto the landscape during the 1830s, which was also when the site acquired its name.²² Conditions of governmental monuments became a concern in the 1850s, but the concern was overshadowed by the burials of the Civil War (the bodies which were later moved to Arlington Cemetery, similar to post-Civil War military disinterment at The Woodlands).²³ The church vestry worked with the additional land, systems, and rehabilitations granted by the government until 1872, when Congress withdrew its financial support.

From about 1890-1912, Congressional Cemetery had clashes with the District regarding property ownership and right-of-way in the wake of city projects, similar to The Woodlands during the 1920s to 1950s, when the site lost nearly half its acreage.²⁴ Government monuments and burial business declined as the superintendent struggled to maintain the landscape.²⁵ From the 1920s to the 1970s, proposals for the responsibility of care for Congressional Cemetery passed through the hands of several federal agencies, including the War Department, the National Park Service, and the Architect of the Capitol; yet none of these proposals resulted in allocations or additional staffing. In 1976, the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery was established.²⁶

By the 1980s and 1990s, the site was under constant threat of land condemnation and lack of professional leadership. Finally, in 1997, individual volunteers, particularly from the dog-walking community, initiated efforts to clean up the neighborhood and cemetery, which at that point had fallen victim to drug dealers and turf wars. As

22 Cathleen Breitzkreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery," 15.

23 Cathleen Breitzkreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery," 22-23.

24 Cathleen Breitzkreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery," 35-39.

25 Cathleen Breitzkreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery," 44.

26 Cathleen Breitzkreutz. "The Developmental History of Congressional Cemetery," 44-54.

there was no management at the time, they formed the K9 Corps, an organization exchanging dog-walking privileges for volunteer service. The site was then listed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 1997 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places; a million-dollar endowment was granted by Congress in 1999.²⁷

Management

Historic Congressional Cemetery is the most transparent of the models regarding leadership and responsibility, likely because it has been crucial to the revitalization effort of the site over the last fifteen years, contemporaneous with The Woodlands. There is a five person staff with specific leadership roles; a Board of Directors of about a dozen people; and representatives from both the affiliated church and the site owners. Also very active in management is the K9 Committee, the group formed in the 1990s to raise money for landscape maintenance of the 36 acres; it was designated an official organization of the Association in 2007, and has a 500-family membership, a board, grounds committee, and public relations responsibilities.

*The mission of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery is to serve the community as an active burial ground and conserve the physical artifacts, buildings, and infrastructure of the cemetery; to celebrate the American heritage represented by those interred here; restore and sustain the landscape, protect the Anacostia River watershed, and manage the grounds as accessible community resource.*²⁸

Programming

27 Betsy Crosby. "To Hell and Back: The resurrection of Congressional Cemetery." *Preservation: The Magazine of The National Trust for Historic Preservation*, January/February 2012, 30-33.

28 *The Historic Congressional Cemetery*. Web.

While Historic Congressional Cemetery’s programming is not as frequent and active as Mount Auburn and Laurel Hill, the site holds events that address the desires of its audience. There are free weekend guided tours, as well as cell phone tours; large events include days of remembrance and benefit runs. About twice a month, there is a charged event such as wine and cheese lectures and classical music concerts, geared toward networking with potential donors.²⁹

Funding

The aforementioned million-dollar endowment offered by Congress contributes to the cemetery’s ongoing maintenance and restoration costs. Burial business and occasional events are also sources of funding, as is the K9 Corps, which pays for a quarter of annual expenses.³⁰

Community Interaction and Interpretation

Historic Congressional Cemetery is clearly actively involved with the local community, particularly through the K9 Corps and discussions with representatives, and is in fact dependent upon it for a significant portion of its funding. The site puts priority on communicating the burial business and preservation efforts. However, while they provide access to historical document resources for the public, there is not yet significant designed interpretation, marketing, or image for people outside of the existing user community.³¹

Applications

While Historic Congressional Cemetery does not yet have as strong an image

29 *The Historic Congressional Cemetery*. Web.

30 “To Hell and Back.”

31 *The Historic Congressional Cemetery*. Web.

or marketing approach as Mount Auburn or Laurel Hill, the site has firm preservation philosophies and conservation tenets. Similar to The Woodlands, the site has identified a need for numerous masonry repair projects and a reassessment of old water systems. Additionally, the site's land development plan report outlines concrete steps for accomplishing strategic plan goals, most usefully in the form of component drawings.³²

Perhaps the most important lesson The Woodlands can learn from Historic Congressional Cemetery is how to capitalize on users as a source of funding. As this model's history demonstrates, a cemetery cannot rely too heavily on outside sources for funding, particularly not government allocations. At the moment, 60% of The Woodlands income comes from a contested land lease with adjacent University of the Sciences, which will end in 2015; The Woodlands critically needs to create a business plan to diversify its funding.³³

Concluding Summary

From analyzing these comparables, we can distill three key lessons to apply at The Woodlands for a more successful site:

- Transparency and community involvement increases capacity.
- Cultivating endowments and diversifying funding is important to financial sustainability.
- Developing strategies strengthens site identity.

32 "Historic Congressional Cemetery: Opportunities for Growth: Final Report." Association for the Preservation of The Historic Congressional Cemetery. Powerpoint presentation. Web.

33 Baumert, Jessica. Interview by author. Notes. Philadelphia, PA. January 27, 2012.



Chapter Three Stakeholders and Values-Based Planning

To prepare an assessment of the current user base at The Woodlands, I began with a theoretical framework on identification of uses and perspectives, and their application in dialogue and planning. This entails a foundation of values-based planning and methods for its incorporation for user interaction, in order to justify and support my fieldwork of collecting site-specific stakeholder data.

Values methodology of articulating cultural heritage categorizes qualities or characteristics of sites as defined by their societal context, so that historic preservationists may understand how the values embody heritage and how the field can maintain and shape them. While this approach has been demonstrated through different value system typologies for over a century, it has gained currency in the historic preservation field within the past decade because it acknowledges ways of defining and negotiating multiple uses, critical and applicable in today's historic site survival. Values-based preservation also incorporates participatory process as an important tool, advocating that the strongest and most sustainable conservation planning is a result of stakeholder consultation – gathering the data of both inside and outside users, not simply relying on the opinions of a small group of academic experts.¹ The process reframes the key questions, shifting focus from basic concerns such as “the joggers are ruining the lawn” to elucidate larger questions such as “how are users continually creating cultural heritage at this site?”

Values-based planning focuses on a three-part process: identification, descrip-

1 Randall Mason. “Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices,” in *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Marta de la Torre (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002).

Mason, Randall. “Values-based Conservation.” PowerPoint Presentation, Site Management course from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, January 28, 2011.

tion, and integration and prioritization of stakeholder values. The process should use a combination of data-collecting methods and employ strategies of inclusivity, with the goal being more effective conservation planning through responsiveness to needs of stakeholders.²

The first step is to understand who comprises the constituency. I deduced this by designing, gathering, and analyzing three sets of quantitative data through three different forms: existing records, surveys, and polls. I then used that information to focus on qualitative methods of data collection, primarily interviews and dialogue facilitation at organization meetings with the management and the local users. The qualitative data helped illuminate perspectives of community and landscape, matching values to physical site resources and characteristics for future interpretation and programming. I examined the values from these tools to trace patterns, conflicts, and areas of overlap. I did not group the values into existing typologies per se, but rather interpreted the feedback to connect larger trends of import. However, the responses of current stakeholders relate closely to the civic and economic values analyzed in the first chapter on The Woodlands' historical context and evolution.

This experiment in stakeholder analysis strives to strengthen the relationship between preservation and context, and between theory and application, to shed light on how they impact each other. And, while it does not intend to propose a new framework, it does strive to fill the gap in data collection: "We need to know how the values of individuals and communities are constructed with regard to cultural heritage, how these values are represented through an assessment of cultural significance, and how the concept of cultural significance can play out more effectively in conservation policy and practice, through better- negotiated decision making."³

2 "Assessing Values in Conservation Planning" 5-6.

3 Erica Avrami, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre. "Report on Research," in *Values and Heritage Conservation* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000), 10.

The value assessment from the stakeholders, combined with the previous chapters on values in historical narratives and comparable site management models, will contribute to the direction of the final thesis section: recommendations for an interpretive plan for The Woodlands' landscape. The assessment also hopefully will contribute to upcoming strategic master planning for the site.

Quantitative

Visitor Log

To gain an introductory understanding of the visitor base, specifically the geographic locations from which visitors attend The Woodlands, the only existing resource was the visitor log. The log provided contact information, connection to the site (such as a relative buried there or volunteer work), and affiliated organizations that might be interested in collaborating. The log is not a comprehensive record of the visitor base, as it rarely includes organized groups that have scheduled ahead of time, or organizations that come to volunteer. These groups will be accounted for in the projects section. It also does not include visitors who do not enter the mansion office, which will be addressed in a data poll section and interview/correspondence section.

I digitized the visitor log from October 2009 to October 2011. During that time period, there were 328 entries. Of these, 161 indicated geographic location. 103 visitors lived in-state, 60 of whom were from Philadelphia; 53 were from out of state; 4 were from a country other than the United States.⁴

The following organization affiliations were indicated:

- Fairmount Park Houses
- Eastern State Penitentiary
- The Art Institute of Philadelphia
- Soil Baltimore

4 See Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

- Lambda Chi Alpha
- Parent Infant Center
- St. John's
- Green Mountain Studio
- WPEB -- West Philadelphia Educational Broadcasting; 88.1 FM

Thus, individual visitors who had heard of The Woodlands and had initiative to visit without a group were affiliated with another cultural or historic site, a service organization, or a neighborhood institution.

Of the few people who added notes, most had family buried at The Woodlands; thus they were aware that The Woodlands is an active cemetery and that the mansion is open to the public, and had entered the mansion previously for business or genealogy purposes.

On-Site Visitor Survey

In order to draw out more specific and direct user information than that of the log, I designed a visitor survey, which was available to visitors during the summer and fall of 2011.⁵ While all those who entered the mansion were encouraged to fill it out, it was voluntary, and there is a small sampling. Of the people willing to provide additional information in the form of the survey, the following data was gathered from the sample:

75% of the visitors were repeat visitors, and 75% were city residents. Most had either heard of The Woodlands by word of mouth, or had discovered it by happenstance. Topics relevant to The Woodlands that were of most interest were landscape, architecture, and urban history, as well as significant interest in early Philadelphia. Cemetery studies and genealogy scored much lower rankings from this sample group. Potential

5 Appendix B, 3.1.

program of greatest interest were cited as exhibits, walks, lectures, and holiday events.⁶

These findings indicate that the significant majority of visitors are repeat users and local; that information about The Woodlands has to this point been spread by other sources than the site's own advertising; and that the topics and programs of interest are consistent with other historical and cultural sites. However, the data can be interpreted multiple ways. For instance, while it is positive that visitors heard about the site from other visitors, it also suggests that during that time period The Woodlands did not commit to advertising in public written forums such as newspapers, or to creating an appealing and high-functioning website. Additionally, while cemetery history and monument studies was low in interest for this particular sample, that could simply be a result of either preconceptions of the role and image of historic/cultural sites in opposition to that of active burial grounds, or an indication that the nineteenth-century history of the site has been neglected to date in favor of the eighteenth-century history.

On-Site Entrance Poll

The data for a poll was adapted from the on-site visitor survey and was conducted by a historic preservation graduate student from LaSalle University. The poll was conducted just inside the cemetery entrance, on a weekday (which yielded 60 visitors) and a weekend day (which yielded 65 visitors), at a range of times, in fine weather. The following data was gathered:

The vast majority of users were neighborhood residents, who frequented The Woodlands multiple times a week with a primary visiting purpose of recreation, and were enthusiastic to attend potential programs. About half identified themselves as having a basic knowledge of the site's history. During the weekday, peak times of visitation were in the early morning and during lunchtime.⁷

6 See Figures 3.3-3.7.

7 See Figures 3.8-3.18.

While the three approaches to gathering and analyzing quantitative data are not without a significant margin of error, they do include varying sample sizes, were collected by different means, and consistently reveal the same patterns: the majority of visitors are local repeat users.

Qualitative

Recent Successful User Projects/Relationships

In evaluating user trends, it is necessary to identify patterns of successful programs, and to define the parameters of what The Woodlands considers “success.” Successful programs are those that attract a new audience or deepen the relationship with and commitment of an existing audience, and that exhibit the mission of the organization by educating users about the historical significance of the site. Tracing common themes of the successful programs, illuminated by stakeholder feedback, will indicate the best possible subjects for engaging the visiting public.

Reviewing all the public events that have been held at The Woodlands in the past three years, in addition to the scheduled summer tour groups and their specific topics of interest, it becomes clear that there is a recurrence of botanical themes.⁸ Specifically, visitors have been enthusiastic about programs demonstrating the overlap of botanical history, archaeological evidence, and current landscape features and maintenance. These programs have attracted users of fellow horticultural sites, such as Bartram’s Garden, Morris Arboretum, and the Delaware Center for Horticulture. There is great opportunity here for collaboration to expand the user base and to solidify the site’s role in Philadelphia’s horticultural hub.

There are also a few specialized groups from surrounding universities, such as University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University, as well as an annual group from the Masterman School, who come to use this site as a case study for documentation purposes.

⁸ Appendix B, 3.2. Also see Figures 3.19-3.24.

es and to collect or learn to conduct research about Philadelphia. While relationships with these groups are certainly valuable, scholarly methods of heritage programming reach a limited audience.

However, there have been significant collaborations with researchers that provide us with resources for gathering further information about the site, such as plant pathologists from Pennsylvania State University, staff from Poplar Forest, and dendrochronologists from the tri-state area. These collaborations are often mutually beneficial relationships, and should be pursued as a form of the educational mission.

Overall, recent interest in The Woodlands as evidenced by successful programming has highlighted landscape, in a way that is highly researched and probing, yet applicable to gardening hobbyists, and can therefore bring together people of common interests at this National Historic Landscape.

Stakeholder Interviews

The best way to obtain the opinions of what is predominantly a neighborhood constituency was to become familiar with the communities, identify the organizations that had members with investment in The Woodlands, and interview them. I approached the stakeholders in two groups: the first was comprised of representatives from inside the management of the site; the second, of community organizations with site users as members. While each interview and set of correspondence was tailored individually, I began with two basic sets of questions, one for each category of stakeholder.⁹

For the management, my questions centered on the following key issues:

- Site Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement
- Preservation Priorities

9 Appendix B, 3.3.

- Preservation Principles
- Site Vision

For the community users, my questions centered on the following key issues:

- Site Memories and Impressions
- Use and Heritage Values
- Programming Interests

For both groups, I inquired as to what they believed constitutes The Woodlands' role in the neighborhood of West Philadelphia, and what partnerships they deemed possible or beneficial.

Management

The Woodlands is conducted as two entities: The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation and The Woodlands Cemetery Company. Both have non-profit status, and share a board of about twelve people, with a separate chair for each entity. The four chief officers (both presidents, the vice-president, and the secretary-treasurer) form an executive committee for long-term planning, visioning, and strategizing. The executive committee is in constant touch with the Executive Director, who is the only full-time staff person at the site, along with an assistant, student workers, and volunteers. The Executive Director and the Board create five committees in addition to the executive committee, to address operational and policy issues: landscape, cemetery, buildings and monuments, finance, and the newly formed education and outreach. These committees are comprised of board members and long-time participants and volunteers at the site, who have passion and/or expertise in the specified area.

This section considers the insights of nine members of The Woodlands Board,

as well as staff and committee members, regarding the site's model of functioning, and brings to light key problems that need to be addressed in the final section of this thesis. Stakeholder interviews and correspondence addressed four main areas: site strengths and opportunities for improvement; preservation priorities; preservation principles; and site vision.

Site Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

Most management stakeholders cited the simple existence of the resources, and their centuries-old survival, as the site's main strengths. Some of the opinions were tangible and item-specific, such as the mansion and particular monuments.¹⁰ But the majority of opinion cited overall site qualities as strengths, most frequently concentrating on the landscape and its multiple significances as open green space, undeveloped real estate, and wildlife habitat.¹¹ Thus, while individual values, or hotspots of history or memory, could be mapped, the strength of the site is in fact in the way the pieces work together. There were also a couple of opinions that the main strengths were based on current projects that demonstrate re-interpretations of historic use, such as the community garden.¹²

The opportunities for improvement were primarily related to the way in which the resources are being presented, both in the physical condition of the built structures and in the marketing to the audiences and potential audiences.¹³ Currently, the web-

10 Jeffrey Cohen, email message to author, March 14, 2012.

Greg Montanaro, email message to author, March 21, 2012.

Jessica Baumert Interview by author. The Woodlands, March 28, 2012.

James Mundy, Jr., email message to author, March 31, 2012.

11 Joe Shapiro. Interview by author. The Woodlands, March 15, 2012.

Mark Jenson. Interview by author. The Woodlands, March 15, 2012.

Sue Pringle. Interview by author. Telephone. March 28, 2012.

Philip Price, Jr.. Interview by author. Telephone. April 16, 2012.

Jeffrey Cohen, Greg Montanaro, Jessica Baumert.

12 Joe Shapiro, Mark Jenson, Philip Price, Jr.

13 Timothy Long, email message to author, March 20, 2012.

site is barely functional; there is no system or curriculum of education, no agreed-upon narrative interpretation (some of which will be addressed in the final section), and only occasional programs with academic institutions or professional groups who see the raw potential of the site and seek out the site.

As will be demonstrated in the community users section, while locals are familiar with the site for their own uses, they have not to this point felt as though the management of The Woodlands was reaching out to them in a beneficial way. However, with a recent personnel change in the position of Executive Director, there is great potential for management communication to incite change, investment, and vision; as one board member reminded, “people make things happen, not buildings, trees, or graves.”¹⁴

An aspect with which the management identifies significant struggles is finances. Tying into marketing, the site does not bill itself as an active cemetery; in fact, the funding from the business is extremely minimal, with only about twenty interments per year. At the moment, 60% of The Woodlands income comes from a contested land lease with adjacent University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, which will end in 2015; The Woodlands critically needs to create a business plan to diversify its funding.¹⁵

A contributing factor to the financial struggles is the demographic of the board itself. While there are some long-time dedicated members who have participated on the board since its creation, and there are a number of academics affiliated with local universities who are eager and energetic to address the historical narratives of the site, variety of expertise is lacking. Recruitment of experts from the finance world, with experience in and willingness to organize fundraisers, make grant connections, establish rapport with wealthy donors, and create a business strategy would be of enormous benefit

Joe Shapiro, Mark Jenson, Greg Montanaro.

14 James Mundy, Jr.

15 Jessica Baumert. Interview by author. The Woodlands, January 27, 2012.

to The Woodlands.¹⁶

In other words, the potential, or the valuable elements of the site, are all there, and in an integrative way create something more valuable than the individual pieces, as Hamilton originally intended. There is also great opportunity because no drastic decisions or alterations have been made since the Trust's founding fifteen years ago; the stagnancy is, in a way, a clean slate, and is malleable for planning.¹⁷ It is just a matter of thinking of the site in a systematic way, rather than as a collection of pieces, an issue which will be further addressed in the final section.

Preservation Priorities

When questioned, "What is the most important thing to preserve about The Woodlands?," the answers were almost entirely intangibles, referring to the physical only in a dependent way, as a demonstration of the history. All members of management cited landscape interpretation as a priority, in the form of multiple narratives and layers of interpretation, as pertain to the history of the site, the people involved in creating it, and their motives and models.¹⁸ Also important in the landscape interpretation, management said, is acknowledgment of its evolution, and selection of elements that can serve as educational tools. Suggested tools include the award-winning trees, the archaeological site of Hamilton's greenhouse, and documents.

Also critical in the interpretation of landscape was the idea of current care. A caretaker has recently been reinstated; though the position, also called superintendent, has existed at The Woodlands since the formation of the cemetery (some could argue before that, if we consider stewards/gardeners as caretakers), and was especially critical in land management during the nineteenth century, there has not been someone living

16 Sue Pringle.

17 Jessica Baumert. Interview by author. The Woodlands, March 28, 2012.

18 Jeffrey Cohen, Joe Shapiro, Mark Jenson, Timothy Long, Jessica Baumert, Sue Pringle, James Mundy, Jr., Philip Price, Jr.

on the property for the past few years. Though previously, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, the caretaker had almost exclusive responsibility of physical choices to interpret the landscape, the role now entails a gentle maintenance mindset. With the recent incident of vandalism, and the common occurrence of such incidents in cemeteries as a genre of site, the caretaker role has also become a form of security.¹⁹

Preservation Principles

Feedback from management regarding principles that guide decision-making were, at best, generic. Most stakeholders stated that they considered themselves stewards of the site, and that decisions should be made with the long-term in mind and should be supported by research.²⁰ Slightly more philosophical responses stated that preservation should be reversible, small enough in size to have confidence in achieving the goal, sensitive to public use and perception, ecologically sound, and fiscally responsible.²¹ However, there was no indication that the management had ever collectively created a set of tenets that they believe embody the essential features and goals of the site, and against which they test potential scenarios for change at the site. Furthermore, there is frequently difficulty in achieving unified mindsets and interpretations among board members, and thus consensus-building is a current focus.²² As designers specializing in preservation know, after establishing objectives, character defining features, significance, and mission or philosophy, it is critical to establish a set of principles for management guidance. Otherwise, as one committee member stated, the site suffers from multiple personality disorder.²³

19 Mark Jenson.

20 Timothy Long, Greg Montanaro.

21 Mark Jenson, Sue Pringle, Jessica Baumert.

22 James Mundy, Jr.

23 Mark Jenson.

Site Vision

The most recent strategic plan for The Woodlands outlines a vision for the restoration and interpretation of the cemetery, mansion, and arboretum; a host for programs, research, and recreation; and the capacity building and development of management and business.²⁴ While these are certainly appropriate objectives, the steps from previous strategic plans to achieve these goals have not proven fully effective.²⁵ Fortunately, the management has a variety of ideas regarding how they desire the space to be used, by what means, and to what ends. Trends in responses centered on increasing visitor numbers, improving the conditions and functionality of the structures, and developing a financial plan.²⁶

Suggested steps toward higher visitor attendance included increased programming, possibly in the models of arboretums such as Morris Arboretum, or living history sites such as Old Sturbridge Village to tell the history of Philadelphia crafts (including masonry, which was conducted on site for a brief time during the early cemetery era).²⁷ It has the potential to be a destination, as it was in the mid-nineteenth century, due to its location and easy accessibility to public transit. There have also been suggestions to rehabilitate and convert the carriage house into a visitor center²⁸; however, while the separation of business from the primary hardscape would be beneficial to the resource, we must think carefully about that investment. It must be done concurrently with marketing and way-finding signage. The reason most people who enter the grounds do not come to the mansion is because it is on the far side of the grounds, not visible from the entrance, and most people do not know it is there. Of those who do, many do not realize it is open. The carriage house is located right next to the mansion, and would be

24 *Strategic Plan 2009-2011: The Woodlands* (2008).

25 Timothy Long. Jessica Baumert. James Mundy, Jr.

26 Jeffrey Cohen. Greg Montanaro. Jessica Baumert. Jim Mundy.

27 Jessica Baumert, Mark Jenson.

28 Joe Shapiro, Greg Montanaro, Philip Price, Jr.

victim to the same disadvantages as the mansion in being a visitor information hub.

Furthermore, The Woodlands is still rehabilitating the National Historic Landmark mansion in stages and may need to dedicate the funds to the primary structural resource. However, this could be more feasible if, as suggested, the site drew new board members who were prepared to finance such projects, and/or who had the capabilities to design a business plan to fund it. Alternative funding ideas that could bring in smaller amounts of income, yet would be innovative in use and engage the public, would be a pet cemetery and a cutting nursery (which is part of the model at the Mount Auburn model).²⁹

For the most part, the stakeholders are enthusiastic about making the site more visible to users, and encouraging the site's applicability to both the consistent neighborhood constituency and the wider audiences, and balancing the community and national significance.

Community Users

In seeking values-based conservation stakeholder perspectives from the West Philadelphia neighborhood, which as we have seen from quantitative data comprise the vast majority of regular users, I sought contact with two types of organizations: those with activities directly related to The Woodlands, and those that had large numbers of frequent users as members. The five stakeholder groups that were most eager and willing to share opinions and observations about the site are as follows:

- University City Green (UC Green): Founded in 1998, UC Green works to volunteer environmental stewardship in University City and its surrounding communities through partnerships and education. The non-profit has offered landscape maintenance service of hundreds of volunteers to The Woodlands on a

29 Jessica Baumert.

regular basis, multiple times a year, for the past few years. The executive director is a member of The Woodlands landscape committee and a former board member.

- The Woodlands Community Garden and Apiary: Established in 2009, the community garden consists of about fifty members of the West Philadelphia community with a dedication to increasing capacity for local urban food sources and connections to other horticultural organizations in the city. They also volunteer to maintain the space, and the manager is a member of The Woodlands landscape committee.
- University City District (UCD): University City District encourages neighborhood revitalization through addressing crime and public safety, bringing life to commercial corridors, connecting low-income residents to careers, and promoting job growth and innovation. Two of the organization's key objectives are to serve the community and shape public spaces, within the boundaries of the Schuylkill River to the east, 50th Street to the west, Spring Garden Street to the north, and Woodland Avenue to the south. UCD provides basic security and publicity for The Woodlands.
- Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA): The Spruce Hill Community Association is a volunteer organization of neighbors committed to strengthening the Spruce Hill community and to enhancing the quality of neighborhood life for all residents. It represents residents from 38th Street to 46th Street and from Market Street to Woodland Avenue. Established in 1956 and with a board of twenty, the organization is active and creative in community-building efforts. SHCA has numerous members who are regular neighborhood users of The Woodlands. The current President is also the past President of Friends of Clark Park, the small, city-owned, highly utilized neighborhood park a few blocks west of The Wood-

lands.

- Cedar Park Neighbors (CPN): The purpose of CPN is to foster collaboration among all people living and working in the area from 46th Street to 52nd Street and from Larchwood Avenue on the north to Kingsessing Avenue on the south. CPN strives to promote community development, to provide a forum for communication and community education, to respond to neighborhood concerns, and to advocate for and promote the general welfare of the Cedar Park community. CPN has numerous members who are regular users of The Woodlands, and counts among it The Woodlands' Executive Director.

It is worth noting that most of these organizations have collaborated and have overlap of membership; West Philadelphia is a highly interconnected set of communities, with repeating characters and leaders.

Site Impressions and Memories

Invariably, the community stakeholders considered The Woodlands a green oasis, an asset to the area, open to all and safe. It was referred to as an anchor to the neighborhood (in a positive sense), as well as a bridge between institutional and residential areas, and a critical piece of Philadelphia's horticultural corridor.³⁰ They are proud to have this National Historic District as a resource of their community, and cited it as a place they bring visitors from out-of-town, and in some cases where they have chosen as a final resting place.

When asked about level of knowledge of the history of the site, most stakeholders interpreted "history" to mean living history of their neighborhood's interaction with

³⁰ Spruce Hill Community Association Board Meeting. Interview by author. Philadelphia, March 13, 2012.

Seth Budick, University City District. Interview by author. Philadelphia, March 13, 2012.

The Woodlands, and provided a wealth of memories. Most memories were of particular community-organized events that occurred on the site before the formation of the Trust, such as rambunctious holiday celebrations and cocktail parties – social events that reinforced the semi-public nature of the space, but were not necessarily directly relevant to the heritage significance. These events were thought of fondly and stakeholders expressed disappointment that more attention has not been paid to programming since the founding of the Trust. As many of the long-time members of the area are familiar with the management of The Woodlands, recommendations were made that the board be more adventurous, and more representative of West Philadelphia in terms of demographics, user interests, and areas of expertise. There is a clear, strong desire among current users to increase use and participation at the site.³¹

Use and Heritage Values

Stakeholders confirmed the uses of the observation poll, particularly identifying The Woodlands as a space used for jogging, dog-walking, and gardening. However, stakeholders' answers differentiated between how they use the space and what they value about the space. Rather than perceiving it as a facility for their independent or constituent activities, users depicted a much more holistic perspective of what they believe is important about the space. Responses included that they value the wildlife and beauty of the retreat; the history of Philadelphia figures as seen through their burial places; and the evidence of the space as a stronghold and building block of West Philadelphia.³² They cited useful tools for conveying these values as maps and the archaeological dig, and stated that priority should be put on the history of the landscape.

Stakeholders considered “use” different from “value,” and often interpreted “his-

31 SHCA Board Meeting.

32 Erica Smith, The Woodlands Community Garden, email message to author, March 6, 2012.

Monica Allison, Cedar Park Neighbors, email message to author, March 20, 2012.

tory” to be interchangeable with “memory.” And yet, the way that most of the stakeholders use this space, such as with the experimental garden or as a beautiful therapeutic retreat, are very much attuned to the history and intention of the site. The purpose of the space is legible, and many people sense it to be a semi-public space, even without any kind of explanation from management.

It is confirmation to the thesis hypothesized that while there are multiple interest groups utilizing this semi-public space in multiple ways, there are united communities for particular interests (the gardeners, the joggers, etc.); and that there exist connections and overlap between these interest groups. Furthermore, the connections between these multiple user groups has formed a fairly united set of values and vision for how The Woodlands can develop with a conservation mindset and an authenticity to its historic purposes; this has resulted in the design of a community advocating for The Woodlands.

However, this community has not been strongly connected with the management or planning since the formation of the Trust. SHCA board remembered only one instance since 1998 in which The Woodlands’ Executive Director contacted their organization; UCD stated that they had never felt that The Woodlands’ management was interested in active collaboration until recently in fall of 2011. The lack of initiative of The Woodlands’ Trust regarding partnerships with several existing local user groups over the past fifteen years has resulted in ignorance of potential resources and potential users³³.

Similarly, the “the public will come to us” mindset has created a gap in outreach and education about The Woodlands. There is still a large constituency of potential local users and contributors who either are unaware of the site’s existence, or are unaware that the resource is available to them.³⁴ Additionally, there is an untapped opportunity to establish the connection between memories of The Woodlands and history of The

33 SHCA Board Meeting, University City District.

34 Sue Pringle, University City Green. Interview by author. Telephone. March 28, 2012.

Woodlands for visitors – to elucidate the legibility of relationships and use throughout its evolution, and to capitalize on the existing uses to draw in the heritage significance.

Programming Interests

Regarding management initiatives desired by current user groups, most are programs based directly on the value and priority of landscape interpretation described previously. UCD is prepared to collaborate on sustainability ideas, and has to this point supported the Community Garden and trolley food tours, which have made stops at The Woodlands to discuss local plants, their culinary possibilities, and their historical use in Philadelphia. The Community Garden would also have stakeholders interested in information on local botanical history and food foraging, and CPN constituents would be involved in educational programming discussing wildlife at The Woodlands.³⁵

UCD is also currently in the planning process for numerous public space greening projects in the vicinity of The Woodlands, including a pedestrian plaza at 42nd Street and Woodland Avenue, as well as redesign of the 40th Street Trolley portal, which strives to improve safe access to The Woodlands for such events.³⁶ These programs would also need more effective marketing to appeal to a wider audience; a couple of well-attended events can far improve the reputation of and visitation rates to historic sites. Additionally, it is important to remember that these events need to be enjoyable for the users, based on a common interest and relating it to the heritage significance of The Woodlands. Programs should have broader connotation beyond volunteer days.³⁷

Finally, these programs should convey the development of West Philadelphia. The Woodlands is a National Historic District, but it is also of great local significance. It is a site whose heritage belongs to many constituencies, from architecture

35 University City District, The Woodlands Community Garden, Cedar Park Neighbors.

36 University City District.

37 University City Green.

scholars on the other side of the country, to the neighborhood people whose relatives are buried at the site. The local users want to hear the history of The Woodlands as it influenced their own community and formed their home.³⁸

Summary of Findings

While there are some discrepancies in specific policies of how to best address the resources, the stakeholders overall are in agreement on the prioritization of values. The value that surfaced at the forefront, both for the management and for the community users, is inclusion of multiple narratives of The Woodlands' landscape evolution. The stakeholder responses have confirmed the thesis that the history of values on the site has created a need for holistic landscape interpretation, and demonstrated that there is potential and interest in pursuing such a planning project. Furthermore, closer dialogue between the management and the community, and the encouragement of multiple user groups, will solidify repeat visitors from the community and draw in potential users for the ultimate goal of heritage education of The Woodlands' significance – locally, regionally, and nationally. The goal of urban landscape interpretation to build a green community will guide the preservation approach for the site recommendations.

38 Cedar Park Neighbors.



Chapter Four Site Interpretation

Based on the evidence and analysis of history of landscape management values, comparable models, and stakeholder priorities, I conclude that The Woodlands National Historic Landmark, Landscape, and District is not fulfilling its educational mission to the greatest extent. Factors contributing to this limitation are lack of attention to user values and community collaboration, and absence of a cohesive interpretive plan to provoke visitors and convey the palimpsest of narratives present at the site. To solve this problem, this final chapter constructs the framework and recommendations for an interpretive plan for The Woodlands, through a prospectus emphasizing a resource, market, and objective-based planning approach. I posit efforts that will inform and encourage local regular users, strengthen the professional network with fellow organizations, integrate natural and cultural resources, and attract attention of travelers visiting other Philadelphia sites.

In addition to the site-specific problems outlined, this issue merits exploration because it is a case study of the increasing small house museum failure phenomenon, and grassroots efforts needed to ensure sites' sustainability.¹ It is also a unique case because of its grounds, history and business as a cemetery, and recognition as a National Historic District. This prospectus will examine how The Woodlands can improve its chances of thriving in an environment with high competition, by creating an interpretive plan that pivots the story from a stagnant and generic one about a wealthy colonial individual, to a story about public and private land use and how it relates to the local community.

1 Donna Ann Harris. *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007).

Purpose, Place, and Importance of Interpretation at The Woodlands

Expert interpretive planner Lisa Brochu defines interpretive planning as “a communication process that forges intellectual and emotional connections between the interests of the visitor and the meanings inherent to the resource.”² This definition, used by the National Association for Interpretation, is problematic – meanings are not inherent to a resource. Rather, presentation of significance is a highly selective process; heritage is shaped by changing value determinations, as examined in this thesis’ first chapter. However, the concept that Brochu attempts to convey is accurate: interpretation designs “touch points” of discovery and understanding for visitors at a particular site. Interpretation guides people to internalize the importance of place through time, and excites them to participate in that continuum.

Because the survival of historic sites depends upon outside support, and because enthusiasm is roused through interpretation, it is therefore logical that interpretive planning should be a top priority of historic sites. As demonstrated in the stakeholders chapter, The Woodlands’ management is aware of the critical nature of interpretation. Furthermore, the management’s internal agreement that landscape interpretation will grow a stronger community at the site, coupled with similar priorities from outside stakeholder groups, indicates preparation for the development process’ first step: know your audience.³ Familiarity and relationships with visitors is key to a site’s success. However, the current parameters of this step are too narrow; The Woodlands should not only know its audience, but should also pursue research of partners and potential audiences. Values of current prominent community users have been evaluated in the previous sec-

2 Lisa Brochu. *Interpretive Planning: The 5-M Model for Successful Planning Projects* (Fort Collins, CO: interpPress, 2003), 2-3.

3 Stephen Hague and Laura Keim. “How to Plan and Implement Interpretation.” Forthcoming by AltaMira Press. 5.

tion, and a list of potential audiences and collaborators is supplied after the main text.⁴

Yet, in creating an interpretive prospectus, one must consider the site in its geographic and typological context. The Woodlands' environs is daunting in this respect: "In the Philadelphia region, which has more than 275 house museums in five counties, more than 100 are eighteenth-century examples of domestic architecture, and their interpretations are generic."⁵ With so many period-similar house museums in the city, how can The Woodlands distinguish itself? What are the unique aspects of The Woodlands that can be accentuated? What changes can be pursued to uphold relevance to a broader audience such that it ensures that it is not only economically viable, but competitive – that as the popularity of the house museum genre lessens with each generation, that The Woodlands is still a destination?

The following prospectus addresses these basic concerns through five focused components of Interpretive planning, in weights appropriate to the needs of the site project: management, markets, message, mechanics, and media. Three of these – management, markets, and message – have been analyzed in previous sections, and will be applied to the prospectus more heavily.⁶ Ultimately, this prospectus pushes The Woodlands to shift from a collections-centered approach to an audience-centered approach, the interpretation of which is crucial for the site to flourish.⁷

Interpretive Prospectus

An interpretive prospectus intends to present development concepts; to propose a planning process and possible outcomes. It is a summary document created to gain support for a more detailed plan, and is frequently conducted by a single individual (un-

4 See Appendix B, 4.1.

5 Harris 9.

6 Brochu 63.

7 Hague and Keim 4; Harris 9.

like a plan, which entails a committee).⁸ I have identified the following parameters for this product:

- Assess existing interpretive materials
- Summarize the site's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Determine interpretive approach and model
- Design message and theme statements
- Summarize interpretive goals, objectives, and potential strategies
- Propose marketing and funding recommendations

Assess existing interpretive materials

Current interpretive materials include:

- Two interpretive panels on site, dense with text and not designed to attract visitor attention. One panel is positioned at the entrance and gives a landscape history overview. The second panel is located at the opposite end of the site, next to the carriage house, and gives a history of the buildings. Both panels are heavily weighted toward the eighteenth century.
- A historical marker from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, which is located on the sidewalk outside the front entrance and provides a brief history of William Hamilton.
- Pamphlets depicting a basic cemetery map, notable trees, and mansion architectural significance. These materials are located only in the mansion, which receives less than 10% of site visitors.
- A newspaper detailing important historical Philadelphia figures buried at The Woodlands. This material is located only in the mansion, which receives less than 10% of site visitors.

8 Brochu 7.

- A small display of images from William Birch's engravings of The Woodlands, as well as photographs and a small sculptural model of the mansion from the Historic American Buildings Survey. These materials are located only in the mansion, which receives less than 10% of site visitors.

As of the spring of 2012, a few volunteers have been provided with documentation about the site, with the hopes of forming a docent network. Currently, tours are provided by the small staff, primarily on an ad hoc basis. This prospectus aims to contribute not only to the potential interpreters' sources of information, but to their construction of heritage message and storyline, in a way that feels approachable to the average visitor.

Summarize the site's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

Analysis of the problems and potential present at The Woodlands was conducted in the previous section regarding stakeholders. By reviewing the data, we highlight the critical points to apply to the interpretive goals.

- **Strengths:** Qualities emphasizing the integrated and holistic nature of the site, concentrating on the landscape and its multiple values as open green space, undeveloped real estate, and wildlife habitat. The rich sources of material fabric and the initiative of the staff were also cited as critical to The Woodlands' operation.
- **Weaknesses:** Inadequate marketing and presentation of resources, limiting the audience base. Additionally, it is difficult to obtain the funds and work power to maintain the physical structures, including the 20,000 grave markers.

- Opportunities: A wealth of local organizations for potential collaboration and programming, a neighborhood of people who use the space on a regular basis and volunteer to assist with upkeep, and increased user participation in planning.
- Threats: Primary concerns regarding financial sustainability from the cemetery business and board connections and contributions. There is also apprehension surrounding the lack of variety of expertise and fresh perspectives on the board, which reminds us that “the continuing vitality of house museums is directly related to board succession planning.”⁹

Determine interpretive approach and model

According to the Brochu model of interpretive planning, there are six potential approaches to use as tools: market-based, resource-based, budget-based, objective-based, agency-oriented, and operations-based planning.¹⁰ Thus far, planning at The Woodlands has been operations-based – i.e. creating solutions for immediate needs and utilizing creativity to make funds reach needs in an ad hoc manner. I have chosen to combine the three approaches that are more appropriate to the case study of The Woodlands, by expanding upon resource-based planning and integrating it with market-based planning (for which the stakeholder analysis has provided the basis). In combining these two approaches, the recommendations will put the identified heritage and the values of the users as the central motivations. I also incorporate objective-based planning to attain the Trust’s mission and vision.

The research of interpretation strategies at the three comparables elaborated in the second chapter provides useful initial models. However, in designing an interpretive plan, it is necessary to have a document stating the process for best practices, and their

9 Harris 13.

10 Brochu 15-20.

application to a house museum with grounds, as a reference point. The interpretive plan for Stenton – a fellow eighteenth-century Philadelphia estate that includes historic structures and grounds in its collections – demonstrates relationships between topics, stories, objects, and historical figures.¹¹ The site is by no means a direct comparison, as The Woodlands desires to interpret multiple periods of significance with a focus on the entire landscape, whereas Stenton emphasizes a single period of significance and interpretation of an interiors collection. It is nonetheless an effective framework for involving the community, partnering with other sites, and conveying multiple narratives. In a further stage of interpretive planning that elaborates upon this prospectus' recommendations for themes, goals, etc., the Stenton interpretive plan provides an imitable framework.

Design Message and Theme Statements

The message of a site is the intersection of resource stories, management desires, and visitor interest.¹² From the message, themes (or guiding principles for the site's interpretation) can be developed. Finally, the themes are demonstrated in storylines or narratives.¹³ For the purposes of the prospectus, there will not be an in-depth analysis of narrative formation; however, a sample narrative can be found in the appendix.¹⁴

The site's message is created by analyzing the values, significance, and mission statement. The previous sections have examined the values and priorities at The Woodlands, both historically and currently, and have illuminated the importance of landscape as an overarching lens to access the site's heritage resources.

 In the Historic American Landscape Survey for The Woodlands, the significance

11 Stenton. *The Interpretive Plan*.

12 Brochu 93.

13 Brochu 100-105.

14 See Appendix B, 4.2.

pivots on the site as:

- New World model of contemporary English landscape techniques and early Federal architectural design
- Rural cemetery model that served civic needs of Philadelphia and was a proto-type for Fairmount Park

Yet, currently, there is nothing in the message about how current visitors are participants in the story, or even how the story extends into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Organizations and activities such as the community garden indicate an appropriate re-interpretation of historical land use.

Additionally, the current significance does not explicitly state that The Woodlands, similar to other house museums with the National Historic Landmark designation, has multiple geographic and audience spheres of importance. The Woodlands is a heritage asset to the country, but also to the city of Philadelphia and to the neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The message should account for the sense of community ownership in respect to the landscape, and the semi-public nature of the space, which is at the core of the significance of The Woodlands.

Therefore, the following significance should be incorporated into the message:

- Contemporary neighborhood identification with nationally important space

To form a comprehensive message, we must consider the significance as it interacts with the mission, or the statement of management priorities. As previously discussed, The Woodlands Trust's mission is "to preserve, enhance and interpret its nationally significant cultural landscape, historic buildings, and cemetery, and to make

them available to the public as vital educational, environmental, and civic resources.”¹⁵ Management is placing priority on the site as holistic and integrated, rather than a series of collections; and placing priority on the public nature and use of The Woodlands, on the intention of civic duty.

Based on the key concepts and words of the significance and mission, an appropriate and encompassing message or central theme for the site would be:

- The Woodlands National Historic District is an evolving holistic landscape design that has served as a model of civic awareness and continues to serve as a cultural resource to the local and national public.

From the central message, the message can then be conveyed through sub-themes. Subthemes demonstrate three to five focused examples of the message, and can be fine-tuned into detailed narratives, connecting the material resource, information, and visitors. Subthemes for The Woodlands’ central theme could include:

- Urban Green Space: Though there have been risks to the site’s well-being during its history, The Woodlands has maintained an urban green space throughout the development of West Philadelphia.
- Activating Our Resources: By pursuing respectful adaptive reuse of the site’s collections, The Woodlands encourages experiment in cultural resource re-interpretation.
- Collective Responsibility: As a private estate converted to a semi-public space, The Woodlands is committed to mutually beneficial relationships with users for the best treatment of the site.

15 Vicki W. Kramer. *Strategic Plan for The Woodlands* (2004).

Summarize interpretive goals, objectives, and potential strategies

Using the message and central theme formulated above, as well as the SWOT analysis, we can form goals (the purpose of the interpretation to support the site's mission), objectives (ways of measuring those goals), and strategies (steps toward accomplishing the objectives).¹⁶

Interpretation can be prioritized with multiple goals for The Woodlands. These include:

- Inform and encourage reliable local users to be stewards
- Strengthen the professional network with fellow organizations
- Attract attention of travelers visiting other Philadelphia sites

Based on these goals and on the stakeholder self-identified heritage awareness from the previous chapter, the objectives could include:

- 20% of visitors will be non-repeat users.
- 25% of visitors will cite historical interest as a reason for visitation.
- 75% of visitors will be able to convey the central message.

To accomplish these objectives, each must have at least one strategy, such as:

- 20% of visitors will be non-repeat users.
 - Design programs that reach new desired audiences
 - Collaborate with potentially interested organizations
- 25% of visitors will cite historical interest as a reason for visitation.
 - Advertise site in wide-spread preservation and cemetery publications
 - Collaborate with fellow historic sites and societies

16 Brochu 70-74, 130-132.

- 75% of visitors will be able to convey the central message.
 - Place brochures and/or interpreter at entrance gate
 - Improve signage to be more message-focused and interactive

In an interpretive plan, strategies are further developed into best practices for most effective methods and presentation.

Marketing and funding recommendations

Social value, historical value, and educational value are key to the Trust's mission and is an area of overlap and agreement among stakeholders; however, the difficulty, as stated in a historical context in the first section and repeated throughout, is to balance these public-minded values with economic value, which is necessary for the site's survival. The management has stated a desire for the site to be financially self-sufficient. While economic feasibility analysis is not within the purview of an interpretive prospectus, a prospectus' purpose is to interest potential funders. As such, recommendations for proceeding steps are appropriate.

With the understanding that The Woodlands Trust and Cemetery Company wish to keep full ownership and operational rights of the property, and to expand the site's reputation, inclusivity, and audience, success for marketing and funding relies on cultivating relationships with users. As outlined in the strategies, advertisement in select preservation publications can inform out-of-town visitors of the national significance of the site. Investment and representation of the site in professional organizations and at conferences would also increase widespread awareness of The Woodlands. Establishing connections with the fellow rural cemeteries utilized as comparables, as well as other historic sites with similar missions outside of the Philadelphia area, would strengthen the site's sustainability.

On a more immediate scale, simple and inexpensive collaborative programming can attract fresh interest and is the most effective way to spread word of the site within the neighborhood and city. Brochures conveying the significance of the resource should be placed in gathering areas, particularly at other local historic sites. Public forums to hear stakeholder opinions can increase commitment and dedication of users.

Over the long term, these relationships can bear bequests and endowments, which have thus far been lacking in the income breakdown for The Woodlands due to limited engagement with the breadth of stakeholders. An interpretive plan could elaborate upon and formalize the framework to draw higher visitor interest in heritage, which would increase income from users and relieve some of the financial dependency on grants and land leases.



Concluding Thoughts

The Woodlands National Historic District is an evolving holistic landscape design that has served as a model of civic awareness and continues to serve as a cultural resource to the local and national public. But as Donna Harris remarks, a historic site is a dead artifact without interpretation.¹ The Woodlands has access to all the resources that can help it reach its full potential in connecting to wider audiences – natural and human-made material fabric that legibly conveys history; a strong foundation of multiple significances, values, and uses; and an active and committed neighborhood base and staff.

To move forward in assuring the sustainability of The Woodlands, the management must focus on cultivating relationships. While many historic sites can claim to be inhibited by a lack of funds, money can never be used as a substitute for personal interactions and passion about the subject matter. Furthermore, interpretation makes possible site experiences that elicit enthusiasm, dedication, and financing from users. The visitors then remember the site as an example of something special, the news of which they then spread, garnering the site a wider reputation. The success of a site starts with and is dependent upon the relationships cultivated by the management, the ultimate stewards.

This thesis has provided guidelines for how the above vision can be achieved, and can continue to grow. And while we must remember that all large-scale, long-term planning for The Woodlands is, like the landscape itself, an experiment – we will never know what great changes it can bring if we do not galvanize the goals to aim for higher than the status quo.

1 Harris 9.



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1300 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

- Philadelphia Cemeteries Collection
- Philadelphia Cemetery Histories Collection
- The Woodlands Cemetery Company Collection

The Woodlands Cemetery Company and Trust for Historic Preservation
4000 Woodland Avenue
Philadelphia, PA. 19104



Introduction



Figure 0.1: 40th Street Trolley Portal



Figure 0.2: Entrance Gate



Figure 0.3: Entrance Sign



Figure 0.4: Interpretation

Chapter One



Figure 1.1: The Woodlands. William Birch. c.1809. HSP.



Figure 1.2: The Woodlands, the Seat of William Hamilton, Esquire. William Groombridge. 1793. Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Preston Morton Collection.



Figure 1.3: Woodlands, the seat of W. Hamilton Esqr. J. P. Malcom. 1792. Dietrich American Collection.

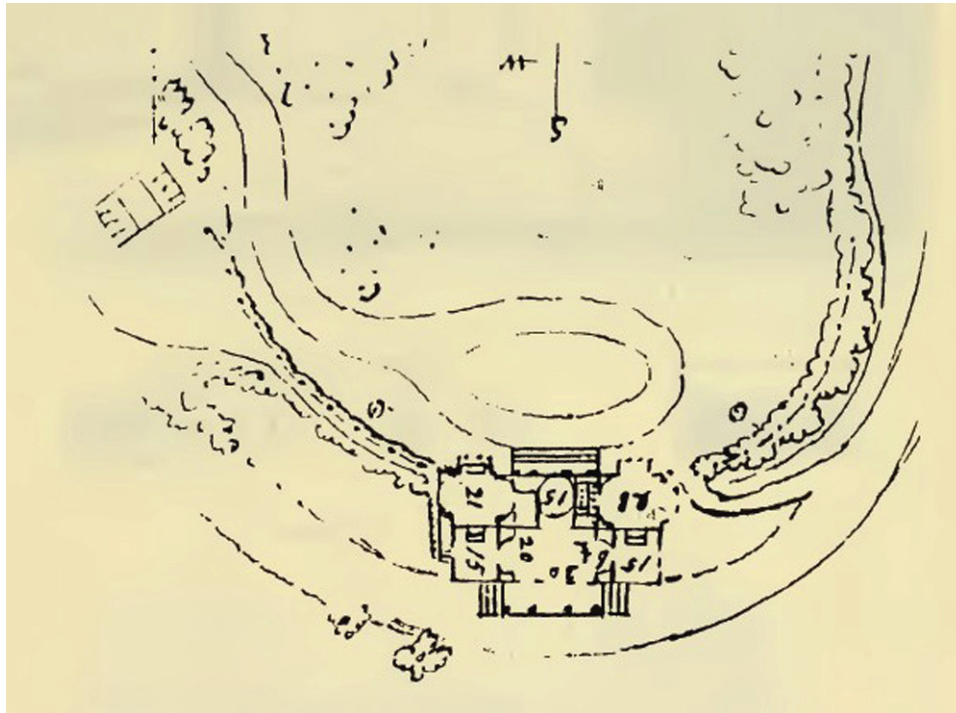


Figure 1.4: Aerial Sketch of the Hamilton Estates. Drayton's Diary. 1806. Drayton Hall Collection, Charleston, SC.

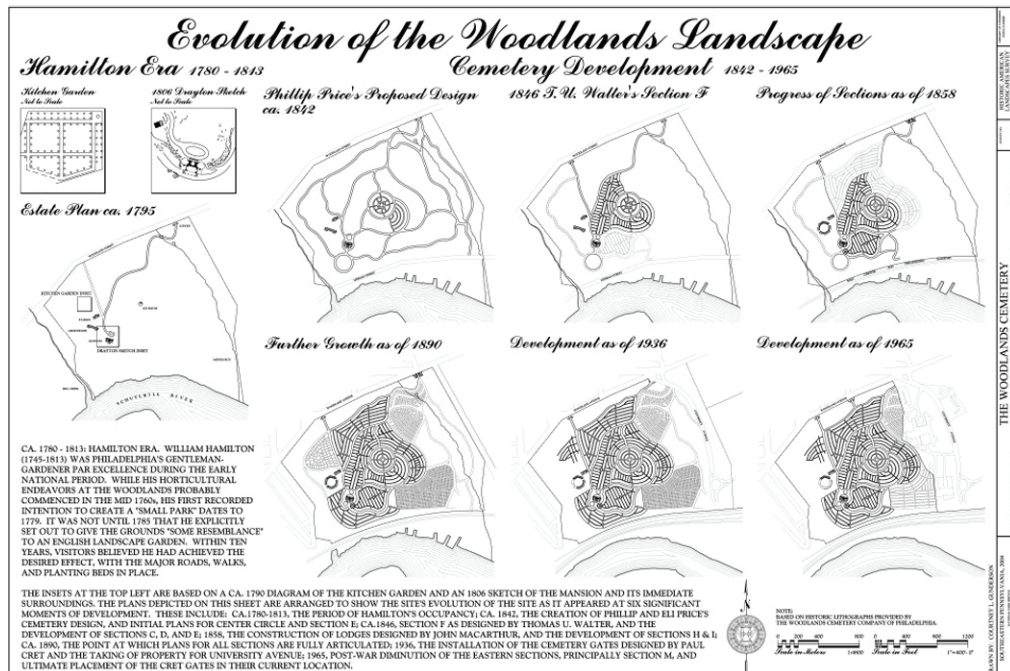


Figure 1.5: Wunsch, Aaron V. "The Woodlands Cemetery Company." HALS PA-2 (2004).



Figure 1.6: Wood lands Cemetery, Main Entrance. c.1860. HSP.

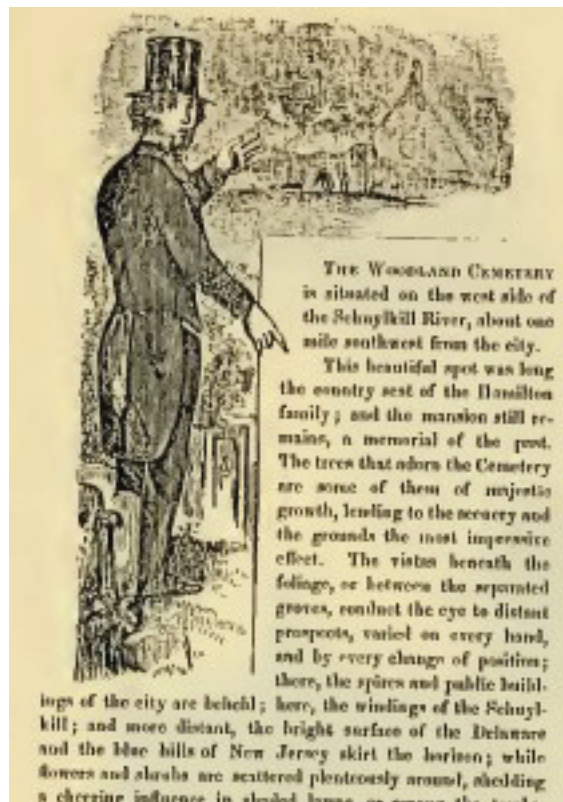


Figure 1.7: Woodland Cemetery. c.1855. HSP.



Figure 1.8: Joseph Elliot, supporting documentation for Aaron V. Wunsch, "The Woodlands Cemetery Company." HALS PA-2 (2004).

Chapter Three

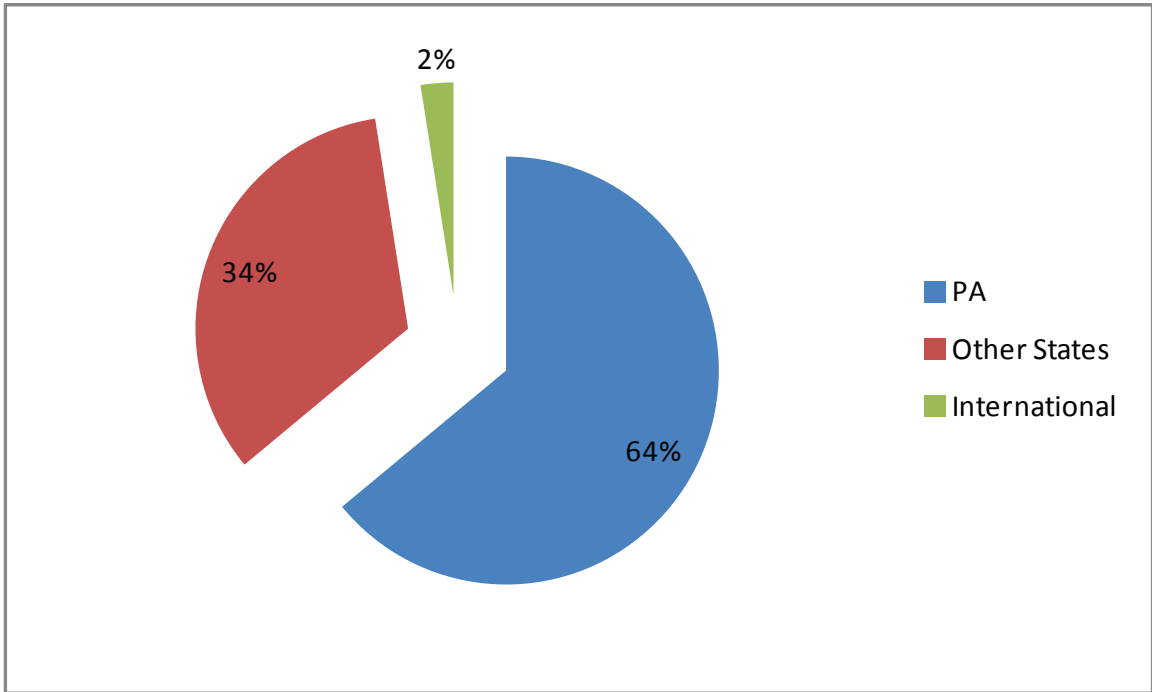


Figure 3.1: Visitor Log – Nation and State Residency

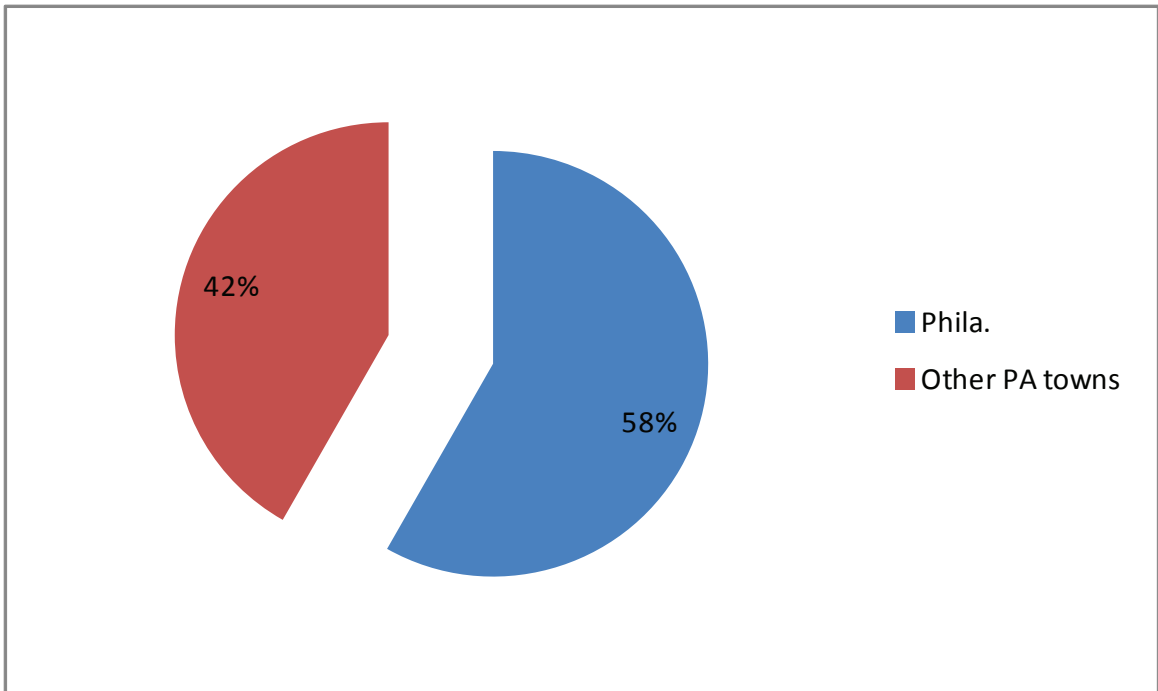


Figure 3.2: Visitor Log – Pennsylvania City Residency

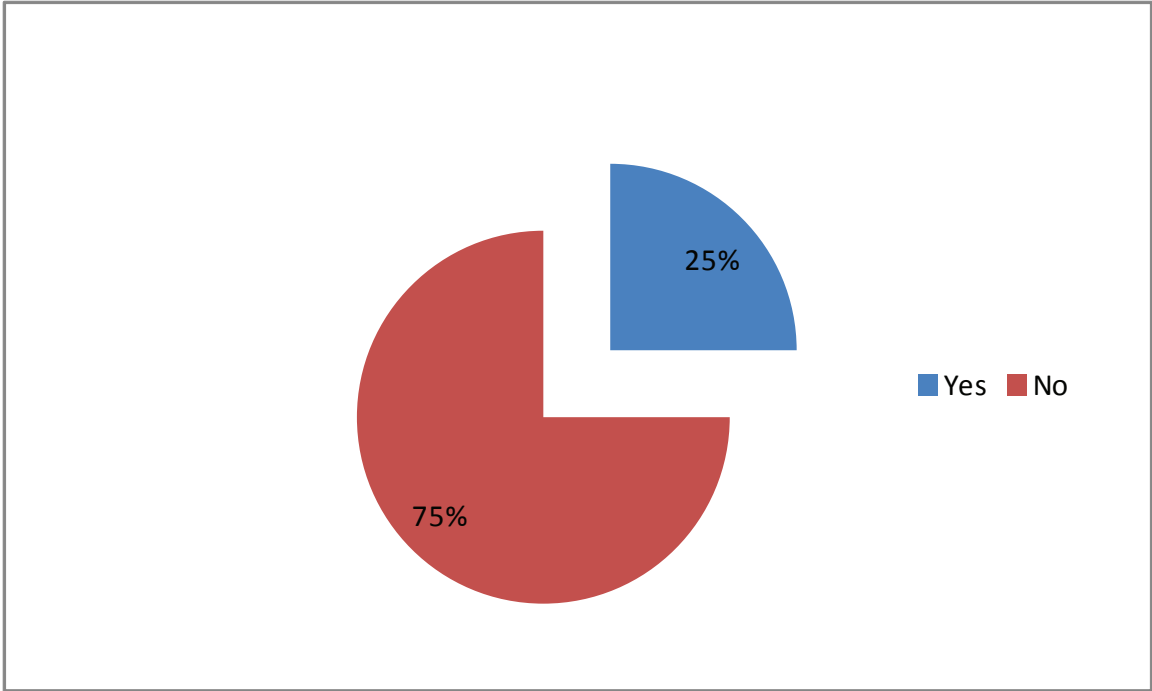


Figure 3.3: Survey – First-time Visitors

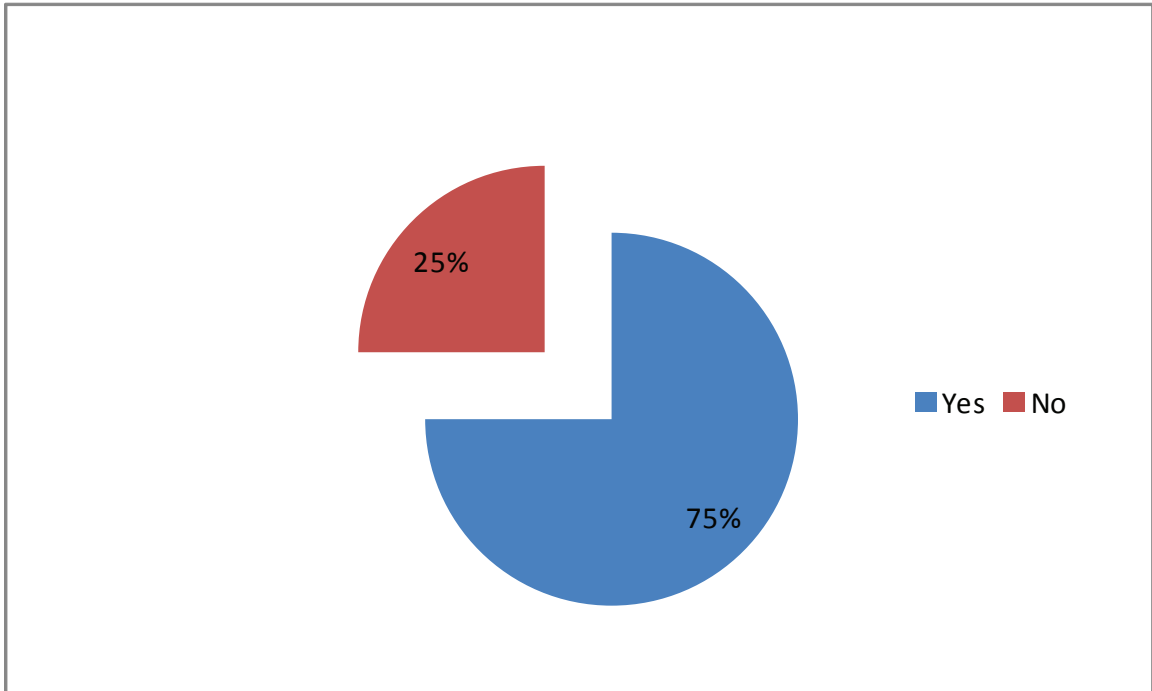


Figure 3.4: Survey – Philadelphia Residents

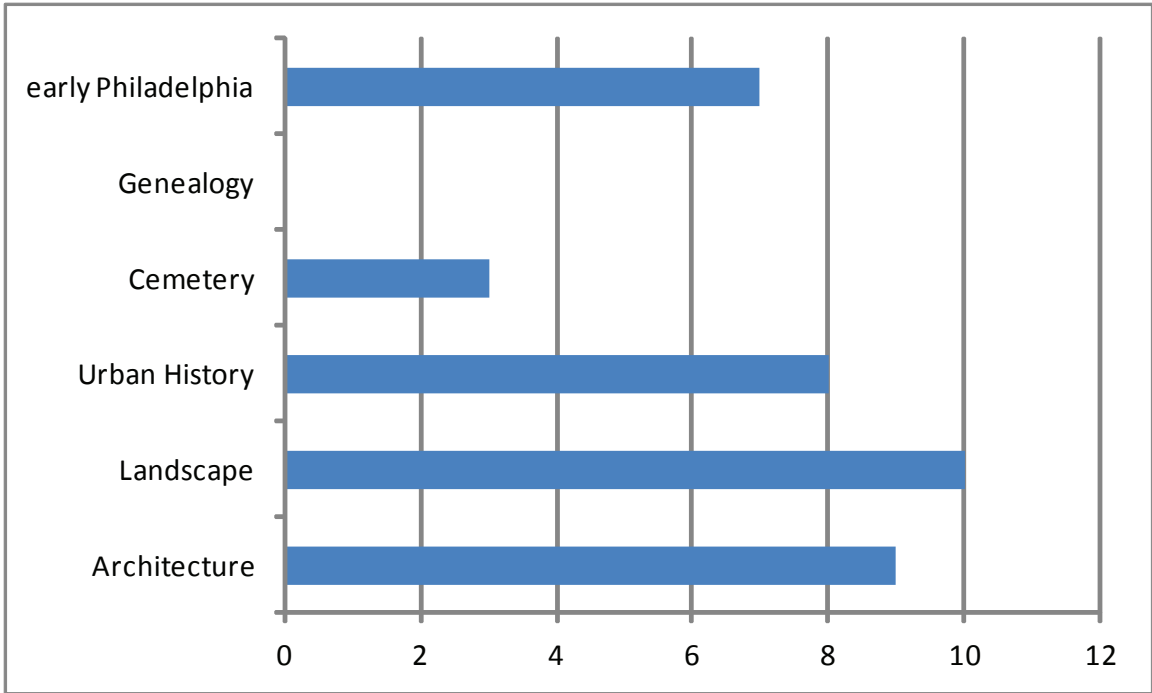


Figure 3.5: Survey – Topics of Interest

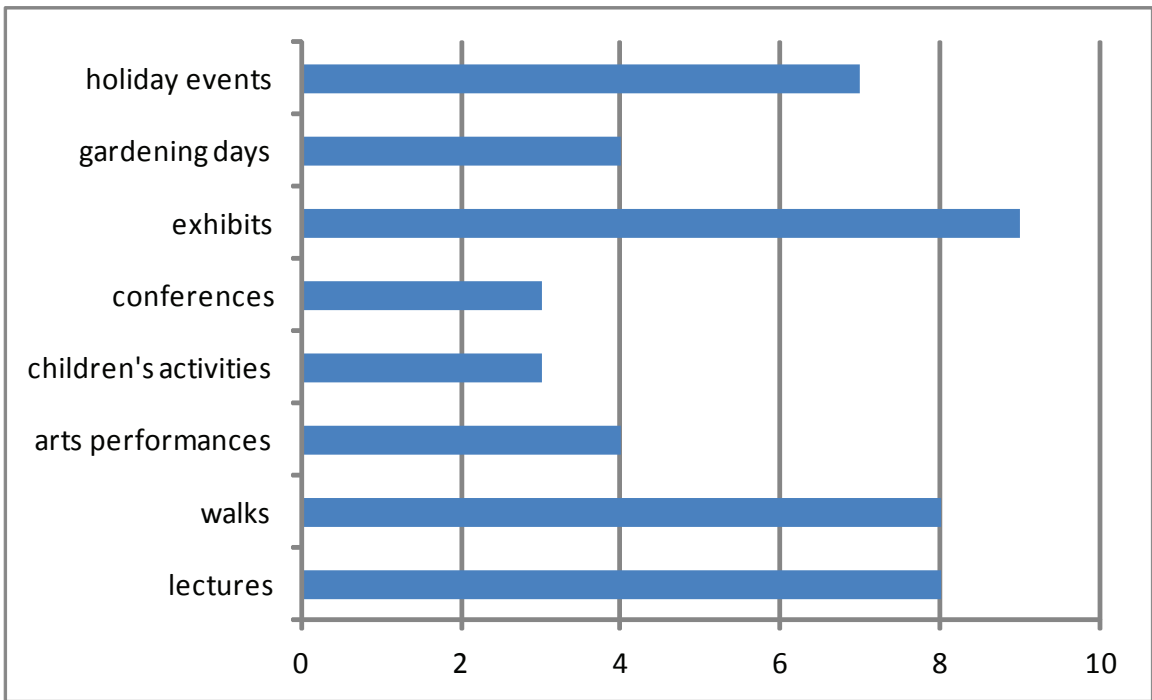


Figure 3.6: Survey – Programs of Interest

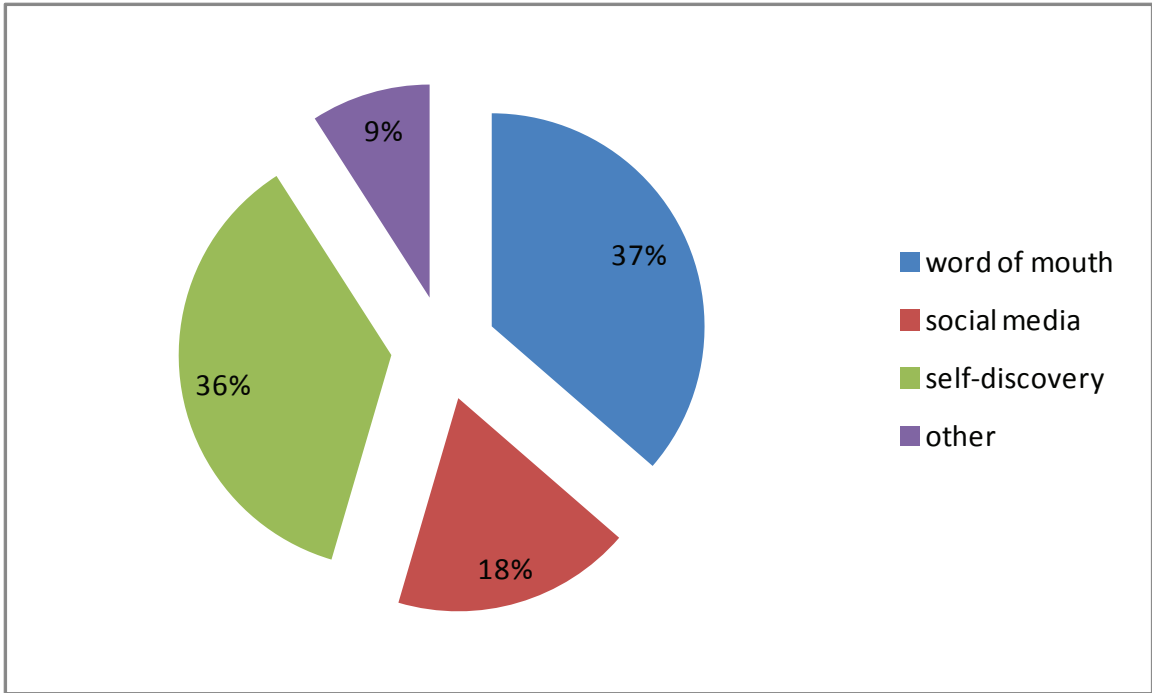


Figure 3.7: Survey – Source of Site Knowledge

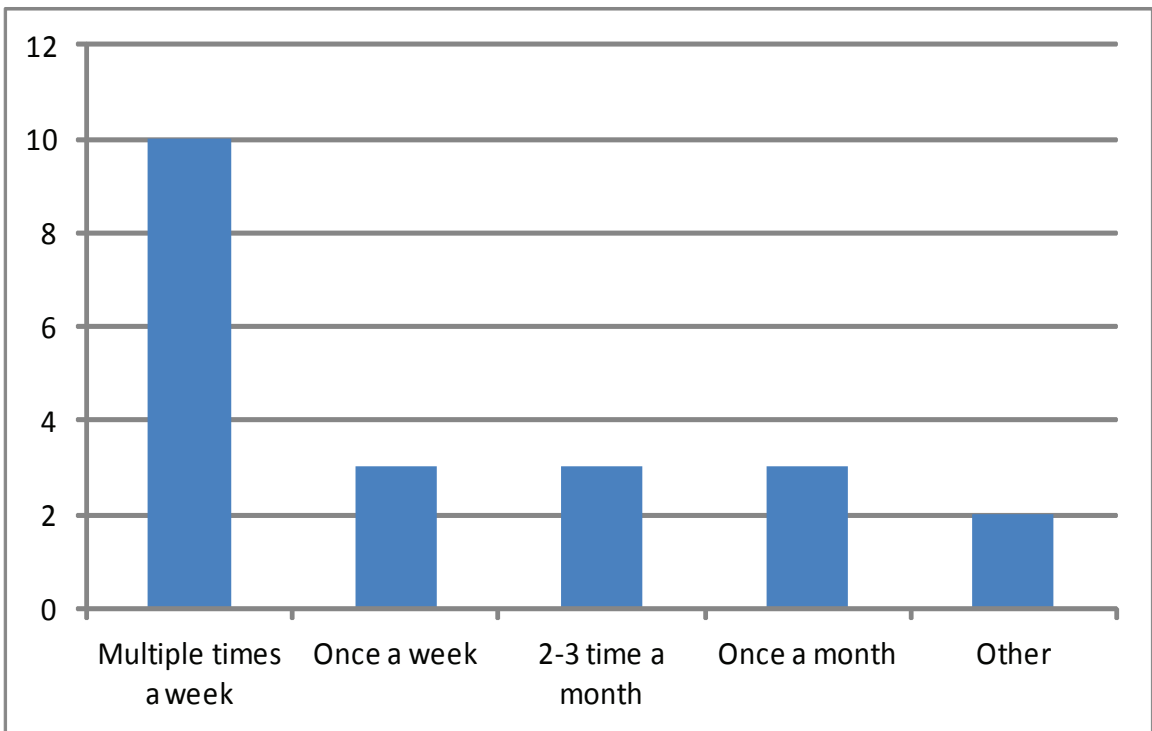


Figure 3.8: Poll (Sat. Sept. 17, 2011) – Visitor Frequency

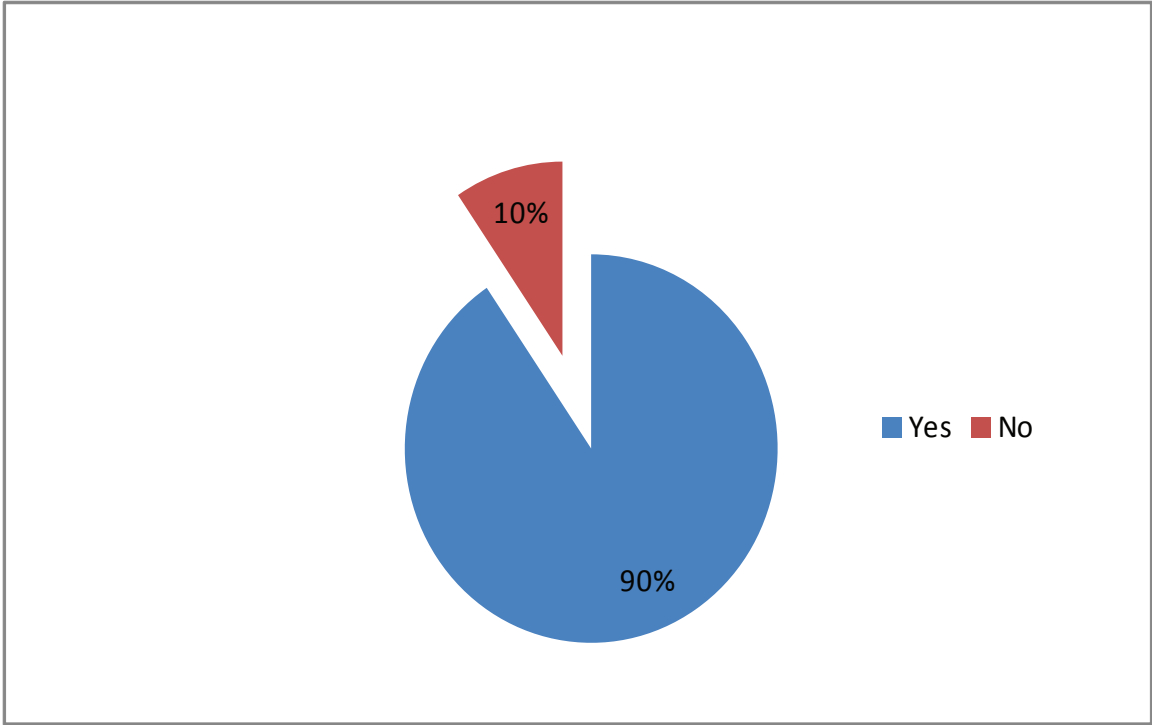


Figure 3.9: Poll (Sat. Sept. 17, 2011) – Neighborhood Residency

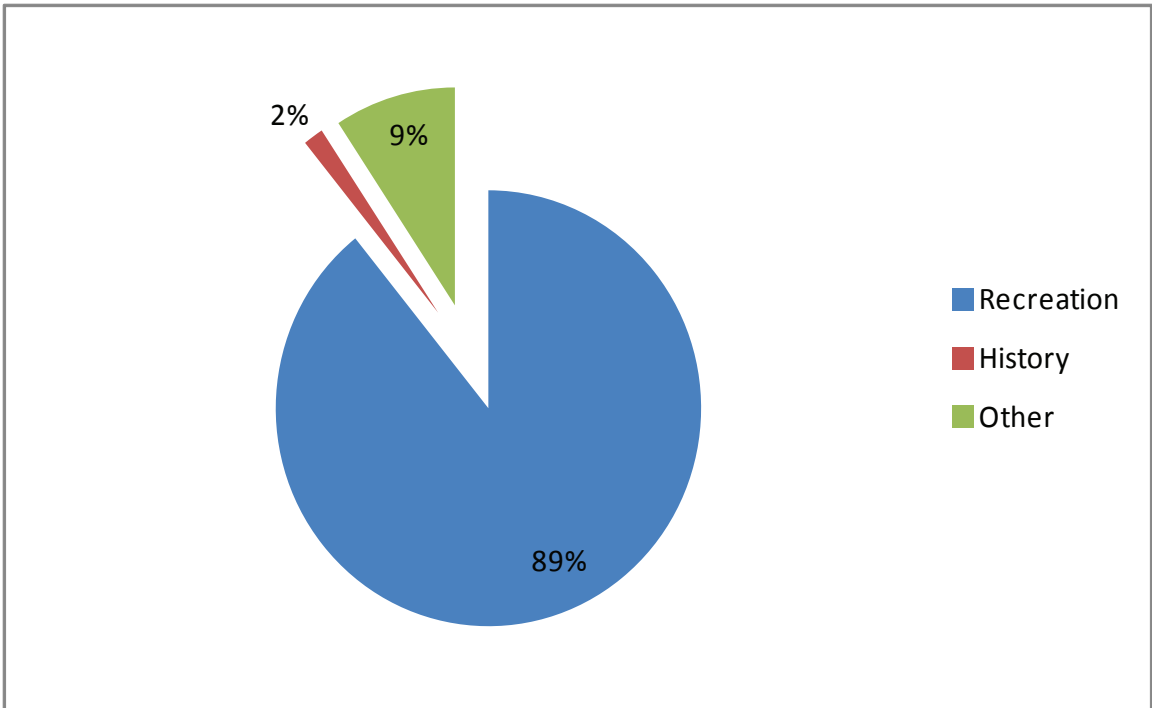


Figure 3.10: Poll (Sat. Sept. 17, 2011) – Primary Reason for Visitation

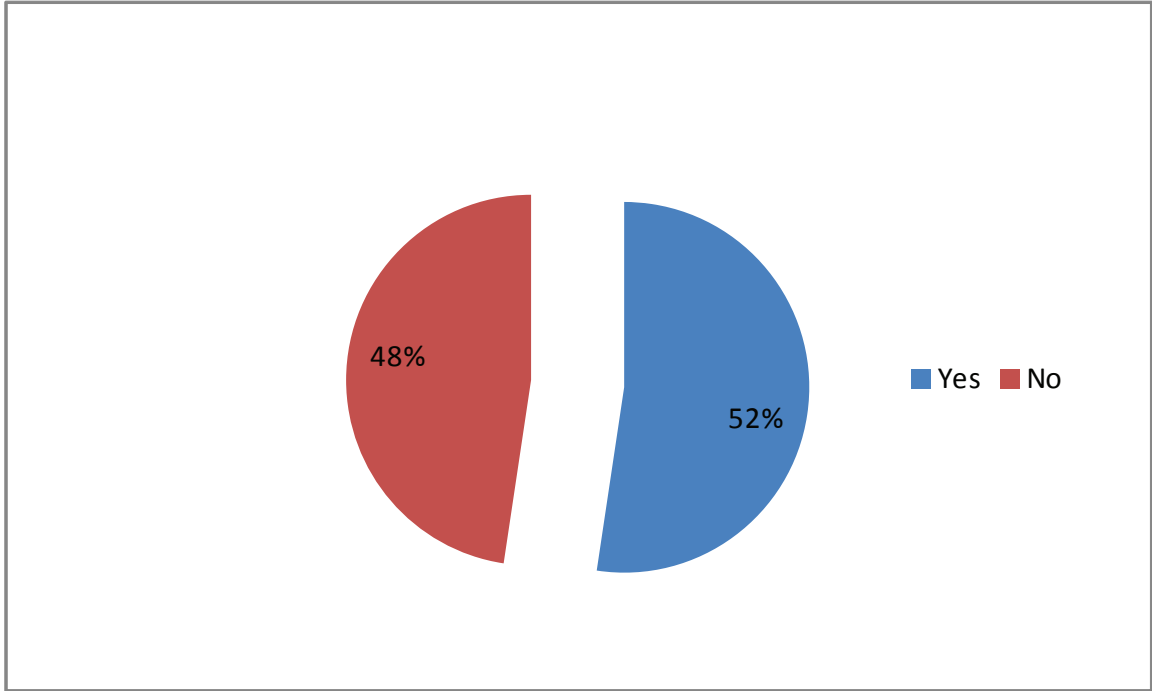


Figure 3.11: Poll (Sat. Sept. 17, 2011) – Visitor Self-Identified Knowledge of Site History

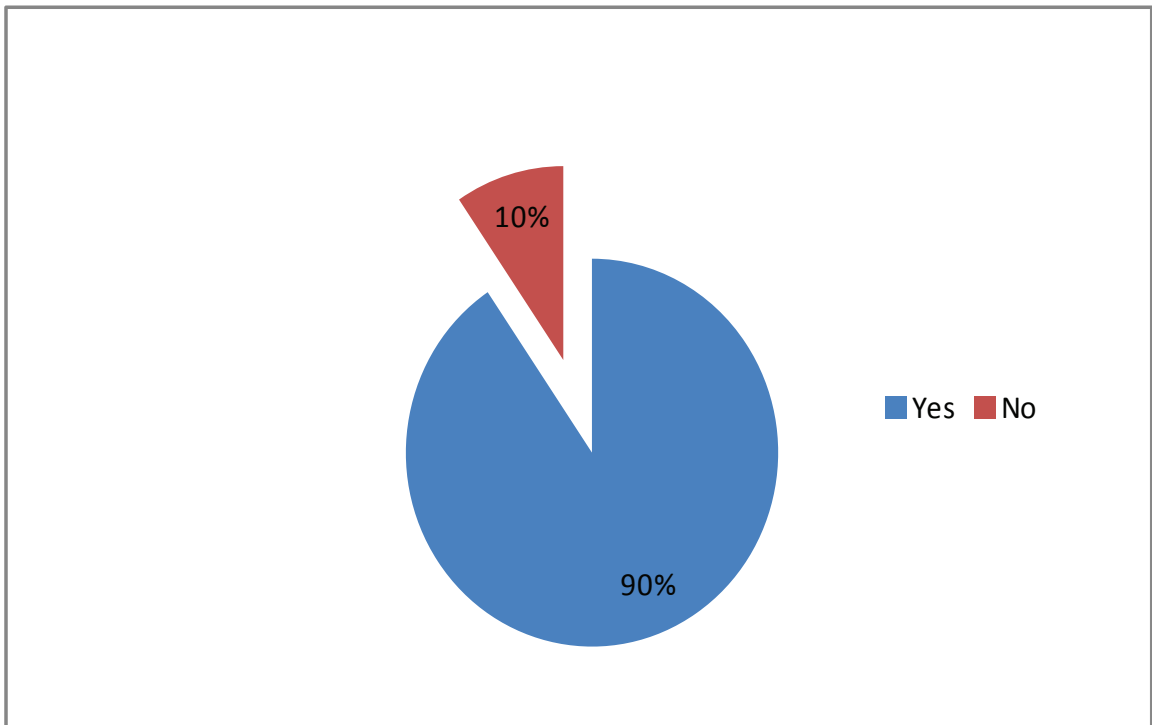


Figure 3.12: Poll (Sat. Sept. 17, 2011) – Interest in Programs

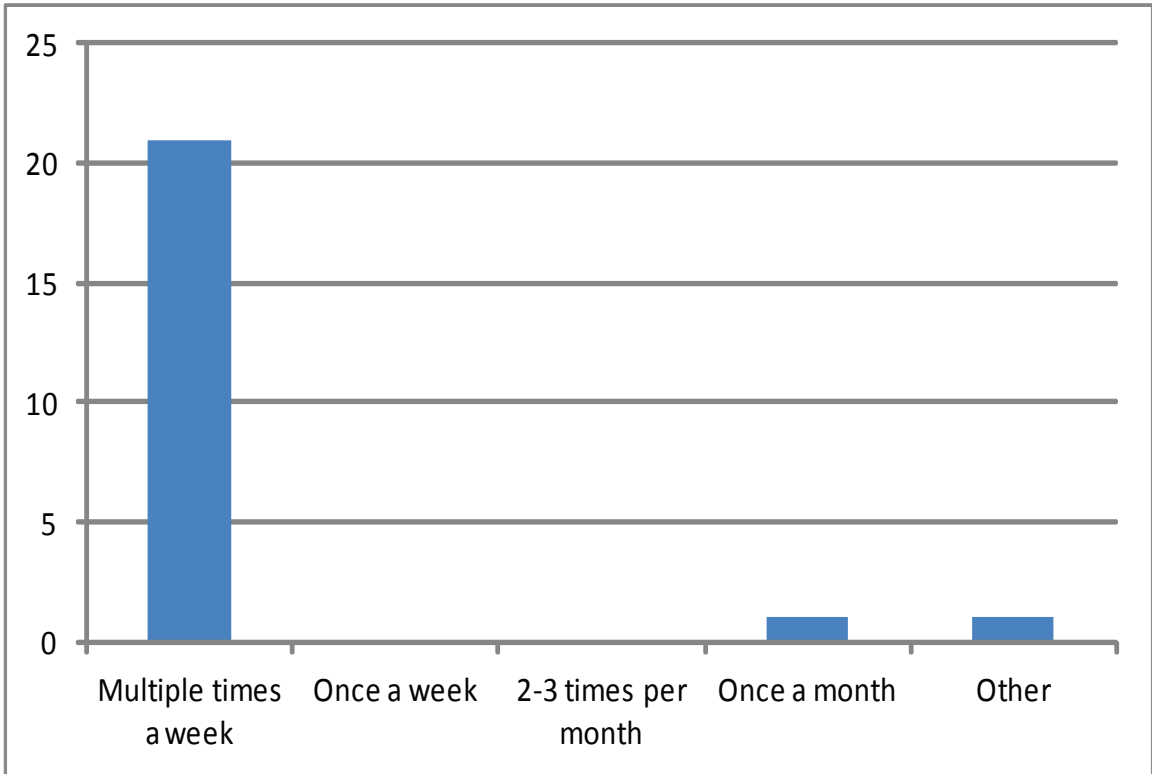


Figure 3.13: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Visitor Frequency

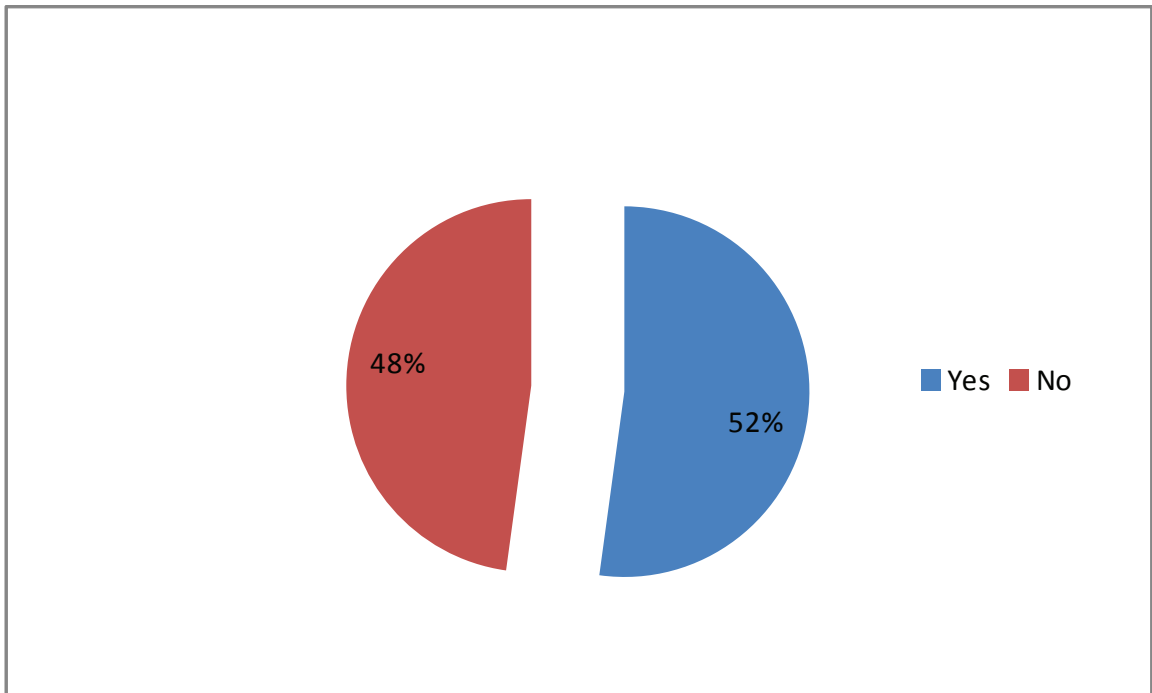


Figure 3.14: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Neighborhood Residency

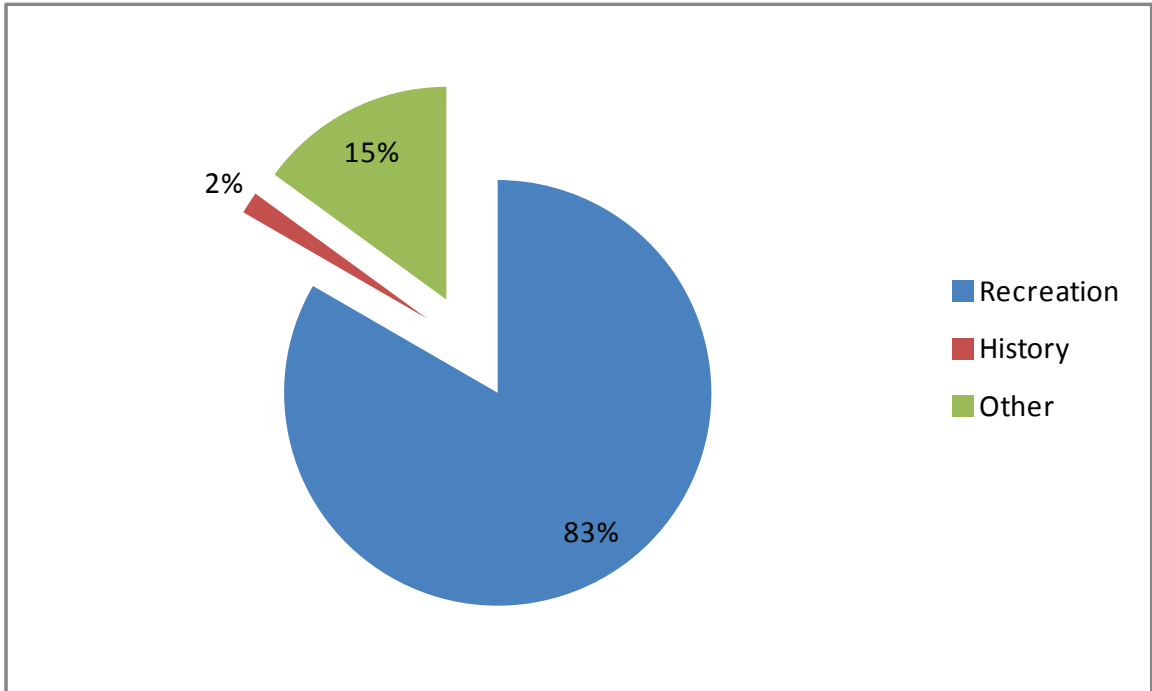


Figure 3.15: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Primary Reason for Visitation

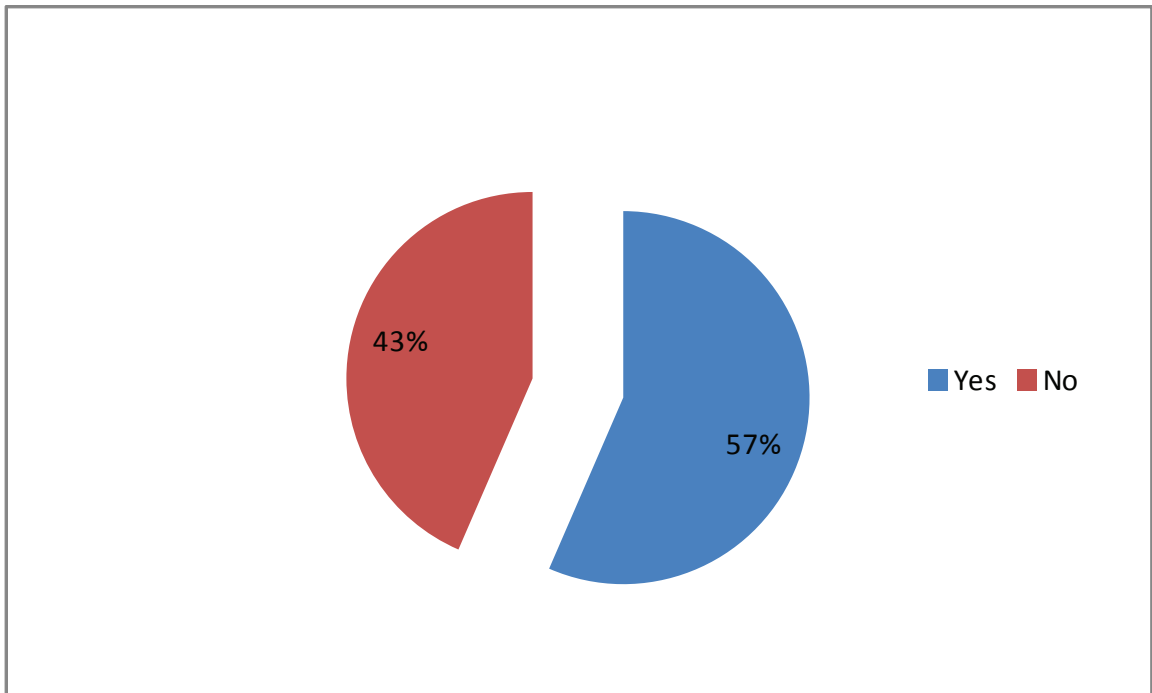


Figure 3.16: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Visitor Self-Identified Knowledge of Site History

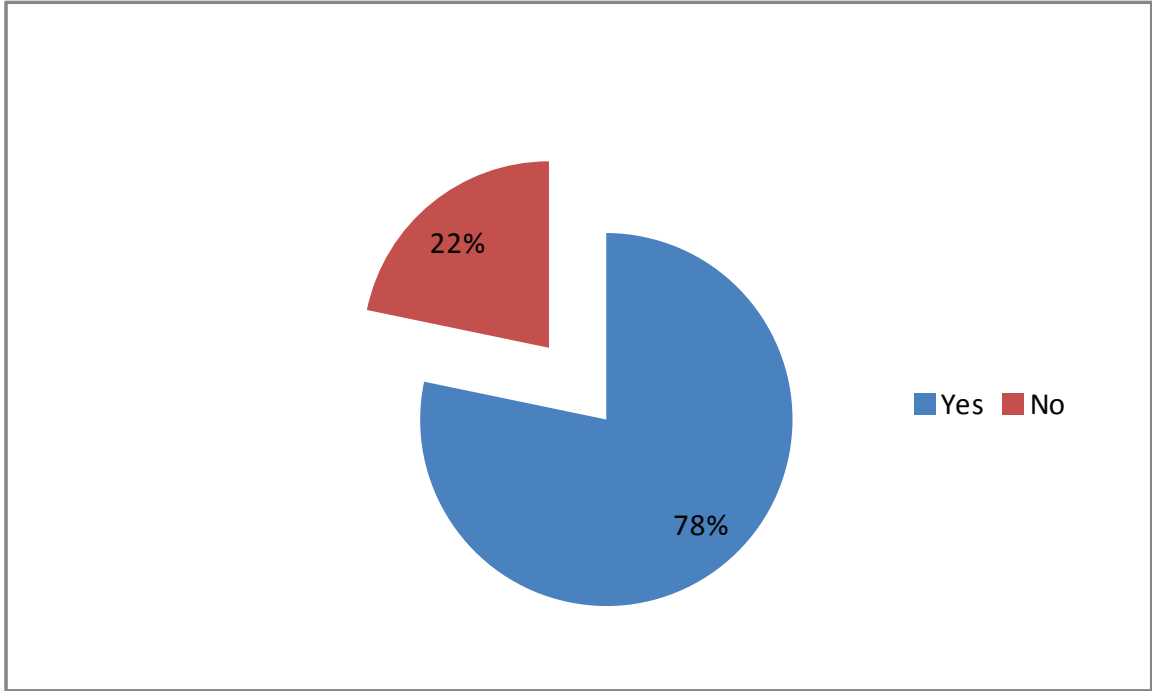


Figure 3.17: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Interest in Programs

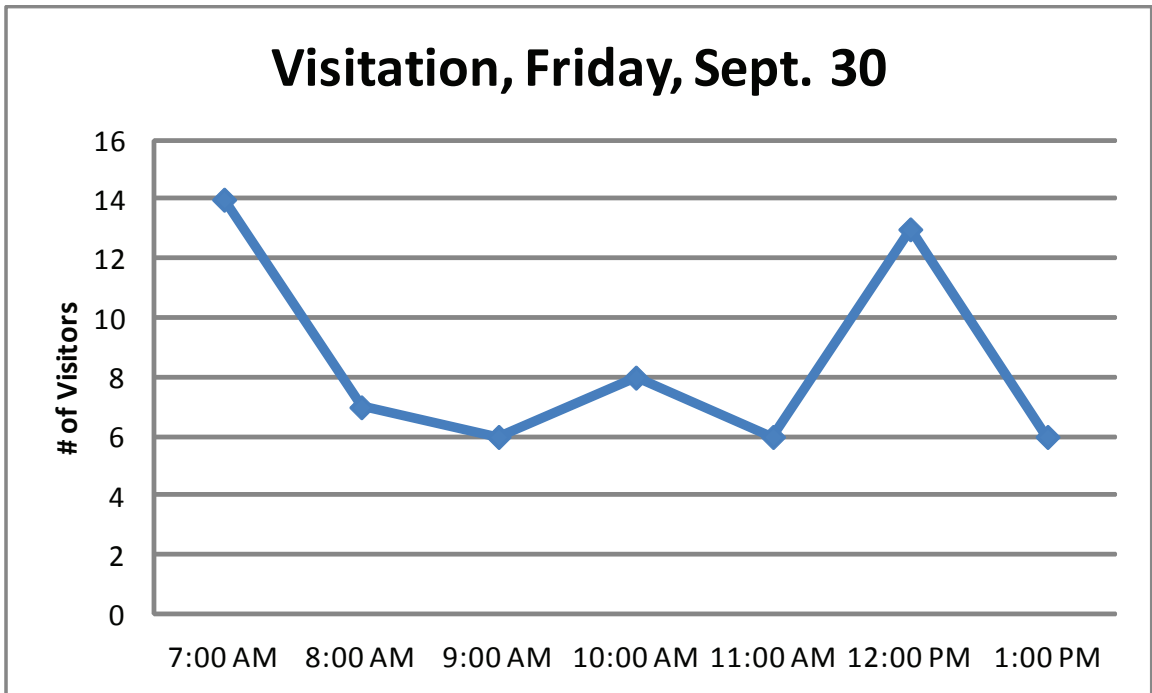


Figure 3.18: Poll (Fri. Sept. 30, 2011) – Weekday Visitation Trends, Time of Day



Figure 3.19: Archaeology Lecture.



Figure 3.20: Apiary Lecture.



Figure 3.21: Flamenco Performance.



Figure 3.22: Hamilton Birthday Celebration.



Figure 3.23: Veteran Memorial Service.



Figure 3.24: UC Green Volunteer Day.



Appendix B: Supplements

3.1: Visitor Survey Form

The Woodlands National Historic Landmark, Landscape, and District

We are delighted that you have chosen to visit the William Hamilton estate, a unique green space in West Philadelphia. To help us better understand your interest and investment in The Woodlands, please fill out this survey.

Is this your first time visiting The Woodlands? Y / N

Do you live in the Philadelphia area? Y / N

If so, do you visit regularly, and for what activities?

How did you hear about The Woodlands?

Which topics did you learn about today that interest you?

architecture	cemetery/monument studies
arboretum/botany/landscape	genealogy
urban history	early American Philadelphia

What programs would you like to attend at The Woodlands?

lectures	conferences
walks	exhibits
arts performances	gardening days
children's activities	holiday events

Are you affiliated with any organizations that may be interested in collaborating with The Woodlands?

What other ideas may you have for making The Woodlands more widely known and publicly accessible?

For more information, visit our website-in-progress: <http://www.woodlandsphila.org/>
Or our Facebook page: The Woodlands Cemetery, Mansion, and Historic Landscape

Remember to sign our guest book for updates about The Woodlands! Thank you, and please visit us again!

The Woodlands, 4000 Woodland Ave., Philadelphia, PA. 19104
(215) 386-2181 info@woodlandsphila.org

3.2: Programs 2009-2012

Fall 2009:

Halloween Storytelling

Spring 2010:

Hamilton Birthday Party

Archaeology Lecture with Bartram's Garden

Veteran Hidell Memorial

Summer 2010, Group Tours:

Monmouth Museum, NJ, senior citizens group

National Constitution Center, children's group

Philadelphia University, architecture students

Delaware Center for Horticulture

Mount Laurel, NJ, senior citizens group

University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, alumni

Drexel University, archivists

Fall 2010:

Collaborative research with Pennsylvania State University plant pathologists

Collaborative research with Masterman School, Philadelphia

Spring 2011:

Collaborative research with Poplar Forest, Virginia

Fall 2011:

Tours for Morris Arboretum and Museum Council groups

Collaborative research with Masterman School

Archaeology Lecture

Collaboration with History Making Production

Spring 2012:

Collaborative research on dendrochronology

Hosted PubComm, The Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities at Rutgers University-Camden

Hosted University of the Sciences benefit run

Hosted Go West! Craft Fest

Hosted Science Scavenger Hunt

Regular Volunteer Maintenance Days with University City Green

3.3: Stakeholder Letters

Dear *Management Member*,

My name is Courtney Allen, and I have been working at The Woodlands for the past three years while earning my master's degree in historic preservation from University of Pennsylvania. As you may know, my thesis, "Building a Green Community: The Woodlands as an Experiment in Urban Landscape Interpretation," examines historical and current uses and values at The Woodlands and how the trends can indicate landscape preservation management and interpretation decisions. One of the sections of my thesis is a stakeholder analysis. As a member of The Woodlands management, your insight would be of great assistance to the project; it would be helpful if you would be willing to respond to the following questions by March 23rd.

Many thanks,

Courtney

1. How long have you been involved at The Woodlands and in what capacities?
2. In your opinion, what are currently the greatest strengths and greatest opportunities for improvement at The Woodlands?
3. In your opinion, what is the most crucial knowledge to preserve about this site, and what physical aspects of the place can do this?
4. Do you have tenets or principles with which you make decisions regarding The Woodlands?
5. How do you see The Woodlands' role in and with the West Philadelphia community?
6. Who do you see as partners and potential partners in the site's preservation?
7. What is your vision for The Woodlands in 20 years? What are some steps you believe could accomplish those goals?
8. Any other insights

To the *Community User Group*,

My name is Courtney Allen. I am a neighbor living at 46th St. and Larchwood, and a master's student in historic preservation at University of Pennsylvania. I am currently working on my thesis, which addresses historic and contemporary uses of The Woodlands National Historic Landmark, the neighborhood green space at 40th St. and Woodland Ave., where I have been working for the past three years.

As part of the research, I am evaluating current stakeholder and user trends at The Woodlands. As your organization is in proximity to The Woodlands and likely has members who are visitors, I am hoping the organization could answer a few questions to lend perspective to the way the neighbors use this space. These questions could be discussed among the board, answered by the chair or another well-informed person, or sent to the members to respond to me at: coallen@design.upenn.edu

I would greatly appreciate if you could consider and respond to these questions by March 15th. Your organization will be acknowledged in the graduate publication, factored into recommendations for the management of The Woodlands, and will overall contribute to a better understanding and treatment of our neighborhood gem.

Many thanks,

Courtney

1. When and how did you discover The Woodlands?
2. How often do you visit The Woodlands? What activities do you do there?
3. Describe your organization (its mission, priorities, membership, connection to The Woodlands, etc.)
4. Do you consider The Woodlands a neighborhood space? Do you believe it applies to a larger audience?
5. How informed do you feel about the history of The Woodlands?
6. What do you value about The Woodlands?
7. What do you believe should be preserved at The Woodlands? Why and how?
8. What format or topic of programs would you be interested to see at The Woodlands?
9. Would your organization be interested in collaborating with The Woodlands?
10. Any further ideas/recommendations you may have for The Woodlands

4.1 Potential Collaborators

West Philly Runners

Liberty Bell Wanderers

Urban Adventures

Academy of Natural Sciences

Mutter Museum

Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation

W3R (Washington-Rochambeau-Revolutionary Route) Re-enactors

Wild Foodies of Philly

Jewish Farm School, Philadelphia

Philly Rooted

Eastern Native Tree Society

American Public Gardens Association

4.2 Sample Tour Outline

The Woodlands General Landscape Tour Outline

National Historic Landmark 1968, National Historic Landscape 2004

Story of urban green space and development, adaptive reuse, converting private space for public

Significance:

- New World model of contemporary English landscape techniques and early Federal architectural design
- Rural cemetery model that served civic needs of Philadelphia and was Fairmount Park proto-type
- Contemporary neighborhood identification with nationally important space
- Thomas Jefferson: “the only rival which I have known in America to what may be seen in England.”

South Side of Mansion

- 18thc. West Philadelphia as undeveloped territory, “Wild West”, transitional space of Lancaster Turnpike and Woodland Ave
- Andrew Hamilton, lawyer and architect, purchases about 250 acres, rents as farmland
- William Hamilton inherits 356 acres in 1786, sets to make main residence
- Envisioned estate as a whole; picturesque (contrast of elements, framing)
- Influences: Lancelot Brown, Humphry Repton, Thomas Whately, John Plaw
- Determined to bring European refinement to new country; cultural tastes and luxuries controversial; political tensions; escapes on grand tour
- Passion is botany, collector – meeting of aesthetics and science
- Imagine ascending from the river, meandering circulation, viewshed from top

By Carriage House

- By 1789, 600 acres of estate; 10 acres of garden
- Greenhouse details [1785, 150 ft long, 10,000 specimens], plants introduced; Philadel-

phia as trade center

- Kitchen garden; systems to separate guests from servants
- Key trees – zelkova, elms
- Connections to American Philosophical Society, Barton’s Botany, Lewis and Clark; education element

By Grove

- After Hamilton: 1813-1840: speculative real estate schemes (ex. canal)
- Cemetery: 92 acres, 4 trustees, shareholders
- Shift from single management to collective management
- Rural cemetery movement
 - Background: Pere la Chaise, Mt. Auburn, Laurel Hill
 - Contributing factors: urbanization, disease, crowding, health of scenery; medical spiritual aesthetic, practical, etc.
- Family burial plots as land ownership, recreation [tourist attraction]
- Design layed out by variety of people; unified by James Sidney in 1860s

Center Circle

- Peak of monuments/burials during Gilded Age; artistic demonstration of Philadelphia high society [point out impressive monuments, note change of style/material of stones, etc]
- Increasingly heavy residential development in West Philadelphia
- 20th c.: burials wane, “rural” is now urban
- Land taken for city projects in 1920s-50s(University Ave, Veterans Hospital, etc)
- By 1950s, 54 acres; push for preservation from neighborhood/local groups
- Cemetery filed non-profit status in 1980s
- Trust founded 1998 for history education
- Serving as active burial grounds, community space



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