Vermont Historic Resource Documentation Requirements

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) has developed these guidelines for projects in Vermont that may need documentation under local, state or federal regulations. The documentation is intended to assist in the formal recordation of a property and may be used by property owners or researchers.

What is Historic Resource Documentation?

Historic resource documentation provides a permanent record of historic places, representing Vermont architecture, engineering, and landscape design. Documentation must fully convey the significant features, context, and history of the historic resource in text, photographs, and plans. This documentation can be used in many ways, including in the repair or reconstruction of historic places, facilities maintenance, scholarly research, or teaching aids. Researchers can access these records on our Online Resource Center.

https://accdservices.vermont.gov/ORC/

The federal Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) programs offer excellent guidance on how to execute measured drawings, photographs, and historical reports in conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation.* This guidance can be referenced for additional assistance with how to document a resource.

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritagedocumentation/guidelines.htm

Preparing Historic Resource Documentation

Documentation submitted to VDHP must meet the guidelines described below. Incomplete submittals will be returned for revision and re-submittal. VDHP shall be allowed no less than thirty (30) days to review the documentation; longer review periods may be established prior to submittal for larger documentation projects. All materials must be prepared and submitted digitally. Printed materials will not be accepted.

Documentation as Mitigation Timeline

When this documentation is prepared as mitigation prior to demolition or substantial alteration of the subject property, removal or modification of historic material **cannot** begin until VDHP has formally accepted the documentation. In order to avoid unnecessary delays, please include adequate time in your project planning to allow for VDHP's review, revisions, if needed, and approval of the documentation. Plan for both review and revision periods and anticipate sixty (60) days for approval.

Documentation Preparer

Unless otherwise approved by VDHP, the documentation should be prepared by a qualified architectural historian, historian, or historic architect with substantial experience in researching and documenting historic resources. Qualified professionals meet the requirements of the National Park Service, published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61.

Documentation Format

The history and significance of the resource should be studied prior to photographing the resource in order to fully understand its significance and character defining features. The documentation must contain three primary components, each of which is described in detail below:

- Written Documentation
- Location Map, Site Plan, and Architectural Plans
- Photographic Documentation

All materials, including photographs, should be saved in a single PDF file. The PDF file is not to exceed 75 mb in size. For clarity of images in the final PDF, please adjust the image file size prior to inserting them in the .pdf as the standard reduce file size tool for .pdfs will detract from the final viewing quality.

All photographs should also be submitted as individual TIFF files (details below).

Written Documentation

Formatting of the report as an outline and with proper headings and indentations is expected. Documentation should all adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines, which are simplified in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Cover Information

Name: The name section is essentially a heading, centered at the top of the page. It includes “Documentation of”, the name of the resource, and the Vermont Survey number. Contact our office if you do not know the survey number.

Location: This includes the address, city or town, county, state, and coordinates. Examples for coordinates with Google Earth (make sure the program is set to decimal degrees).

Single building/resource:

The building is located at latitude: 39.185876, longitude: -94.682148. This point was obtained on March 24, 2016 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Entrance to a complex/district:

The ranch is located at latitude: 39.185876, longitude: -94.682148. This point represents the main gate and was obtained on March 24, 2016, using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

End points for a linear resource:

The canal is located between latitude: 39.185876, longitude: -94.682148 (west end) and latitude: 39.185876, longitude: -94.682148 (east end). The points were obtained on March 24, 2016, using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on their release to the public.

Present Owner/Occupant:

This refers to the current owner(s), who may or may not be the occupant, so both need to be addressed here.

Present Use: This is a brief statement explaining how or for what the building or site is currently used.

Significance: This succinct statement presents the rationale for recording the building or site, emphasizing its significance in the local, regional, or national context. It should highlight both historical and architectural aspects of the resource and its relationship to its environment. This summary statement should be no more than 3 or 4 sentences and will be expanded in following sections.

Author: In addition to the name(s) of the author(s), include the author affiliation(s) and the completion date of the report.

Project Information:

This is a summary of those involved in preparing the documentation, including the measured drawings, photographs, and historical report. Sponsor and cooperating organizations should also be named here. If this is being prepared as mitigation, cite the name of the governing document and appropriate stipulation in the permit or memorandum of agreement.

Historical Information

Historic images and maps should be included in-text in this section and not as an appendix. If a partial or full chain of title exists, include that as an appendix.

Physical History:

Include the initial **date of construction**. If no exact date can be determined, but an estimate is possible, indicate by using “ca.” and suggest reason for the estimate, such as local tradition or stylistic evidence, or a change in tax assessments. Include sources for all dates cited.

Identify the **architect**, if known, and include a brief biographic entry.

Describe the **building chronology** including details about owners and occupants at the time of modifications, known builders and material suppliers, original plans, alterations and additions, and construction details. Address this material chronologically and devote a separate paragraph to each major change. Not all evidence comes from documents; the physical structure can provide valuable information. Record if an alteration is based on physical evidence and estimate the date, if possible, noting that it is an estimation. Use graphic sources as well; old photographs and drawings can be a valuable tool. Physical evidence described in the building chronology should be captured in the photographic documentation of this report.

Historical Context:

This section expands the brief significance statement given at the beginning of the report by examining the building’s place in the larger context of national, regional, and local history as well as in architectural history. Consider not only the general history of the building, but also its relationship to its environs and the persons and events associated with its establishment and development.

Architectural/Physical Description

The purpose of the written description is to supplement the information provided by measured drawings and photographs. The descriptions should be clear and concise and touch on all significant features of the building/resource and site.

General statement:

This is a statement on the architectural, engineering, or design interest or merit of the building/resource, with particular emphasis on unusual or rare features. Information included in this section should help answer the questions of what distinguishes the building in terms of design and how it reflects broader architectural/design trends and patterns.

Site: Include descriptions of the overall site, including the layout and character of the site, all buildings and significant features, and historic landscape design.

Description of the primary building/resource:

Describe materials, form, and details. Add or remove from the following list as appropriate for the resource you are describing.

Exterior

1. Layout and Overall dimensions
2. Foundations
3. Walls
4. Structural system, framing
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads
6. Chimneys
7. Fenestration
    a. Doorways and doors
    b. Windows and shutters
8. Roof
    a. Shape, covering
    b. Cornice, eaves
    c. Dormers, skylights, cupolas, towers

Interior

1. Floor plans
2. Stairways
3. Flooring
4. Wall and ceiling finishes
5. Doorways and doors
6. Windows surrounds and sills

7. Decorative features and trim (include woodwork or features not described above)
8. Hardware
9. Mechanical (describe any hvac, lighting, or plumbing of note that conveys significance about the building history)
10. Original/early furnishings (furniture, draperies, carpets of historical interest)

Description of other buildings and features:

Describe materials, form, and details of other resources identified in the site description.

Sources of Information

This is an essential section of the historical report that directs subsequent researchers to all pertinent sources. Be sure to include complete bibliographic information on every source located. For primary sources, it is helpful to include the institution or archives at which the document is housed or some annotation.

Architectural drawings: Include the date and location of the drawings and note anything significant, such as features not built as originally planned. Not only are original drawings useful, but alteration drawings should be noted too.

Early Views: Include photographs, engravings, and other images. If known, specify medium, artist, date, publisher, and plate size. Give the location of the item and include information such as a negative number needed for ordering a copy. A note on the importance of the view is useful, such as “north front of church before tower was removed.”

Interviews: Include the name of the person interviewed, the date and place of the interview, and the person’s association with the structure or site.

Selected Sources: If the written sources are extensive, divide them into primary and secondary, or unpublished and published. Unpublished materials should always be accompanied by their archival location. Include items such as deed books, inventories, censuses, tax records, insurance records, manuscripts, letters, and historical society files.

Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: List here anything not referred to for this report but known or thought to contain further or related information.

Supplemental Material: Supplemental material can be graphic or written, and it is usually put at the very end of the report (copyright permitting).

Location Map, Site Plan, and Architectural Plans

Location Map: A map with the location of the property clearly indicated.

Site Plan: A site plan of the property showing all resources and significant landscape features with key/labels.

Architectural Plans: Include floor plans, elevations, sections, and details as appropriate. The level of detail needed in these measured drawings will be dependent on the resource. These can be historic and/or new measured drawings. Consult with our office if sketch plans with minimal measurements is sufficient. If only historic drawings are included, please add annotations for significance alterations to accurately reflect current configurations.

Photographic Documentation

All photographs must be prepared in accordance with the following guidelines, which are partially based on the National Register of Historic Places Consolidated and Updated Photograph Policy 2024.

With ever-evolving advances in digital technology constantly improving image quality, use of cell phones and digital cameras to take photographs is acceptable. Set the camera for its highest image quality so that you can meet a minimum pixel dimensions of **2000 x 3000 pixels**.

For archival image stability, the preferred format is **TIFF** (Tagged Image File Format) due to its lossless compression and support for metadata, making it the gold standard for master digital files. JPEGs may be converted to TIFFs by a computer conversion process but should be done so the first time the image file is opened; JPEGs degrade the image quality with each re-save, making it unsuitable for long-term archival preservation.

Photographic Documentation includes:

Photograph Log: Include the name of the **Photographer** and **Date** photographed.

List and **describe** photographs in a numbered index in the following format:

1of 20 VT_County_ResourceName_01

View of east elevation, facing west

Photograph Key(s): duplicate site and floor plans to key all photographs to the Photograph Log

Photographs: Present-day views of the historic resource and surrounding area. Included both in the PDF and as individual TIFF files. Name the TIFF files with

this format *VT_County_ResourceName_01.* The number of each image must correspond to the Photograph Log and Photograph Key. In the PDF format the photographs to be on 8.5x11 pages with a narrow white border. Label the photograph with the file name, *VT_County_ResourceName_01,* on the border of the page – do not place text over the image.

Photographs should be taken of the overall property and the exterior and interior (if historically important) of each resource on the property, including old and new outbuildings. The number of interior and detail views will depend on the significance of those aspects of the resource(s).

The following photographs should be taken to document the property:

Setting

- Views of the overall setting of the historic resource(s), e.g. fields and forest surrounding a farm complex, a streetscape of buildings in a village, etc.
- Views of the historic resource in its immediate surroundings, showing the relationship of the resource to neighboring resources
- Aerial views when available and beneficial for the documentation (an adjacent hill or tall building may provide an aerial vantage point)
- Views of significant landscape features, e.g. tree-lined approaches, stone walls, formal gardens, etc.

Exterior Views

- Full views and complementary perspective views of each side/elevation of the historic resource
- Details of significant features/materials, e.g. cupolas, steeples, porches, doors, decorative brickwork etc.

Interior Views

- Views of highly used/primary interior rooms, e.g. courtrooms, formal parlors, kitchens, etc. Do not include bathrooms unless they are integral to the significance of the property (e.g. a bathhouse). Use a combination of head on and perspective views as appropriate.
- Views and details of significant/character defining interior features, e.g. staircases, fireplaces, ceiling medallions, industrial machinery, exposed structural framing, light fixtures, decorative finishes, etc.

Submitting the HRDP

- Save the Written Documentation, Location Map, Site Map, Architectural Plans, and Photographic Documentation as a single PDF not to exceed 75MB in size.
- Save each digital image as an individual TIFF file.
- Digital files can be submitted via an online file transfer service or directly to ACCD.ProjectReview@vermont.gov

Upon review and approval, VDHP will upload the materials to the Online Resource Center for public access.

For additional assistance please contact Elizabeth Peebles, State Architectural Historian, at 802-505-1147 or elizabeth.peebles@vermont.gov.