

# New Spaces in Historic Places Remick Barn and Ramsdell House Master Orientation Plans

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# Museums of Old York

## Remick Barn Orientation Plan

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## Acknowledgements

# Overview

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## Introduction

In the spring of 2008, the Remick Barn opened as the visitor center for the Museums of Old York. Moved from Eliot, Maine, the Barn is a historic structure (c. 1834) adapted for a new and exciting use as a welcome center for museum visitors. It includes space for educational programs and a climate-controlled gallery for exhibits on the second floor.

Although many possible uses of the Remick Barn exist, one of its most important purposes is the subject of this proposal – visitor orientation. With nine historic buildings, several of which are located considerable distance from the others and which feature both guided and self-guided tours, the Museums of Old York has the potential to overwhelm or confuse visitors. A comprehensive, consistent orientation plan is necessary to minimize confusion on the part of visitors and ensure that they have the most positive experience possible.

## Goals

With these thoughts in mind, three major goals articulate the three major purposes of this orientation plan for Old York.

- 1. To provide visitors with the practical tools they need to take advantage of Old York's resources.** Visitors will not be willing to entertain abstract historical knowledge unless they are physically comfortable in their surroundings. They must feel comfortably situated in space (know where buildings, restrooms, food, etc. are located) before they can learn. In addition, the orientation space should serve as a “comfort zone” for visitors. Most visitors have been to other museums and are familiar with admissions desks and museum stores; they know how to act in such spaces. This familiar environment should put them at ease before they venture into the potentially unfamiliar environments of Old York's historic buildings.
- 2. To provide a historical framework for visitors to understand Old York's resources and the idea that Old York's properties represent a series of time periods rather than just one historical era.** Old York has the potential to be conceptually confusing because its interpretations span such diverse time periods, sometimes within one building, as at the Emerson-Wilcox House. Orientation should prepare visitors for the diversity of time periods they will encounter at the museum, while helping them to make thematic connections between the eras.
- 3. Answer the question: why does the history of York matter to the average visitor?** Many potential visitors to museums care little about history. Declining attendance at even the most well-known museums and historic sites challenges museum professionals to find historical ideas and issues to which contemporary visitors can relate. Those who already care about history may not understand how York's history fits into broader historical trends in New England and the nation. Visitor orientation at the Remick Barn should

illuminate the significance of York's history and show visitors what they can better understand about their own world by studying the past of this historic seaside village.

## Budget

Some of the orientation components recommended in this plan require the commitment of funds that may or may not fit into the museum's regular annual budget. To be realistic, we have included three budget options for the plan's most expensive elements. Our preferred recommendations are starred. We have included some detailed budget information in Appendix Q.

# Visitor Center Planning Process

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## Field trips

In order to learn what methods of visitor orientation are achieving success in other institutions, we visited a variety of regional New England museums, including:

- Mystic Seaport, Mystic, CT
- Portsmouth Historical Society, Portsmouth, NH
- Strawberry Banke, Portsmouth, NH
- Minute Man National Historic Site, Lexington, MA
- National Heritage Museum, Lexington, MA
- Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA
- Seacoast Science Center, Rye, NH
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston, MA
- Old South Meeting House, Boston, MA
- Boston National Historic Park Visitor Center, Boston, MA
- Boston Common Visitor Center, Boston, MA

Each museum took a unique approach to visitor orientation, yet some trends were evident across institutions. Most museums incorporate some form of handout map or brochure, and some, like Mystic Seaport, rely almost entirely on their brochures for visitor orientation. In their visitor center lobbies, many museums incorporate exhibit panels explaining the museum's mission, what visitors should expect, or the history interpreted there. Front-desk staff frequently post tour times and other relevant information behind or near the front desk. Many visitor center lobbies feature a large table-top or wall map to orient visitors to the museum grounds. Some sites, like Minute Man National Historic Site and Strawberry Banke, use an audio-visual presentation to introduce visitors to the history portrayed at their museums. Without exception, the museums also rely heavily on live staff to orient visitors. In each museum, at least one person greets visitors and answers their questions. Some museums experiment with more innovative forms of visitor orientation; for example, the Seacoast Science Center's lobby features a small boat on which children can climb, providing them with an introduction to the museum and a way to keep them occupied while their parents buy tickets and ask questions.

Beyond the visitor center, museums utilize prominent signage to help visitors find their way around a building or site, as well as help them find the museum from the street. Staff at some sites, like Strawberry Banke, emphasize that visitor orientation begins long before visitors walk through the door or even enter the parking lot; they consider the website and brochure important orientation tools as well. For much of this orientation plan, we drew inspiration from various components of visitor orientation at all of these different sites. We have included photographs of a few highlights of these visits in Appendix A.

## Visitor surveys

Collecting visitor feedback constituted an extremely important realm of research for visitor orientation planning in the Remick Barn. Museum professionals now widely recognize the necessity of visitor research. They

cannot simply rely on their own judgment when planning an exhibition or a program. Too often that judgment proves faulty; museum professionals can sometimes be woefully out of touch with the average visitor's desires. In order to ensure that this master plan incorporated visitor opinions and interests, we undertook several surveys of museum visitors and community members.

#### - **Remick Barn Visitor Orientation Survey**

We distributed the survey reproduced in Appendix B to visitors at the Remick Barn for several weeks in late June and early July 2008. Shoppers at the York Farmers' Market on Saturday, July 12 also completed some surveys. A total of twenty-three visitors completed surveys; the results are tabulated in Appendix C. Some visitors failed to answer every question, but the results of the surveys give a general idea of what visitors want and expect in an orientation center. See Appendix D for charts illustrating the results of each question. We summarize the results below:

- Visitors are most interested in two potential topics in an orientation center: history and practical information. The recommendations in this plan incorporate both of these differing, but equally important, elements.
  - When asked what they would like to learn at the Remick Barn Visitor Center, twenty-one respondents said that they “definitely want to learn” the “history of Old York’s buildings.” Twenty-one respondents said that they “definitely want to learn” or “maybe want to learn” an “overview of York’s history” and twenty marked the same for “practical information.” Visitors were least interested in learning about “other things to see/do” (seventeen) and “upcoming events/programs” (fifteen).
  - Of those who specified which choice was the most important to them, the most respondents chose “overview of York’s history” (eight) followed by “history of Old York’s buildings” (six) and “practical information” (six). Four visitors chose “upcoming events/programs” and no visitors chose “other things to see/do.”
- Visitors did not always agree on which methods they preferred for learning information in an orientation center. This finding was not surprising, considering that people learn in different ways. According to theorists like Howard Gardner, people possess skills in seven different realms of learning: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Each realm is independent from the others; therefore, different visitors have different preferences for learning within these seven “multiple intelligences.”<sup>1</sup> A successful visitor orientation program will appeal to as many of these diverse intelligences as possible.
  - When asked how interested they would be in using particular methods to learn about Old York, twenty-three visitors said they were “very interested” or “somewhat interested” in “exhibit panels.” Twenty-two

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<sup>1</sup> Discussed in Kathleen McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1993): 10-12.

visitors were interested in a “large map” with twenty-one very interested. Twenty-two were interested in a “handout map and brochure.” These top three interests were followed by “schedule on wall” (twenty-one), “video” (eighteen), and “staff member” (eighteen).

- Of those who specified which option would be most appealing to them, the greatest number chose “large map” (seven), followed by “handout map and brochure” (six), “video” (four) and “exhibit panels” (four). Three people each chose “schedule on wall” and “staff member.”

Due to some incomplete surveys and the relatively small number of surveys returned, the survey results are not statistically infallible. Although some options stand out as clear visitor preferences, the main trend that emerges from the surveys is the diversity of visitor opinion. The recommendations in this plan are designed to appeal to these various visitor preferences.

#### - Visual Component

We also included a visual component in our visitor surveys. We discussed visitor preferences regarding exhibit panels with museum visitors and professionals and encountered contradictory opinions. For example, some said that panels should feature a solid amount of text so that visitors can learn more about an object or idea if they are interested. Others, like Strawberry Banke director Larry Yerdon, said that words tend to deter visitors and that panels should incorporate little, if any, text. We tested three mock-up panels on twenty visitors to see which they preferred. We designed each panel with a different amount of text balanced with images. The three panels are included in Appendix E, and the results with visitor comments are included in Appendix F.

Option A was the clear winner with 13 votes out of 20. Visitors consistently extolled its clarity and simplicity. They preferred to focus on one image rather than several competing images and appreciated the solid – but not lengthy – block of text. Any exhibit panels in the new orientation plan should be designed with this visitor feedback in mind.

#### - Map and Brochure Feedback

Early in the summer, we redesigned the brochure Old York visitors receive upon purchasing tickets. The original one-page brochure included a great deal of text, and from our observations, proved difficult for visitors to use. For example, building tour times were buried in lengthy blocks of text, and visitors had trouble finding them unless a staff member highlighted them. In order to improve this situation, we created a booklet-style brochure that includes the same information in a less verbose fashion. See Appendix K for a copy of the new brochure. Throughout the summer, we spoke to visitors to see which they preferred. They chose the new brochure almost exclusively.

We also talked to visitors about Old York’s map, which is included on the old and new brochure. The drawing is attractive, but not particularly useful for visitor navigation. It is particularly difficult for visitors to see that the two sections of Lindsay Road on the map are in fact connected. Our

discussions with visitors led us to a firm belief in the necessity of a new map for next year's brochure.

## Community surveys

Since most visitors to the Museums of Old York are visitors from out-of-town, visitors of this demographic completed most of the surveys. A different survey method was necessary to obtain the opinions of York residents, an important group that Old York hopes to serve more purposefully in the future. In order to obtain their thoughts on the visitor center, we conducted seven phone interviews with year-round residents of York. Most of the interviewees had prior connections with Old York; for example, we interviewed the parent of an Old York Junior Docent. Therefore, most of the interviewees were already somewhat familiar with Old York before the interview, which may have influenced their responses. The survey used, adapted from the original Remick Barn survey, is found in Appendix G.

- Three of the interviewees visit the museum about once a year and two visit less than once a year. Only two interviewees visit two or more times a year. From the survey, it appears that many York residents visit for special events, such as the Remick Barn grand opening, a funeral reception, and a lecture on the silk trade.
- All seven interviewees were personally interested in learning about upcoming special events and programs at Old York. They were somewhat less interested in York history, practical information like where to find food and restrooms, and Old York's buildings, and barely interested in other things to see/do in York. When asked if they would like to learn anything not already mentioned, responses were contradictory. Some named particular aspects of York's history about which they would like to learn, but one said that visitors do not need to learn about York's history in the Remick Barn.
- The York residents interviewed were most interested in an orientation film about Old York, a large map of York, and a schedule of tours and events on the wall. Six of the seven interviewees were most interested in early York history (1600-1800), while one mentioned nineteenth-century York history as a primary interest.
- The interviewees contributed a variety of ideas about ways that Old York could appeal more to the local community. For example, interviewees expressed interest in special events specifically for community members, programs exploring controversial topics, and opportunities to use Old York's facilities for community events. One respondent said that Old York could use York's legacy of fishing and agriculture to talk about pressing environmental issues today, like pollution and conservation. Most of the interviewees expressed an awareness of the importance of the past in helping us to act wisely in the future.

All of the comments from the community member interviews are listed in Appendix H. The community member surveys proved particularly valuable because the opinions solicited did differ considerably from those of out-of-town visitors. Most notably, community members were more interested in upcoming events and programs at Old York, and therefore we will not neglect this element of visitor orientation in the orientation plan.

## Staff and interpreter surveys

The final component of surveying involved a conversation with the staff and interpreters at Old York. More so than any others except the visitors themselves, those on the front line are best positioned to know visitors' need and desires. We distributed a questionnaire (Appendix I) to all staff members and interpreters and held a meeting on July 8, 2008. Five staff members, in addition to the four Fellows, attended the meeting to discuss the questions, and two absent staff members filled out questionnaires.

Responses to the questions were extremely varied, and a full summary may be found in Appendix J. A few trends did emerge.

- The staff emphasized that most first-time visitors most need to know "What are the Museums of Old York?" or "what is here." They are "more confused about what we are than what times or how much we are."
- Most agreed that the most compelling aspects of Old York are related to its social history, and expressed the desire to show visitors why they should care about York's history, not shying away from controversial issues in the process.
- When we asked them how they believe the Museums of Old York could appeal to York residents, staff respondents said that residents want more than a visitor center can provide, but within the visitor center itself, "less is more." Visitor orientation should not overwhelm the visitor.
- Most respondents concur that visitors want to be able to compare the past to the present and directly relate to the people whose stories they hear. For example, York residents can relate to a discussion of York as a port city by comparing the role of the river "back then" to the role of the river in their community today. Residents can also relate to historical developments like the rise of tourism, a business that still largely sustains York's economy.

Anyone preparing new interpretation strategies at Old York should be aware of the trends articulated at the staff and interpreter meeting. Old York's staff wants to help visitors make connections between the past and the present in ways that relate to their lives today, even if – and sometimes especially if – they must discuss controversial issues while doing so. Staff and interpreter feedback also confirmed many of the trends we had already noticed at Old York, such as the desire to make history relevant to modern residents of York. This confirmation provided further support for the visitor orientation recommendations to follow.

# Remick Barn: Recommendations

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## Unique challenges at the Remick Barn

The recommendations outlined here seek to confront five challenges presented by the unique parameters of the Remick Barn space, the configuration of Old York's buildings, and its visitor demography. These challenges each relate directly to the plan's master goals, as outlined in the previous section. The challenges, as we see them, are to:

1. Utilize limited physical space (without overwhelming visitors)
2. Communicate changing tour options and times
3. Convey the passage of time within and between museum buildings
4. Make the history of York relevant to contemporary visitors from other regions
5. Make a perceived tourist destination relevant to community residents

## Visitor comfort

As the first building that many visitors enter, the Remick Barn has the responsibility of welcoming visitors and making them feel comfortable. Accessible restrooms, a visible gift shop, and clear signage are all important towards this end. The plans for the physical layout of the Remick Barn lobby space necessarily take these factors into consideration. The recommended orientation components outlined below are plotted on a floor plan of the first floor of the Visitor Center, available in Appendix P. We designed this floor plan with an intentional minimalism that focuses attention on the marketing of museum resources and visitor comfort. Elements in the current lobby space that distract from the project goals must be reconsidered and, in some cases, relocated.

- **Gift shop.** With this in mind, we recommend that the museum store be moved to the taproom in Jefferds' Tavern. The current location of the store in the Remick Barn lobby is cramped and stands in the way of a simple, streamlined orientation space. Its five doors limit shelving possibilities and increase the potential for theft. Jefferds' Tavern, on the other hand, has a number of currently under-utilized spaces. The taproom offers a contained, secure space with room for shelving. The taproom's bar, which was once used for selling tickets, is an ideal location for a cash register and for storage for bags, boxes, and other store materials.
- **Two benches,** one located along the glass wall to the left of the Lindsay Road entrance and one along the western wall of the Remick Barn lobby.
- **Décor.** Some visitors surveyed indicated that the stark white interior of the Remick Barn lobby was off-putting. While this is not considered a priority at this time, if the Barn interior is ever repainted, we recommend a warmer, non-obtrusive off-white or tan color. Also, the acoustics of the barn lobby are such that voices have a tendency to echo. At some point, an area rug might be installed to absorb sound.

## Marketing materials

As an information center and museum crossroads, the Visitor Center fills a number of important roles. One of its most important functions is to provide visitors with the practical tools they need to take advantage of Old York's properties. Without proper signage, tour information, and adequately dynamic boosterism of museum buildings and activities, Old York's many resources are lost to visitors. Rather than encouraging lingering and reflection, most of the paneling and signage in the Visitor Center should be geared towards getting visitors *out* of the Visitor Center and *onto* historic properties.<sup>2</sup> Thus, marketing materials should be easy to absorb and understand, and text should be kept to a minimum. The recommendations in this section are top-priority.

- **Museums of Old York overview panel** to the visitors' left as they enter through the parking lot entrance. Our research indicates that upon entering a new environment, visitors want to understand where they are and their options for the day. Rather than providing an extensive history of Old York, we recommend a brief paragraph in a large typeface, explaining how visitors can use the museum's resources.

### Sample Text

*Museums of Old York was founded in 1984, when three York historical groups merged into the Old York Historical Society. Today, Old York offers guided and self-guided tours of nine properties, research facilities at the Museum Archives, family activities, special events, and a rentable function room for the York community.*

- **Building banners.** Seven vertical, cloth banners will each feature a large image of the building's exterior, an inset interior photograph, the year of construction, and no additional text. They will not include specific information about tours, themes, or material culture to prevent them from becoming prematurely outdated. To provide a visual cue for visitors about the difference between guided and self-guided tours, however, the three buildings currently available only by guided tour will be grouped behind the greeter desk, where visitors buy tickets. The other four will hang along the western wall of the Remick Barn lobby.
  - Emerson-Wilcox House
  - Elizabeth Perkins House
  - Ramsdell House
  - Old Gaol
  - Jefferds' Tavern
  - Old Schoolhouse
  - John Hancock Wharf and Warehouse (top half)/George Marshall Store (bottom half)
- **Dry erase board** to the visitor's left behind greeter desk, listing scheduled tours and any special events that day. The flexibility of floating staff requires that a tour board that is easy to edit at a moment's notice. A white board is affordable and suitable to Old York's needs.
- **Brochure/schedule with new map.** In Appendix K, we've attached a new brochure for distribution to museum visitors at the beginning of each party's visit. In trial runs, visitors preferred this brochure schedule to the one-page flier in use at the beginning of the summer season. The new brochure breaks out the various

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<sup>2</sup> This strategy is employed effectively at Strawberry Banke.

activities available to visitors by tour times in an easy-to-use schedule format. It includes a brief synopsis of each building without overwhelming the brochure with text. This document should also be made available as a PDF on Old York's website.

\* The new brochure should be revised before next season to include a new map. Surveys revealed that visitors are unanimously dissatisfied with the map currently in use. This image, produced for the capital campaign, is aesthetically pleasing but confusing for visitors without a pre-existing knowledge of Lindsay Road and York Street. Lindsay Road, in particular, is obscured by the trees. The new map should be oriented like the old map, with Remick Barn at the bottom of the map and the Perkins House at the top, but York Street and Lindsay Road should be fully visible and labeled. This map needs to be as easy to understand as possible, as it will serve as each visitor's primary tool for navigating Old York properties.

- **Map on greeter desk counter** highlighting Old York buildings (similar to the tabletop map at Strawberry Banke, pictured in Appendix A). An enlarged version of the map included in each visitor brochure, underneath a sheet of glass or Plexiglas, will serve as a visual aid for the greeter as s/he points out locations of interest.
- **Sample daily schedules** (see Appendix L). The most frequently asked questions in the Remick Barn Visitor Center are "What's here?", "What do you recommend?", and "What do we have time for?" While some museum visitors enjoy crafting their own agenda for the day, other parties find the task daunting and overwhelming. Initially, the breadth of Old York's resources have the potential to actually diminish the experiences of these visitors. Therefore, in addition to the more general schedules that should be distributed to all museum visitors, we recommend providing three optional schedules, for (1) families, (2) adults, and (3) people with only an hour or two to spare. Some visitors want to be told what to do. By providing several sample schedules, we can provide these visitors with the guidance they crave while maintaining some freedom of choice.
- **Brochure stand** for all booklets, brochures, and magazines, located on the front right of the greeter desk. The area around the greeter desk is currently cluttered with informational materials. Everything in the Visitor Center should have a "home" to maintain a clean, minimalistic atmosphere that allows visitors to focus their attention on purchasing tickets and learning more about York history.
- **Interior signage** to welcome visitors to the Remick Barn and direct them to spaces beyond the Visitor Center lobby. These should be consistent in design with Old York's wayfinding plan. See sample signs in Appendix M.
  - Museums of Old York logo stenciled above doorway to restroom lobby
  - "Restroom" sign (with arrow pointing straight ahead) stenciled above doorway to restroom lobby
  - "Gallery" sign (with arrow pointing up and to the right) stenciled above doorway to restroom lobby
  - "Orientation film" sign on the strip of wall to the visitor's right when entering coat room from main lobby
  - "Tickets – Information – Membership" sign in the front panel of the greeter desk
  - Sign at front desk with prices printed in *large* typeface

- “Jefferds’ Tavern and Museum Gift Shop” sign on the door to Jefferds’ Tavern
  - Interchangeable sign on the door to the Function Room that reads, “The Function Room is open. Come on in!” or “The Function Room is currently closed. Ask at the front desk about our special events and programs.” Alternatively, a simple “Function Room” sign would be enough to appease many curious visitors.
- **Panel for donor recognition.** We recommend moving the donor panels from their current location behind the greeter desk to the left of the function room doorway. In this location the panels will hold a special place of prominence during events and community gatherings, which is when most donors and York residents attend the museum. If this is deemed unacceptable by the Development department, we recommend moving the panels to the left of the entrance from the parking lot (above the Old York overview panel). This location is prominent but does not distract from important tour information and signage above the greeter desk.

## Change-over-time panels

Mini-panels will be integrated into the Visitor Center for visitors to discover as they use the space for its more functional purposes. They are designed to reinforce museum concepts in the Visitor Center without burdening the small orientation space with large displays. They confront the challenge of conveying change over time in and between museum buildings by highlighting features from buildings of different time periods. They also encourage visitors to consider the history of ordinary life details, and ultimately connect the physical environment to the social history interactive component at the heart of the Orientation Plan (see p.16).

- Bathrooms (two sets of panels in the Men’s and Women’s bathroom stalls)
  - Historical drawing of privy, with blurb about the Ramsdell house’s lack of indoor plumbing until 1946
  - Old Gaol’s indoor chute
  - Indoor plumbing at Elizabeth Perkins House
- Cash register (one panel on the front left of the greeter desk, at a child’s eye level to give kids something visually stimulating to look at while their parents purchase tickets)
  - 1790s currency
  - 1890s currency
  - 1990s currency
- Water fountain (one panel)
  - Meeting House Creek ice harvesting
  - Water pump behind Emerson-Wilcox House
  - Horse trough near burying ground
- Coat room (one horizontal panel above coat hooks in northwest corner)
  - Pegboard in Ramsdell House
  - Hat hooks in Schoolhouse
  - Closets for fine dresses in Perkins House

## Sample Text

[Photo of chute in Gaol.] *In 1763, two new upstairs cells replaced the dungeon cells in the Old Gaol, indicating an increased concern for the prisoners' welfare. One cell even has an indoor bathroom – a wooden toilet attached to a long wooden chute!*

[Photo of Mrs. Perkins' bathroom.] *Miss Elizabeth Perkins loved reliving her version of colonial times in York, but she also appreciated modern conveniences. Miss Perkins' Colonial Revival estate was one of the first homes in York to have indoor plumbing.*

[Photo of privy behind Jefferds' Tavern.] *For most of York's history, its residents used outdoor privies like this one. The residents of the Ramsdell House used a privy until they installed its first modern bathroom in 1946.*

## Audio-visual component

Field research and visitor feedback indicate that visitors would like to see a visual presentation in the Visitor Center. According to Chelle Ferand, of the Creative Services department at Mystic Seaport, modern visitors are increasingly visual, and "short attention spans are not serviced by printed materials." To cater to changing learning styles and the appeal of modern technology, most museums with a premeditated orientation program choose to orient visitors with some kind of audio-visual presentation, most typically a narrated orientation video.

While a formal theater is not available in the Remick Barn, the Visitor Center coat closet, adjacent to the Remick Barn lobby and the Function Room, would serve as an adequate seasonal theater space between June and August. Rarely is the Visitor Center asked to accommodate more than two families at one time. By mounting a monitor in the northeast corner of the room and removing most of the coat hangers after the school season is finished, the room comfortably fits approximately 8 visitors (or 1-2 families) on two benches and two chairs. Lunchboxes for children's programs in the summer can be stored in milk crates in the function room. Alternatively, rather than installing a flat screen, the television could be mounted on a rolling cart to provide maximum versatility of space.

### **Budget #1**

*Cost of flat-screen monitor or television, computer, and staff time (\$575 + staff time)*

If the coat closet theater is deemed nonviable, one low-cost option would be a PowerPoint slide presentation with photographs and informational slides (advertising programs, tours, buildings, and upcoming events) to loop silently in the Remick Barn lobby. This could be produced easily in-house and updated as frequently as necessary with new programs and events.

### **Budget #2**

*Cost of monitor or television, computer or DVD player, and 2 Perkins fellows (\$6,575)*

While a PowerPoint slide show would entertain visitors waiting for tickets or tours, we recommend a more elaborate audio-visual presentation to introduce visitors to York's history. This presentation needs to be short (no longer than 8 minutes), dynamic, and fulfill some of the same goals as the Visitor Center itself. It should make the visitor aware of Old York's resources, convey the passage of time between buildings, and provoke thought about the relevance of Old York's themes to contemporary audiences.

If budget constraints prevent the professional production of such a piece, the Museum might consider recruiting one or two Perkins fellows next summer with experience or interest in audio-visual editing. The fellows would be responsible for developing a script and matching the audio up against Museum collection images and any available live footage, using a home editing program such as iMovie HD, available on Apple computers.

### ★ **Budget #3**

*Cost of flat screen television, DVD player, and film-maker fees (\$10,625)<sup>3</sup>*

Given the high quality of the capital campaign video, we recommend outsourcing the production of the orientation video to Atlantic Media. The difference between a professionally produced piece and an in-house product is often dramatic, and many grants are available to assist with production costs (see Appendix N).

## Interactive components

- **"We Make History" station** for all ages, located on the wall opposite from greeter desk.

### **Budget #1**

*Cost of panel, mirror, paper, pencils, and drop-box (approximately \$170)*

"We make history every day" panel, in line with other orientation panels. This panel should include a full-length mirror in lieu of an image and slots for 3-5 visitor memories to be posted in the same font as the permanent panels. To the right of the panel should be a small table with a card slot, and blank cards for people to respond to prompts pre-printed at the top of cards.

The prompts should be designed to appeal to both out-of-town visitors and York residents. Possible prompts include:

- "100 years from now, people will come to museums to learn about..."
- "100 years from now, people in York will..."
- "My favorite York memory is..."
- "When I think of York, I think of..."
- "York is special because..."
- "History is important because..."

The visitor memories can be reviewed, typed, and switched out at the museum staff's (or intern's/fellows') convenience, probably around once a month.

### **Budget #2**

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<sup>3</sup> Grant possibilities to fund such a project are listed in Appendix N.

*Cost of panel, mirror, paper, pencils, drop-box, and blog design (\$170-\$2,170 + staff time)<sup>4</sup>*

Budget #1, plus post visitor feedback on a museum blog to incorporate this element into the website. The website is the first face of the Museums of Old York to many visitors, and by incorporating this interactive feature into the website we hope to enrich and extend the visitor's Old York experience. Ideally, we'd like visitors to return to the Old York website even after their visit. The blog makes this a likely possibility. Small wallet cards with the blog's URL could be available at this station for visitors to take home.

The budget price range reflects the difference between a custom-designed, tailored blog and a (free) pre-fabricated Blogger page.

★ **Budget #3**

*Cost of panel, mirror, computer station, blog design, and programming fees (\$3,170)*

Budget #2, plus make a computer station available in the Visitor Center instead of paper and pencils for visitors to respond directly to prompts on the computer. Responses would then be reviewed prior to posting on the blog. The panel would work the same as in Budget #1.

**Sample Panel**

<p><b>We make history every day.</b></p> <p><i>History isn't just the stuff of textbooks and Civil War documentaries. Historians look at the details of everyday life to figure out how people lived in the past. The clothing you wear, the things you buy, and the books you read are all part of the historical record. Look at yourself in this mirror. What do you think people in the future will find interesting or unusual?</i></p> <p><i>These museum visitors made history, and so can you! Fill out a card and we might post your answer here or on our Museum blog.</i></p> <p>"When I think of York I think about going fishing and getting sunburned."</p> <p>-Little Kid, age 7</p> <p>"In 100 years, people will come to museums to learn about poverty, because by then we'll have figured out how to share."</p> <p>-Happenstance Perkins, age 43</p>	<p><b>Full-length mirror</b></p>
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<sup>4</sup> Estimated budget figures here are from local web design specialists were n

s. Emails to

- **Children's basket** with an assortment of hands-on historic toys. The basket will be located next to the bench on the western wall of the Remick Barn, where it will provide a safe place for children to stop and play while their parents purchase tickets and examine the building panels. Possible toys include ball and cup, cloth dolls, Nine Men's Morris, and playing cards. This basket is inspired by the arts and crafts table in the current Folk Art Exhibit, which has proven very successful this summer. Unlike the table in the exhibit, however, we do not want families to dawdle at the basket for more than a few minutes, so the objects provided should reflect the transitory nature of the lobby space. They will also provide a good outlet for children while their families are waiting for tours.

## Community bulletin board

In an effort to directly respond to the interests and needs of York residents, we recommend installing a community bulletin board on the northern wall of the restroom lobby (where the Elizabeth Perkins case currently resides). The museum should be open-minded in their vision and policy for this board, which might be used to advertise museum events, community events, and local groups and forums.

## Human resources

The Remick Barn lobby is a small space in a vacation town in a friendly state. Notably, it is often empty of other visitors when families arrive. This intimate atmosphere sets the Remick Barn Visitor Center apart from visitor centers at larger, busier museums. Regardless of how much information we provide visitors on signs and in brochures, many will still rely on the friendly introduction of the Museum greeter to determine where to go and what to see. Greeter training must be an ongoing part of the orientation process at the Museums of Old York. We suggest the development of a greeter script and a set of Frequently Asked Questions to help greeters field commonly asked questions in the Visitor Center. We have included greeter training materials from the John F. Kennedy Museum and Archive in Appendix O as a starting point for these conversations.

## For future consideration: Interpretive overview

In addition to the orientation components outlined above, our research indicates that visitors, and community members in particular, would like to see some overview of York history in Remick Barn. This undertaking should be approached judiciously, as there is some danger of cluttering the Visitor Center with too much text, which would make the functional aspects of the space less effective. While some overview of York history is important, thematic interpretation should never become the primary focus of the Visitor Center. Interpretive panels should remain physically separate from and secondary to marketing panels. We recommend installing interpretive panels in the restroom lobby on a triangular floating kiosk (on wheels to provide maximum versatility).

Within the next year, the Museums of Old York should organize an Interpretation Committee to begin formulating a thematic overview of Old York's properties. This overview might preface or supplement the narratives discussed in museum buildings. To ensure that the Museums of Old York remain a relevant community resource, and perceived as such by community members, we recommend that the resulting interpretive plan make an effort to connect museum themes to the present day through treatment of issues to which visitors can relate, including social tensions, changing land use, and conservation debates.

The sample topics and text below are provided as a jumping off point for the committee's conversations.

#### Sample Topics

- **Life on the Water:** Maritime Trade and Lifestyles
- **Living Together and Living Apart:** Tourists and Tenements
- **Life on the Land:** York's Changing Landscape

#### Sample Text

##### ***Life on the Water***

##### *Maritime Trade and Lifestyles*

*For thousands of years before European settlement, Native American groups lived off of the fertile land at the junction of the Agamenticus (York) River and the Atlantic Ocean. They supplemented their diets by hunting and fishing the many maritime animals native to southern Maine.*

*When the region was settled by English merchants in the 1640s, the newly chartered town of York grew into a successful maritime port. Oceans and waterways served as the main highways in colonial America for transporting people and goods. Many residents made their livings through the exchange of goods bought and sold in regions as distant as England and the West Indies. The 1807 embargo and war with England in 1812 devastated the shipping and maritime economy of York well into the nineteenth century.*

*In the face of an adverse economy, fishermen and lobstermen continued to harvest the sea for subsistence and commercial profit. Lobstering remains an important part of York's economy to this day, although fluctuations in local lobster populations and fuel prices have created uncertainty within the industry that did not exist a decade ago.*

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