

Property Documentation

The photographic and historical documentation of a historic property to be demolished, relocated, or substantially altered is standard practice in the field of historic preservation, and is intended to provide a record of the property in perpetuity as mitigation for adverse impacts. Federal documentation guidelines are provided under the Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscape Survey (HABS/HAER/HALS) program. This sheet provides state-level guidance for producing digital and hard-copy documentation reports to be held by our office (the State Historic Preservation Office/SHPO) and by the New York State Archives. Historic properties are to be documented using the following format:

Photographs*

- Photographs should be clear, well composed, and should provide an accurate visual representation of the property and its significant features. Submit as many photographs as needed to depict the current condition and character-defining features of the property.
- Digital photographs should be taken using a ten (10) megapixel or greater digital SLR camera.
- Images should be saved in Tag Image File format (TIFF) or RAW format images. This allows for the best image resolution. RGB color digital TIFFs are preferred.
- Selected images for the hard-copy documentation package should be printed as follows: one to three 8x10-inch views of the overall property. Sufficient 5x7-inch supplemental images to fully document the present condition of all aspects of the property (important site features, all façade elevations, major architectural features and details, and representative views of the interior spaces).
- Historical photos (if available) depicting the property should be reprinted at 5x7-inch size and included in the documentation.
- Images should be printed on a high quality color printer using compatible high quality photographic paper stock (HP printer use HP Paper, Epson printer use Epson paper)
- Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on an accompanying Photo Log or Key. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the Photo Log or Key and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.
- Write the label information within the white margin on the front of the photograph using a photo labeling pen. Label information can also be generated by computer and printed directly in the white margin (adhesive labels are not recommended).
- Do not print information on the actual image – use only the photo margin or back of the photograph for labeling.
- At a minimum, photographic labels must include the following information: Photograph number, name or address of the property, date photograph was taken, and the county the property is located in.
- Photos should be placed in folders or photo sleeves.

Historical Narrative**

A narrative description should be prepared and should include the relevant historical context, a discussion of the development and construction history of the property, and a summary of the property's historical significance. Copies of primary source documentation (such as historic photographs, archival records, original architectural plans, and maps), if available, should be included, appropriately labeled, and referenced in the narrative text (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2).

Plans/Drawings***

Copies of existing recent or current construction plans, if available, should be included.

Final Report

Two bound or boxed hard copies of the final documentation report (including photographs, historical narrative, and drawings) are requested: one copy of the report should be submitted to the SHPO for forwarding to the New York State Archives, and one copy of the report should be provided directly to an appropriate local repository. A digital copy of the report (saved on a thumb drive, CD or DVD) shall accompany the SHPO hard copy. **Completed documentation reports are to be submitted prior to demolition/relocation/renovations.**

PLEASE NOTE:

**Large-format (4 by 5) film photography may be warranted for National Historic Landmarks and properties possessing a high level of local significance, or statewide or national significance.*

***Creation of as-built drawings may be warranted, and could be done using traditional drawing methods, CAD-type programs, or laser scanning.*

****A useful model for the historical narrative is the HABS/HAER narrative report form, equivalent to HABS Level 2 documentation. The HABS Historical Report Guidelines can be found on the web at: <https://www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/HABS/HABSHistoryGuidelines.pdf>*

NOTICE: This form is meant to be used as general guidance. Requirements may vary depending on the historic property and project in question. Property-specific requirements such as number of buildings/structures may be called out in the Letter of Resolution (LOR) agreement document or as a modification of this document appended to an LOR.