

Documentation Standards for Connecticut's Cultural Resources

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"Have you finished all that writing and picture taking? Can we tear the bridge down, now?" It is a critical moment of second thoughts and nagging doubts. Unnerving questions hang in the air as the demolition contractor awaits your answer. . . .

Introduction

Connecticut's heritage resources, which date from its early days as a colony up to the recent past, are often in danger of being removed from the landscape in order to accommodate 21st-century needs: safer and wider bridges, additional housing, water and sewer improvements, and commercial development. Despite extensive consultation and inter-agency efforts to examine alternatives, significant buildings, structures, objects, and sites from Connecticut's past may be lost. Historic houses and factories may face demolition, and picturesque narrow bridges may be threatened with replacement. The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office has established specific standards for ensuring appropriate written and photographic documentation of important cultural resources before the contractor swings a wrecking ball. Adhering to these professional standards will ease the burden of responsibility when State Historic Preservation Office-sanctioned destruction is imminent. In addition, these standards represent a good approach for documenting threatened historic properties irrespective of state and/or federal involvement.

The following documentation guidelines provide for a comprehensive written and photographic record that will ultimately be deposited by the State Historic Preservation Office with the University of Connecticut's Thomas I. Dodd Research Center as part of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection. Once properly accessioned by the Dodd Center, these narrative and photographic materials will be publicly available to be retrieved for students, concerned citizens, and others.

When a state agency proposes actions that would alter or destroy a potentially significant resource, and no feasible or prudent al-

ternative exists, the State Historic Preservation Office evaluates the project and decides upon an appropriate level of documentation. The State Historic Preservation Office's decision is based upon numerous considerations, among which are the following:

- Is the property of local, state, or national significance?
- Is the property individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or a contributing component of an eligible historic district?
- What is the property's overall degree of integrity?
- How does the property compare to similar resources within the community and the state?
- Does the property convey important associations with the community's historical development?
- Does the project propose total demolition, major alterations, or minor modifications of the resource?
- Are there nearby associated historic properties or an historic landscape that will be radically altered by the proposed undertaking?

If the State Historic Preservation Office decides to mandate professional completion of state-level documentation rather than rec ordation to the National Park Service's standards, the following guide- lines will ensure a consistent level of quality in reports filed with the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection.

Connecticut's documentation requirements are based on the well-established standards of the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engi- neering Record (HAER). Starting in the 1930s, the National Park Ser- vice, in coordination with state and local sponsors, has undertaken numerous HABS and HAER projects to document nationally- significant historical resources. The projects have created important archival materials that preserve a record of the nation's residential, commercial, public, monumental, religious, military, and industrial buildings, sites, and structures. This method of saving our collective past through professionally implemented and extensively-detailed studies, which are deposited with the Library of Congress for perma-

ment archiving and public accessibility, has been very effective in preserving information on our nation's cultural heritage.

Over the last two decades, the overwhelming majority of HABS and HAER documentation efforts have been the direct result of federally-mandated cultural resource reviews undertaken in accordance with the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. These environmental review submittals currently constitute one-third of all HABS-HAER submissions to the Library of Congress.

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office believes that not all threatened cultural resources warrant the considerable expense and professional effort required by the National Park Service's HABS-HAER documentation standards. Consequently, the State Historic Preservation Office has developed its state-level documentation requirements as a viable alternative that provides an appropriate degree of professional recordation for properties of state and/or local importance. Equally important, the State Historic Preservation Office's partnership with the Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut provides greater and easier public accessibility and ensures long-term archival preservation of the documentation for soon-to-be-demolished cultural resources.

State-Level Documentation Standards

All written and photographic state-level documentations must be submitted for review by the State Historic Preservation Office. If accepted, the State Historic Preservation Office will transfer the materials to the Dodd Research Center, which will then include the document title, author, date, and location in its User's Guide to the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection (<http://chpc.lib.uconn.edu>). The collection expects these documents will be used by both present-day and future researchers. Consequently, all submitted materials must be both archivally stable and user-friendly. Because of the Dodd Research Center's storage and retrieval requirements, all components of the documentation must be consistently labeled with the name of the property and its town and properly cross-referenced with other parts of the documentation package.

Each submittal must include a brief explanatory cover letter which indicates the specific project and agency that generated the sub-

mitted materials. In addition, there are four primary components which compose the total documentation package required by the State Historic Preservation Office. Discussed in greater detail on the following pages, these components include narrative text, photographs (including negatives or electronic media), an index to the photographs, and a photographic site plan.

Narrative Text

The narrative text serves to describe the physical condition and historic use(s) of threatened properties and in effect becomes an archival epitaph. As such, the descriptive text that accompanies the photographs should be comprehensive, yet succinct. The actual number of pages of written text will vary depending upon the importance and complexity of each historic property. The text should include a brief statement of purpose for the documentation study; that is, an explanation or identification of the proposed project and the future use of the property should be provided. While it is unnecessary and undesirable to present a lengthy discussion and/or justification for the proposed demolition or other alterations, a brief recapitulation of the site-specific federal or state review and consultation process is required.

There is no preferred or predetermined format for the narrative text, but it should follow a logical presentation and include sufficient material to fully describe the site history, physical environment, and context of the threatened cultural resource, including a discussion of comparable properties. When safe and accessible, both the exterior and interior conditions of historic structures must be described and evaluated. The State Historic Preservation Office strongly recommends that the historical and archival research for the narrative text should precede the photographic documentation process in order to give the photographer a clear understanding of what is critical to capture on film, such as any particular views, architectural components, or small-scale details that may have been identified as important. Although it is inappropriate to duplicate existing reports, pertinent documents should be referenced and repositories for original plans, shop drawings, historic photographs, and similar archival documents should be listed by full name and address.

Checklist for State-Level Written and Photographic Documentation Submission:

- Cover letter to State Historic Preservation Office of the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism.**
- Narrative text**
- Site location noted on appropriate portion of USGS topographical quadrangle map**
- Original photographs**
- Negatives or electronic image files on CD-ROM**
- List of photographs**
- Photographic site plan**



Property name and location must be appear on all materials and be consistent; no abbreviations allowed

The text should reference the accompanying photographs by number (see Index to Photographs) in order to guide the reader through the narrative. If available, at least one historic map, reproduced on archival paper with the project area clearly annotated, should also be included. Historic newspaper accounts and photographs can also be included as a supplement to the narrative text.

Production specifications for the text are straightforward. A title page should clearly identify the historic (and common) name of the property, its specific location (street address and town), the preparer of the narrative text (name, affiliation, and address), and the responsible agency with address, date, and town; abbreviations should not be used. Text must be printed, on one side only, on 8 1/2" x 11" archival paper (a list of suppliers of archival materials is included with this essay). Each page of text should contain an appropriate footer and/or header that includes the name of the property, the town name, and a sequential page number. A bibliography should include, where appropriate, repositories of archival sources (cited and non-cited) and identification of individuals who provided pertinent observations or personal recollections. The property's location must be clearly noted

on an acid-free 8 1/2" x 11" photocopy of the appropriate U.S. Geological Survey quadrangle map, with the name of the quadrangle clearly indicated.

Binding

Do not use staples, paper clips, or any adhesive products. If the documentation package is less than 50 pages, submit the material unbound in an acid-free archival folder. If the documentation text exceeds 50 pages, front and back covers should consist of acid-free card stock with the addition of clear plastic protector pages over the covers; bind the text and covers with a plastic comb.

NEVER USE:

- ⊗ **staples**
- ⊗ **paper clips**
- ⊗ **ballpoint pen**
- ⊗ **glue/adhesive/tape products**

Photographs

There is no prescribed maximum or minimum number of photographic views that are required for any particular resource, whether a one-lane rural iron-truss bridge, an isolated farmstead, an urban streetscape, or a multi-structure industrial complex. Simply, the photographic recordation must be adequate to convey the important elements of the historic resource. The sequence of views should be organized in a logical pattern, such as beginning with wider contextual (exterior) perspectives and ending with specific details.

Excessive and redundant photographs are to be avoided; well-focused and properly-centered perspectives showing all elevations are usually sufficient for a simple historic property. The physical context of the historic resource, e.g., streetscapes, significant landscape components, and other associated environmental or cultural features, can often be conveyed with one or two views. Two views (opposing perspectives) should be sufficient to document sculptural ornamentation. However, once in the field, the photographer should select as many views and details as seem appropriate. Although undeveloped as actual prints, redundant views should be retained on the negative strips (if applicable); these will become an integral component of the final submission of documentation materials.



Connecticut River Railroad Bridge, Old Lyme - Old Saybrook, camera facing northwest (HPI photograph).

Exterior photographs should include general views of the resource (e.g., streetscapes and related landscape settings) as well as detailed views of functional and/or decorative design elements that are of engineering, industrial, or architectural interest. Particular attention should be addressed to both out of the ordinary elements and the overall character that identify the historic resource, i.e., its period of construction, its massing, size, and materials, and its unique use(s) through time. One should also not overlook the small-scale details that serve to define the character of a historic property.

Cultural material encountered during research and/or field investigation can humanize the story of any soon-to-be-demolished resource. For example, in the case of an historic industrial property, photographs that capture time clocks, safety signage, inspection records, manufacturer's plates, extant machinery, and historic graffiti can contextualize the resource in its time and place and connect it with its local community.

Questions concerning the extent of the photographic documentation effort can arise when archival research has revealed a wealth of architect's plans, construction or shop drawings, postcard collections,

business management papers, etc. In this situation, the State Historic Preservation Office should be contacted to decide whether it would be best to include text notations on the extent and location of original archival materials or, alternatively, photographic reproductions of all or a sample of the archival materials. The State Historic Preservation Office should also be contacted regarding appropriate guidance and decision-making on the possible retention and donation of archival materials.



Detail of chain drive and roller segment, Niantic River Railroad Bridge, East Lyme, camera facing southwest (HPI photograph).

Photographic Specifications

A major goal for documentation standards is the permanence of the photographic record. Black-and-white images taken with a 35mm camera and printed on specific silver-emulsion paper have been

acceptable for decades. New technology now affords options in the type of camera used in documentation. Digital color images that meet a permanence standard of 75 years are now acceptable. Specifications for both types of cameras are presented below.

35mm Cameras. Traditional black-and-white film, such as Kodak Plus X™, should be used. At present, popular chromogenic black-and-white films, which share more similarities with color films than with traditional black-and-white films, do not meet an acceptable permanence threshold. Archival acid-free photographic paper and archivally-stable chemicals are required for the photo-development process.



Fixed spans of the Connecticut River Railroad Bridge, Old Lyme - Old Saybrook, camera facing southwest (HPI photograph).

Digital Cameras. Digital cameras must be capable of producing an image size of 6 megapixels, with 7 megapixels (or greater) preferred. A camera of this capability will allow some cropping without dropping below the minimum final image size. Equally important is the quality of the camera's lens; a camera with a low-quality lens will produce poor images regardless of its image size.

Black-and-white prints from digital cameras can be printed in-house without going to a special production lab, as long as a combination of archival inks and premium photo paper is used. Currently, Hewlett-Packard Vivera™ ink cartridges can be used with HP Premium and Premium Plus Glossy photo paper to meet the 75-year permanence standard, as can Epson UltraChrome™ pigmented inks with Epson Premium papers.

Electronic images corresponding to the submitted photographs must also be submitted. Electronic image files must be saved as uncompressed .TIF (Tagged Image File format) files on CD-ROM media, in keeping with guidance on digital photographic records issued by the National Archives and Records Administration. The minimum size of each image must be 1600 x 1200 pixels saved at 300 dpi (pixels per inch). It is recommended that digital images be saved in 24-bit RGB or 32-bit CMYK color format, which provides maximum detail even when printed in black-and-white. The CD-ROM label must reference the Town and Property Name. The file name for each electronic image must include the photograph number corresponding to the number in the index and the number written on the back of the printed photograph.

One set of original photographs is required. The preferred format is 3" x 5" black-and-white prints (4" x 6" is also acceptable, but nothing larger). Each photograph should be slipped into an individual archival sleeve. Each archival sleeve must be annotated with the name of the historic property, its specific street address and town, and its corresponding photograph number. Photographs must be numbered in a logical and sequential series. Numbers should be noted on back of each photograph with a soft #2 or softer pencil and must be consistent with the assigned numbers on the photographic site plan and the index to photographs. When labeling the back of the photographs, place individual photographs on a hard surface and press lightly, so that the emulsion on the front surface is not broken.

If 35mm photography is used, one full set of uncut negatives stored in archival quality, multiple-strip sleeve sheets is also required. The sleeves are to be annotated, prior to inserting negatives, using a soft pencil, with the town and property name and/or street address.

Negatives are extremely fragile and should be kept in their sleeves. If negatives must be handled, it is imperative to limit contact to their edges and use lint-free archival gloves (the body acids from a fingerprint can destroy the archival stability of photographic negatives).

Index of Photographs

An index, or list, that identifies all the printed photographs must be included. The list should be dated and labeled by town, location, project number (if any), and the photographer's name. An identifying footer and/or header must be on each page of the list, but the margins are not regulated. As with the narrative documentation, the Index of Photographs should be printed on only one side of acid-free, 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Each photograph must be numbered in logical and sequential order and must include a short descriptive caption (see accompanying photographs). The direction of the view, or camera angle, must also be provided. In addition, simple orientation cues may be helpful (e.g., "Main Street in foreground").

Photographic Site Plan

Coordinated with the Index to Photographs, the Photographic Site Plan literally depicts the position of the photographer when taking each specific view of the threatened historic resource. A simple plan, or footprint, of the historic property, whether a bridge, single family residence, commercial block, industrial complex, or streetscape, is the basis for the Photographic Site Plan. An existing drawing or plan may be used and annotated with appropriate photograph numbers and directional arrows. Directional arrows serve to depict the photographer's perspective. The Photographic Site Plan should include a north arrow and identify at least two landmarks, such as adjoining streets, nearby structures, or prominent environmental features.

All annotations should be completed prior to reproduction on acid-free, 8 1/2" x 11" paper. In addition, the Photographic Site Plan must be dated and labeled by town, location, project number (if any), and the photographer's name. An identifying footer and/or header must be on the key map, but the margins are not regulated. Figure 1 provides an acceptable example of a Photographic Site Plan.

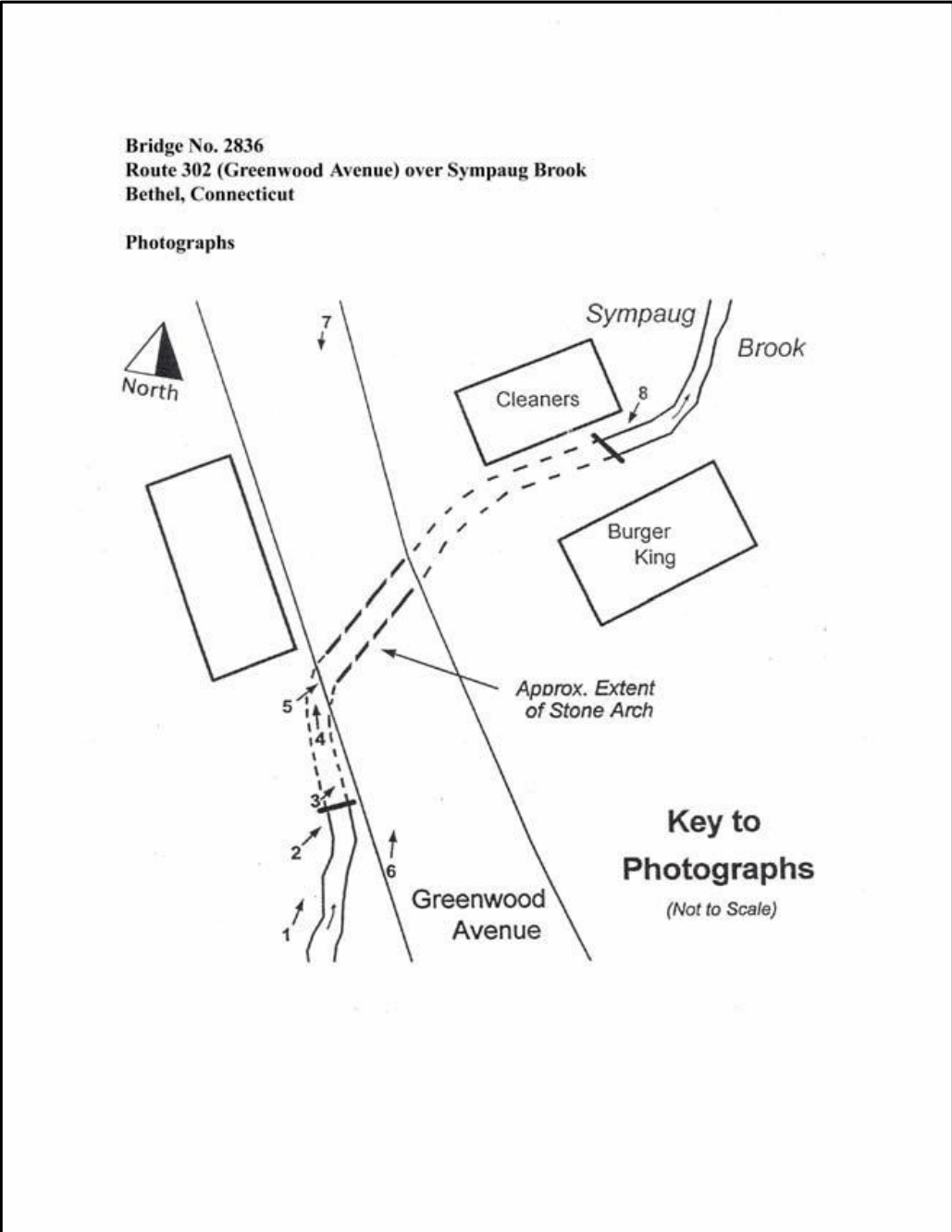


Figure 1: Example of Photographic Site Plan.

Sources for Archival Materials:

Conservation Resources International LLC

5532 Port Royal Road
Springfield, VA 22151
800-634-6932, 703-321-0629 (fax)
www.conservationresources.com

Gavlord Brothers, Inc.

P.O. Box 4901
Syracuse NY 13221-4901
800-448-6160, 800-272-3412 (fax)
www.gavlord.com

Hollinger Corporation

P.O. Box 8360
Fredericksburg, VA 22404
800-634-0491, 800-947-8814 (fax)
www.hollingercorp.com

Light Impressions Corporation

P.O. Box 787
Brea, CA 92822-0787
800-828-6216, 800-828-5539 (fax)
www.lightimpressionsdirect.com

Printfile, Inc.

P.O. Box 607638
Orlando, FL 32860-7638
800-508-8539, 800-546-4145 (fax)
www.printfile.com

Pohlig Bros., Inc.

8001 Greenpine Road
Richmond, VA 23237
804-275-9000, 804-275-9900 (fax)
www.pohlig.com

TALAS

20 West 20th Street – 5th Floor
New York, NY 10011
212-219-0770, 212-219-0735 (fax)
www.talasonline.com

University Products

517 Main Street
Holvoke, MA 01040
800-628-1912, 800-532-9281
www.universityproducts.com