

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE CURRENT STATE OF INTERIOR
DOCUMENTATION: WILL IT SATISFY A
RECONSTRUCTION GOAL?

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This thesis examines the interior documentation in Presidential house museums and sites associated with Presidents. The research evaluates the accuracy of the interior documentation that exists, or is planned, and if it is sufficient to affect a reconstruction in the event a building is lost in a natural or man-made disaster. The research includes a comprehensive survey of 34 Presidential sites to provide site, interpretation, and documentation information, as well as the current state of disaster planning and policies regarding reconstruction. The focus of the thesis is on the need for accurate interior documentation to satisfy a reconstruction goal, if reconstruction is deemed necessary or desired. Its other purpose is to raise awareness of current thinking regarding reconstruction and proactive planning for a disastrous event.

The study makes it clear that many historic properties do not have the financial ability, or skilled human resources, to create accurate documentation to satisfy a reconstruction goal. The thesis addresses these limitations and makes recommendations to overcome them. Survey results indicate that a lack of interpretive focus on the interior may influence the amount of accurate interior documentation existing at these sites, as well as plans to record interiors in the future. This thesis suggests a need to adjust current thinking regarding the physical attributes of interiors as they are interpreted and recorded in historic buildings.

The nature of our world's volatile environment is further indication of the need to reevaluate the current state of interior documentation for historic buildings. Disaster planning and policies can mitigate circumstances where historic resources bear a risk of loss, but does not proactively address issues involved with reconstruction were a tragic event to occur. The thesis recommends that a document referred to as a "recovery plan" be developed. It defines the personnel responsible for its creation and maintenance and suggests repositories for its safe keeping.