

Photographic Documentation Requirements for Historic Resources

What is a Historic Resource Documentation Package?

Despite our best efforts, sometimes a historic resource cannot be saved. The following guidelines identify the process by which a historic resource should be documented prior to demolition or removal. Preparation of a Historic Resource Documentation Package (HRDP) is one method of collecting important information about a historic resource and serves as a final record after the resource itself is gone. The HRDP must fully convey, in both text and photographs, the significant features, context and history of the historic resource. All materials must be prepared and submitted digitally. Printed materials will not be accepted.

The federal Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) programs offer excellent guidance on documenting historic buildings, structures and sites, respectively. There are instances, however, when the level of detail and cost required to meet HABS/HAER/HALS guidelines is not feasible. The Division for Historic Preservation (the "Division") has developed the HRDP requirements as a cost-effective alternative for projects in Vermont that may need documentation under local, state or federal regulations.

Each HRDP submitted to the Division must meet the guidelines described below. Incomplete packages will be returned for revision and re-submittal. The Division must be allowed up to thirty (30) days to review the HRDP, and demolition or removal cannot begin until the Division has formally accepted the HRDP. In order to avoid unnecessary delays, please include adequate time in your project planning to allow for the Division's review and approval of the HRDP.

Unless otherwise approved by the Division, the HRDP should be prepared by an architectural historian with substantial experience in photographing and researching historic resources. The history and significance of the resource should be studied prior to photographing the resource in order to fully understand its significance and unique features.

For additional guidance on photographic documentation standards, please see:

- [National Register Bulletin #23: How to Improve the Quality of Photographs for National Register Nominations](#)
- [HABS/HAER/HALS Photography Guidelines](#)
- [National Register Photo Policy Factsheet \(Updated 5/15/2013\)](#)

Preparing a Historic Resource Documentation Package

A HRDP contains three primary components, each of which is described in detail below:

- Written Documentation
- Location Maps, Site Plans and Architectural Plans (if available)
- Photographic Documentation

Written Documentation

- **Cover Page:** stating the project name, location, date, project sponsor, property owner and author
- **Project Summary:** one to three paragraphs describing the history of the project and the process by which demolition of the building was determined to be acceptable
- **Physical Description:** one to three paragraphs describing the physical features, design and construction of the resource
- **Statement of Significance:** one to three paragraphs describing the historic significance of the resource within a local, state and/or national context
- **Photograph Index:** a numbered index to the sketch map and photographs

Location Maps, Site Plans and Architectural Plans

- **Location Map:** A map with the location of the property clearly indicated
- **Sketch Plan:** a site plan of the property showing all structures and significant landscape features (keyed by number to photographs and the Photograph Index)
- **Architectural Plans:** Include floor plans, elevations or other documentation of the resource if these materials are available. These can be historic and/or contemporary documents.

Photographic Documentation

Types of Images:

- Present day views of the historic resource and surrounding area
- Digital scans of historic photographs, drawings, and/or paintings (if available).

Coverage

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 (an adjacent hill or tall building may provide an aerial vantage point, or a Google Earth view)
- Views of significant landscape features, e.g. tree-lined approaches, stone walls, formal gardens, etc.

Exterior Views

- Full views of each side of the historic resource
- Views of important details, e.g. cupolas, steeples, porches, doors, decorative brickwork etc.

Interior Views

- Overall views of important interior rooms, e.g. courtrooms, formal parlors, historic kitchens, etc.
- Views of important interior features, e.g. staircases, fireplaces, ceiling medallions, exposed structural framing, etc.
- Views of significant interior details, e.g. door hardware, light fixtures, industrial machinery, hand-grained trim, etc.
- Views of people using the building.

Photographic Formats

All photographs must be prepared in accordance with the following guidelines, which are based on the [National Register Photo Policy Fact Sheet \(Updated 5/15/2013\)](#).

Digital Camera

- Digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with a non-distorting lens
- Filters that reduce glare and sharpen contrast are encouraged
- Camera phones are not acceptable

Taking the Picture

- Set the camera for its highest image quality
- TIFF or RAW formats are best; JPEGs may be converted to TIFFs by a computer conversion process

Digital Image Requirement

- Save as .TIFF files in RGB color format
- Minimum pixel depth or dimension of 3000 x 2000
- Minimum 300 dpi
- Do not insert text into the images. Name each image file as follows:
 - ResourceName_001, _002, _003, etc.
 - The number of each image must correspond to the photo index and sketch map

Submitting the HRDP

- Save the Written Documentation as a PDF
- Save the location map(s), sketch maps(s), and architectural plans as a PDF
- Save each digital image as an individual .TIFF file. Do not insert images into a PDF or Word document.
- Burn all of the above materials onto a CD or DVD, and label the CD or DVD as "Historic Resource Documentation Package" with the name of the resource and project. Mail or deliver the CD or DVD to the Division at the following address:

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation
One National Life Drive
Davis Building, Floor 6
Montpelier, VT 05620

One complete Historic Resource Documentation Package should be provided to the Division. Upon review and approval, the Division will upload the materials to the [Online Resource Center](#) for public access.

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