Delaware Threatened Buildings Survey
Guidelines for Documentation of Threatened Resources

The dramatic transformations that have taken place in Delaware’s rural and urban landscapes over the past decade have exacted a tremendous and irreversible toll on the built environment. Abandonment, vandalism, demolition, and uninformed renovations have contributed to the overall loss of material even in New Castle County and the City of Wilmington, where preservation planners have gained some measure of cooperation from responsive property owners in terms of partial funding for historic structures documentation. The following guidelines will act as standards that will provide for the documentation of threatened structures throughout the state at a level appropriate to their individual significance and integrity.

Some of the documentation provided under these guidelines will qualify to be submitted to the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) in the Library of Congress (all large-format photographs and full sets of measured drawings). Copies of the documentation submitted to HABS/HAER, as well as all other documentation, are retained as part of the Delaware Valley Threatened Buildings Survey in the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware, and in the collections of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DESHPO) in Dover. All of this material is accessible to the public.

Starl House, Intersection of Route 72 & Route 13, Red Lion Hundred, New Castle County, Threatened by development pressure. Documented with large-format photographs and full measured drawings.
Definition and Identification of Threatened Resources

Any building or structure listed or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places or that may be likely to yield significant information and is threatened in such a way that the resource’s integrity will be compromised or lost should be considered a threatened resource. An explanation of eligibility requirements for the National Register of Historic Places may be found in National Register Bulletin 16 (Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms). Threatened resources may be identified by officials of a local government (such as preservation planners), officials from state or local agencies (such as the Department of Natural Resources and Energy Control, Department of Parks and Recreation, or the Department of Transportation), real estate developers, property owners, or members of the general public.

Procedures

One of several courses of action may be followed in regard to a threatened resource. First, in the case of a request for a demolition permit, local government officials should negotiate with the property owner to find alternatives to demolition or threats. In the event that the property owner cannot be persuaded to allow the building or structure to remain standing, local government officials should negotiate with the property owner to delay demolition for a sufficient time to permit documentation of the resource at a level appropriate to its significance and/or historic value. The category of documentation is to be determined by preservation professionals familiar with the site and its context. In this case, the property owners should be encouraged to underwrite the cost of the documentation process. If that is not possible, the local officials should notify the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office of the status of the building to see if it can be included in the current year’s Historic Preservation Fund subgrant for Threatened Resources.

In situations where there is no legal process in action (demolition permit or Section 106 review), notification of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office should be the first step. If funding for recording is available from a private source, arrangements can be made with a private consultant. If not, the DESHPO will assign the property to the current year’s Historic Preservation Fund subgrant for Threatened Resources. Again, determination of the appropriate category of documentation for the structure should be made by preservation professionals who are familiar with the site and its context.

The documentation of threatened resources is an important component in the statewide comprehensive historic preservation plan. Documentation, however, is not to be considered an alternative to the physical preservation of historic properties. Threatened resource documentation represents a category of preservation activity dedicated to the preservation of information where the physical loss of that information for whatever reason is deemed a real eventuality.

Notification Procedure

Historic properties may be identified as threatened by any individual, community, organization, or agency. Initial notification can occur in a number of ways. When aware of an impending demolition or long term abandonment (acute or passive threat), private citizens, community groups, or public agencies should inform the city or county historic preservation planner in which the threatened property is located. If there is no local preservation planner,
Greenlawn Farm Manager's House, Middletown, New Castle County. Threatened by development pressure. Documented with large-format photographs and scaled, annotated field notes.

then the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DESHPO) should be notified. Within ten days of receiving notification that an historic property is threatened, the property should be visited by the state or local preservation planner in whose jurisdiction the property is located and should be assessed in terms of the Criteria for Justification listed below. Within ten days after the site visit, the preservation planner must provide a report to the DESHPO containing the information outlined in the Criteria for Justification as well as identifying the historic property by name, location, and Cultural Resource Survey number. The planner should also make a recommendation as to the level of documentation which they feel is appropriate for the property in accordance with the Categories of Documentation contained in these guidelines.

The final determination regarding whether there is adequate justification to go forward with the documentation project and the determination of the appropriate level of documentation will be made by the DESHPO and should occur within ten days of the receipt of the preservation planner's report. While it is not possible to document every threatened property, every threatened resource brought to the attention of the DESHPO will be considered in accordance with the Criteria for Justification. The individual, community group, or agency that originally identified the property will be kept informed of all actions regarding the determination on whether to document the property, and may be actively involved in the determination process. Once the DESHPO has determined that the documentation process will be carried out, the owner of record should be notified by whomever will be carrying out the actual documentation.
Criteria for Justification

Documentation of threatened resources must follow the criteria for establishing areas of significance and levels of integrity identified in National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 15 (How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation). Both notification and documentation must also make specific reference to the relevant historic contexts identified in the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan. Wherever possible, justification should refer to the existence of similar historic properties by functional and associative property type, historic context, known numbers of surviving examples, and the number of examples either listed or deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Justification also must refer to the level of the threat and available funding. Threats to historic properties can be categorized as acute or passive. Acute threats generally are represented by the announced intention to demolish or irrevocably alter the architectural integrity of a property through alteration, renovation, or other action. Passive threats comprise all those actions which leave historic properties vulnerable to long term deterioration. Chief among passive threats are various aspects of abandonment and disuse. Passive threats, such as the long term vacancy of a historic property, often become acute. The justification process must balance a number of factors around the question of acute and passive threat. A rare example of a recognized property type may be passively threatened by abandonment, while a representative of a common property type may be threatened by imminent demolition. Weighing integrity issues, architectural significance, historic contexts, and representativeness, the DESHPO must determine the schedule and appropriate level of documentation for each historic property. Preservation planners must also account for the possibility that threatened resource documentation can curb both acute and passive threats. The ability of the documentation process to serve as an historic preservation education vehicle must not be underestimated. Situations where threatened resource documentation may lead to the physical preservation of an historic property should be recognized.

Because finite funds and human resources limit the real number of properties that can be documented, the justification process must consistently refer to existing historic preservation planning guidelines and priorities.

Justification statements should address the following:

1) Nature of threat:
   a) active
   b) passive.

2) Representation of the property type in existing surveys including National Register of Historic Places, Historic American Buildings Survey, Historic American Engineering Record, etc. Specify number of known examples and level of documentation wherever possible.

3) Relationship to historic contexts and priorities in the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, including any pertinent evaluation criteria developed for the context.

4) Areas of architectural significance and integrity. Specify significant features such as site plan, plan type, ornamentation, construction, historic change, etc.

5) Projected project outcome:
   a) documentation only
   b) possible physical preservation
   c) other.

6) Available funding.

Taken together, these factors provide measurable criteria for ascertaining appropriate categories of documentation.
Categories of Documentation

The documentation category chosen should be appropriate to the nature and significance of the threatened building or structure, but should accommodate as far as possible any existing time constraints such as imminent demolition or rapid physical deterioration.

The following documentation categories have been based on specifications for submission of documentation to the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record and on common practices carried out by staff of the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering and state and local preservation planning professionals. Documentation within all categories shall adequately illustrate and explicate the significance and/or historic value of the building or structure in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Architectural and Engineering Documentation.

Category I: Intensive Documentation

This type of documentation would be appropriate in cases where extensive evidence for the original configuration, trim, or historic use remains. In the case of agricultural buildings, the placement of original stalls, storage areas, and work places describe not only the fabric of the building but the operation of the farm. The same level of information can be expected from well-preserved industrial, ecclesiastical, and public structures. Dwellings with significant evidence of plan, plan changes, and ornament provide valuable insight into the organization and use of domestic space. All materials in this category are submitted to HABS/HAER.

1) Drawings. A full set of measured drawings (including floor plans, sections, elevations, details, and cover sheet) depicting existing and/or historic conditions. (See Field Instructions for Measured Drawings: Historic American Buildings Survey or Historic American Engineering Field Instructions.)

Phillip Reading Tannery, Middletown, New Castle County. This building represented the only surviving eighteenth-century tannery in the state. Documented with large-format photographs and full HABS drawings in 1991, it was destroyed by fire less than a year later.
2) **Photographs.** Large format (4" x 5") negatives and contact prints of exterior and interior views; archival photocopies of existing drawings, photographs, and historic views if available. (See Guide for the Preparation of Photographic Documentation in Accordance with the Standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record.)

3) **Written Data.** A narrative report containing a history and architectural description of the site is preferred. This may be either the long or short form specified by HABS/HAER. (See Guide for the Preparation of Written Historical and Descriptive Data in Accordance with the Standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey.)

**Category II: Partial Intensive Documentation**

In many cases, the category of partial intensive documentation will preserve the architectural and historical information provided by a given structure. In some instances, the buildings are so altered that their documentation is primarily archaeological in nature. Accordingly, scaled and detailed field notes with extensive annotation provide comprehensive coverage for the resource. In situations where there is insufficient funding for the preparation of finished measured drawings, the compilation of detailed field notes provides the means to record the maximum amount of data and allow for the future completion of measured drawings.

1) **Drawings.** A full set of archival measured field notes annotated and to scale, depicting existing and/or historic conditions. (See Field Instructions for Measured Drawings: Historic American Buildings Survey or Historic American Engineering Field Instructions.) The field notes would not be submitted to HABS/HAER in this form but could be used at a later date to prepare measured drawings of the structure.

2) **Photographs.** Large format (4" x 5") negatives and contact prints of exterior and interior views; archival photocopies of historic views if available. (See Guide for the Preparation of Photographic Documentation in Accordance with the Standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record.) The photographs would be submitted to HABS/HAER with the written data.

3) **Written Data.** A HABS/HAER short form narrative report containing a history and architectural description of the site is preferred. (See Guide for the Preparation of Written Historical and Descriptive Data in Accordance with the Standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey.) The written data would be submitted to HABS/HAER with the photographs.

_Dwelling, Hunter Farm Complex, Indian River Hundred, Sussex County. Threatened by deterioration, vandalism, and renovation. Documented with large-format photographs and full HABS drawings._
Category III: Basic Documentation

Basic documentation describes two areas of recording activity. First, basic field work is used to update and augment the information recovered in earlier documentation efforts, such as previously completed HABS/HAER-level measured drawings and large format photography. Second, basic field work is used to supplement initial reconnaissance surveys where the structures are imminently threatened with demolition, have been abandoned, or are in an advanced state of deterioration.

1) Drawings. Measured sketch plan and site plan.

2) Photographs. 35mm negatives (or larger format) and contact sheet prints of exterior and interior views.

Definitions

This section defines the terms used in Categories of Documentation as they apply to Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record standards for submission of documentation.

Measured Drawings. Measured drawings shall be produced from recorded, accurate measurements of all exterior and interior dimensions. Portions of the building that were not accessible for measurement should not be drawn but rather clearly labelled as not accessible, or drawn from available construction drawings or other sources which must be identified. No part of the measured drawings shall be produced from hypothesis or non-measurement related activities. Measured drawings submitted to HABS/HAER shall be accompanied by a set of archivally prepared field notes on which the measurements were first recorded.

Large Format Photography. Large format photographs shall be 4" by 5" black and white negatives that clearly depict the appearance of the property and areas of significance of the recorded building or structure. Each view shall be perspective-corrected and fully captioned.

Written History and Description. Written data for Categories I and II shall be based on primary sources to the greatest extent possible. A frank assessment of the reliability and limitations of the sources shall be included. Sources shall be footnoted within the written history. The written data section shall include a methodology specifying the name of the researcher(s), date of the research, sources, and limitations of the project.

Materials and Presentation

Documentation shall be prepared on materials that are readily reproducible, durable, and in standard sizes.

Measured Drawings. Ink on translucent and archivally stable material. Two standard sizes are acceptable: 19" x 24"; 24" x 36". Drawings will be lettered mechanically or in a hand-printed mechanical style. Dimension scale will be included on all pages.

Photography. Prints will be archivally stored with their negatives. Negatives are required to be on safety film only. Color photography is not acceptable. Complete identification sheets will accompany photographic negatives and contact sheets.

Written History and Description. Archival 8½" x 11" bond required.

Field Notes. Field notes should be taken on 100 percent rag paper and may be photocopied on to archival paper.

For additional information, contact:
Center for Historic Architecture & Engineering
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19716
(302) 831-8097
To report a threatened resource, contact the appropriate preservation professional:

1) City of Wilmington Preservation Planner  
Department of Planning  
(302) 571-4402

2) New Castle County Preservation Planner  
Department of Planning  
(302) 366-7780

3) Kent County Preservation Planner  
Department of Planning  
(302) 736-2029

4) Delaware State Historic Preservation Office  
(302) 739-5685

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Washington, DC 20240

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Dover, Delaware 19901