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Urban and Regional  
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L. Douglas Wilder School  
of Government & Public  
Affairs

URSP 691-903  
Historic Preservation  
Applications



# [ HANOVER TAVERN: A HISTORIC RESOURCE MASTER PLAN ]



***Prepared For***

The Hanover Tavern Foundation

***Prepared By***

Historic Preservation Applications Team

*URSP 691-903*

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*Cover Image: [travelpod.com](http://travelpod.com)*

*Image of Hanover Tavern 2011. Graphic has been artistically modified by: M. Simons*

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## Acknowledgements

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### Acknowledgments

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## Executive Summary

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Hanover Tavern is a historical cornerstone. For nearly two centuries, the Tavern has been a gathering place, and it continues that tradition today with its restaurant, historical tours and the prominent Barksdale Theatre. Centrally located in Virginia, the Tavern is situated near the major transportation nodes of I-95, I-295, and State Route 301, and is across the street from the Hanover Courthouse.

Hanover Tavern's future success as a historic site is dependent on a reevaluation and prioritization of its existing internal conditions, operations, and outreach. With creative implementation, changes can be made to help increase public knowledge of the Tavern as a unique and important historic resource. Currently, poor directional signage, limited regional interest, and difficulty publicizing events present weaknesses for the Tavern's outreach. The Tavern has been underutilized as a heritage tourism resource and educational historic site. Survey respondents identified the restaurant, theater and event space as the primary draws to the Tavern, and pointed to a lack of significant historical attractions at the site.

Fortunately, each of these problems can be easily converted to strengths. Recommendations outlined in *Hanover Tavern: A Historic Resource Master Plan*, provide guidance for future planning, and focus on enhanced use of the Tavern's existing historic resources, through the expansion and streamlining of exhibit and other interpretive offerings, and remediation of problem areas in communicating the historic character of the space. Through an analysis of existing conditions, and perceptions of local and prospective constituents, this plan aims to increase the historical patronage of Hanover Tavern.

## Introduction

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*Hanover Tavern: A Historic Resource Master Plan* is designed to serve as a roadmap for the future use of Hanover Tavern as a historic resource in a context of varied constituencies and diverse opportunities. The recommendations herein have been created with the participation of the Hanover Tavern Foundation board members and staff, are based on a close analysis of the Tavern building, amenities, site, uses, and visitors, and incorporating findings from a survey of area residents.

Commissioned by the Hanover Tavern Foundation marketing Committee, a group of students in the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program at Virginia Commonwealth University were challenged with creating a new and dynamic plan for the utilization and promotion of the Tavern as a historic resource. By recognizing the site's strengths and weaknesses, the team hopes to help Hanover Tavern make history more prevalent in its current goals, and its interpretation of history more compatible with other Tavern activities, thereby completing the trio of opportunities available to visitors.

This document outlines a set of recommendations that will help Hanover Tavern succeed as a cultural resource in the community for years to come. The first section covers existing conditions – the data upon which our recommendations are based. This information was collected and analyzed through resident, board, and staff surveys, personal visits and observations, and analysis of the current documents and programs that Hanover Tavern uses in its interpretive programs and other activities. The recommendations which emerged from these findings embody the vision for the future of Hanover Tavern as a premier historic site in Virginia.

## History

The first tavern at Hanover Courthouse was licensed in 1733. John and Eleanor Parks Shelton, Patrick Henry's in-laws, operated a tavern near the Courthouse from 1750 to 1764. The earliest surviving section of Hanover Tavern, the north end, was built in 1791 as a private residence for Paul Thilman. The Thilman family owned and operated the nearby Shelton Tavern which had fallen into disrepair by 1811. In 1822, William Thilman built an ell-shaped tavern to the south of the Thilman residence to replace the no longer extant Shelton Tavern. The two Thilman buildings were linked by a hyphen in 1832. Other modifications have been made to the building as its function changed over the years.

The early clientele of Hanover Tavern was citizens with business at the courthouse, who would often stay overnight and take their meals at the tavern, exchanging gossip and news from distant areas of the county and the country. Hanover Tavern therefore became a major hub for community information in the area. It remained vibrant until the routing of the new railroad through Ashland, and the subsequent decline of highway traffic through Hanover. The tavern has been associated with several famous figures, and the building was in the center of the action in the Civil War Battle of Hanover Courthouse in May 1862.

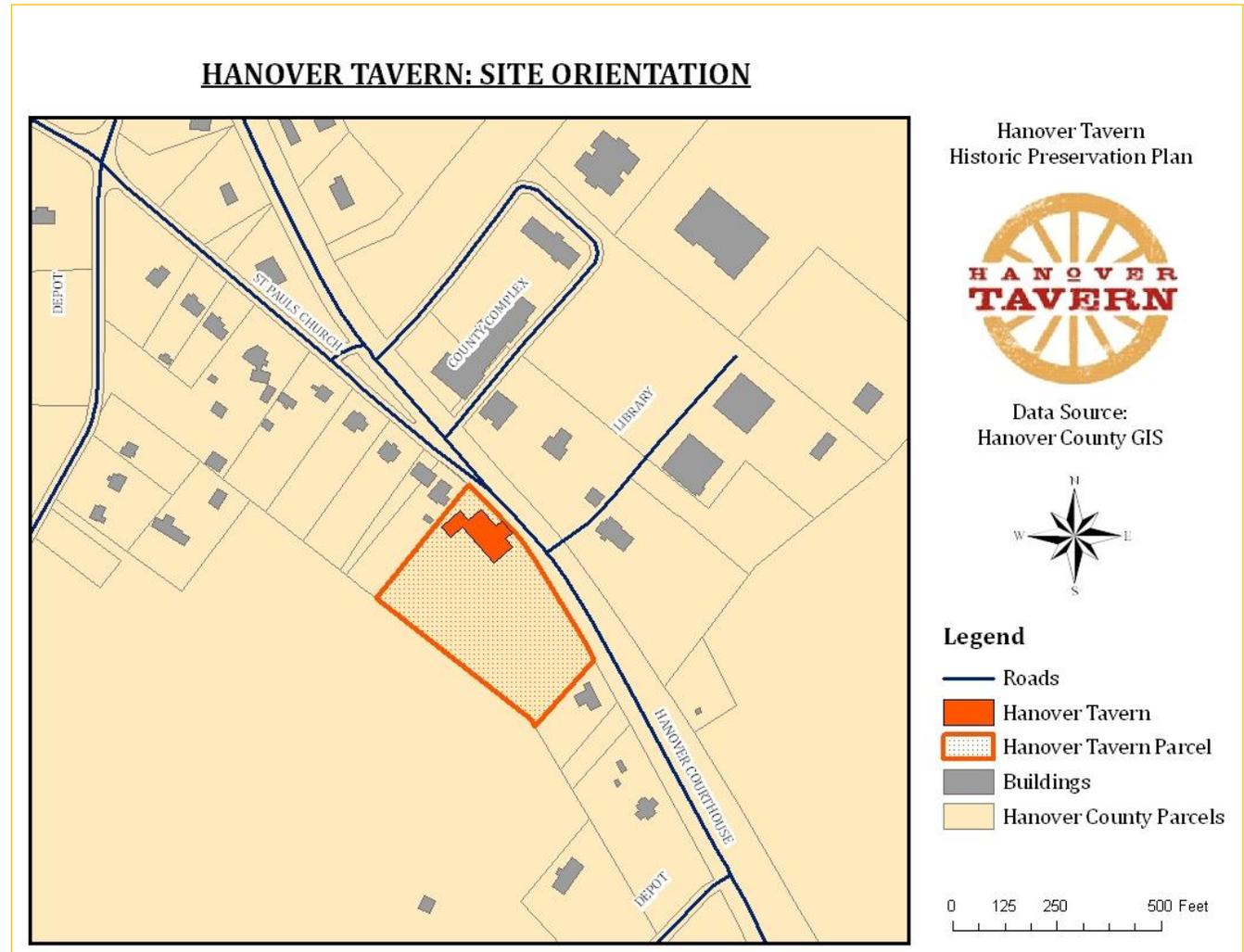
The building was a roadhouse for a number of years after this, but emerged into historical prominence again with the establishment of the Barksdale Theatre in 1953, the first dinner theatre in the United States, and a pioneer in Black-White relations during the Jim Crow era. In 1990, the Hanover Tavern Foundation acquired the property, and leases space to both the Barksdale Theatre and an active restaurant and pub.

## Existing Conditions

### Spatial Analysis

#### Location and Surrounding Influences

Hanover Tavern is located along Hanover Courthouse Road (Route 301) in Hanover County, nineteen miles north of Richmond, seven miles east of Ashland, and approximately a third of a mile south of the intersection of Route 301 and E. Patrick Henry Road (Route 54). The Tavern sits across Route 301 from the Hanover County Courthouse Complex. The land surrounding Hanover Tavern is mostly undeveloped, with only a few shops concentrated along Hanover Courthouse Road. The remaining land is forested or open agricultural land.





### Hanover Tavern Site

Hanover Tavern sits on approximately 3.35 acres owned by the Hanover Tavern Foundation. The tavern is currently the only permanent structure on the parcel, but the Hanover Tavern Foundation has initiated a plan to construct two additional buildings in the next 5 years. The first will be the Smoke House, a historic structure which will be moved from its current location, across Route 301. It will be utilized for tavern events and catering, and surrounded by a demonstration garden. The second structure will be a newly constructed Stable, which will replace the existing tent on the lawn, and will be used for weddings and outdoor events. This figure illustrates the intended physical changes to the site.



### Access to the Tavern: Directional Signage

Signage for Hanover Tavern is posted along major thoroughfares throughout Hanover County, within a five mile radius of the site. The two signs on Interstate-95 are approximately one mile before the exit for Hanover County and are very large and visible. While travelling east on Route 54 one encounters a small green sign that reads “Hanover Tavern” with an arrow pointing to the south. Vehicles must turn right onto Route 301 approximately 100 yards after passing this sign. The next sign is a historic site sign issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia for the entire Historic District of Hanover Courthouse, of which Hanover Tavern is a part. Hanover Tavern’s sign in front of the building stands several feet high near the road in front of the building and clearly displays the name “Hanover Tavern.” As one can see in the photo, the main tavern sign while within feet of the road may not be high enough to be read from a distance or noticed. In addition, it may be trying to convey more information than can be easily read while driving by at a normal speed.

Once in the parking lot more historic signage is found describing the history of the area. Directional signs located along the picket fence that encloses the Tavern yard steer visitors to the rear entrance which is handicapped accessible. There is confusion about accessing the building because the original front of the building now faces a field and the original rear of the building faces Route 301. Further, the Route 301 façade is broken up by a projecting ell that forces the visitor to move to the right or left of the building although the ell also has a doorway. Although the Tavern has debated moving the

entrance to the more visible Route 301 frontage, the rear entrance is used because it is quiet and handicapped accessible.

Once inside it is up to the visitor to determine the direction that they travel. One large sign in the passageway to the restaurant (previously displayed outdoors as a historic site location sign) alerts the visitor to Hanover Tavern’s history. Beyond that there are several directions one can move upstairs and downstairs, although no signs steer visitors in any given direction. Various temporary displays give information about the tavern, pub, and restaurant and allow visitors to take brochures and flyers.

In conclusion, although it is clear that Hanover Tavern has a variety of activities there is no distinction between which doors to enter for each activity. Further, the rear entryway brings visitors into the least historic appearing part of the tavern, and does not promote or invite visitors to use the upper floors of the building.



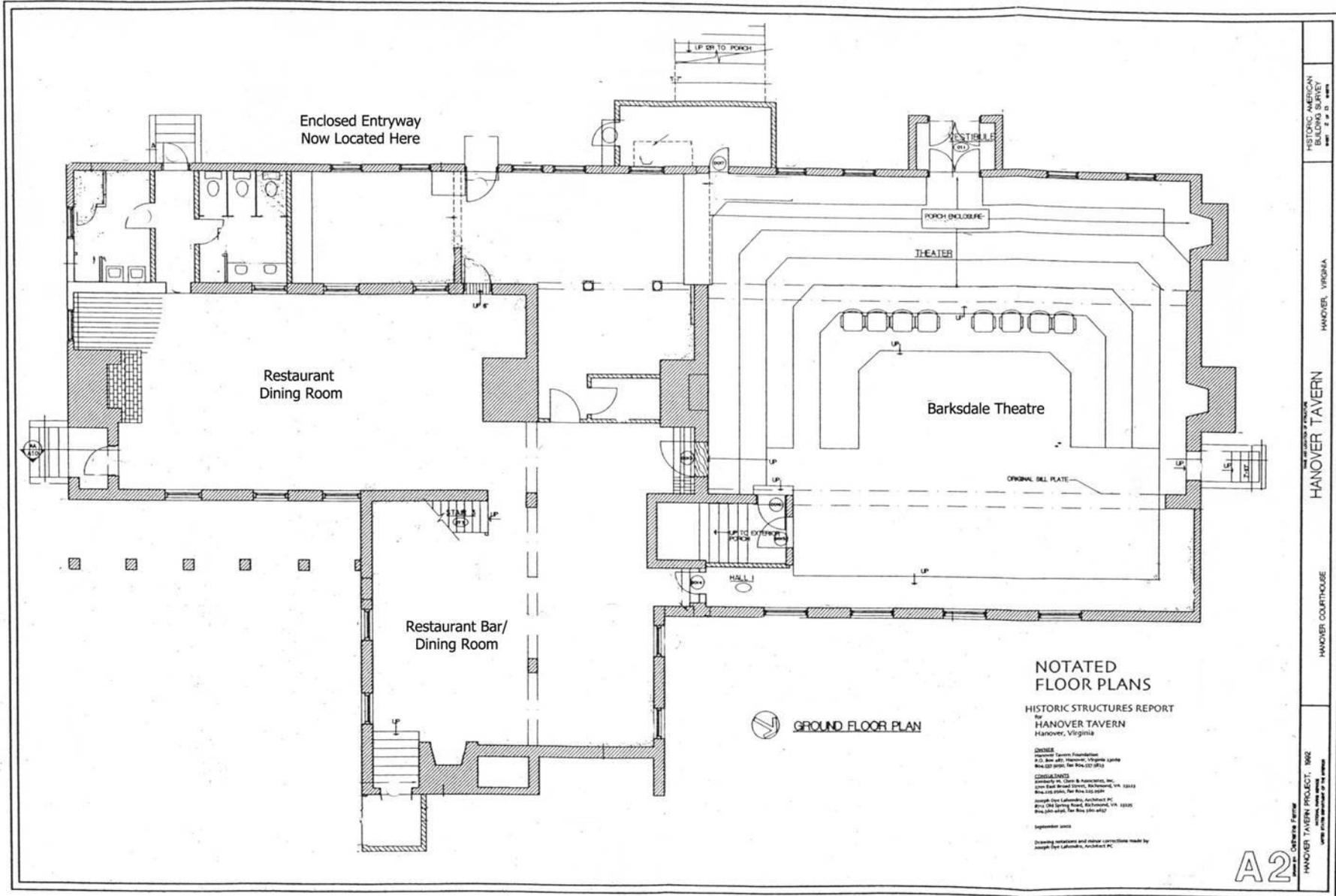
## Interior Layout

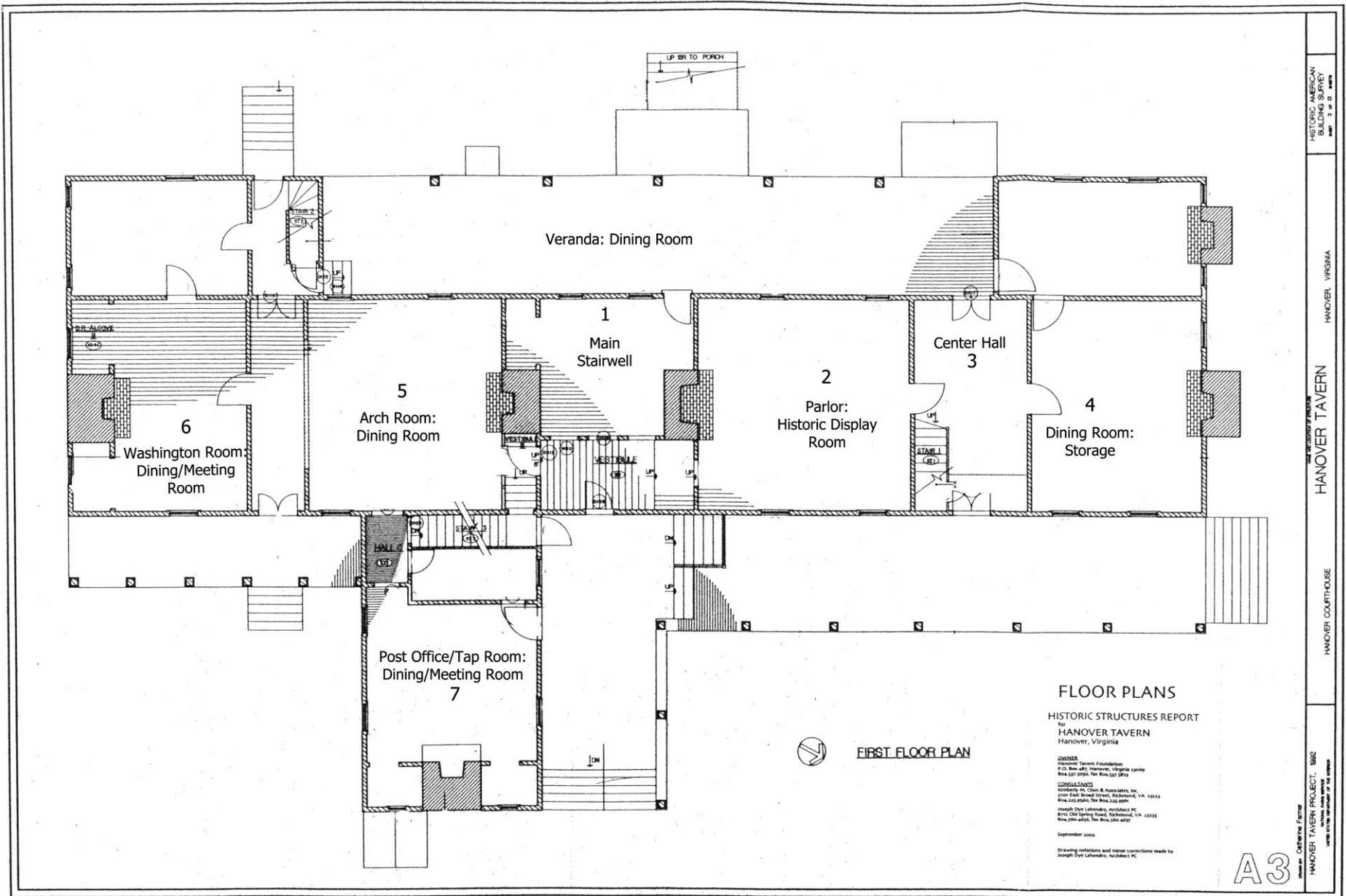
Hanover Tavern consists of three floors, totaling about 12,000 square feet. The primary entrance for the public is on the ground level near the southwest corner, where the restaurant and the Barksdale Theatre are located. This floor consists of four main rooms: two restaurant dining rooms, the entryway, and the Barksdale Theatre. An addition has been added at the northern end of the building, to house modern bathroom facilities and utilities.

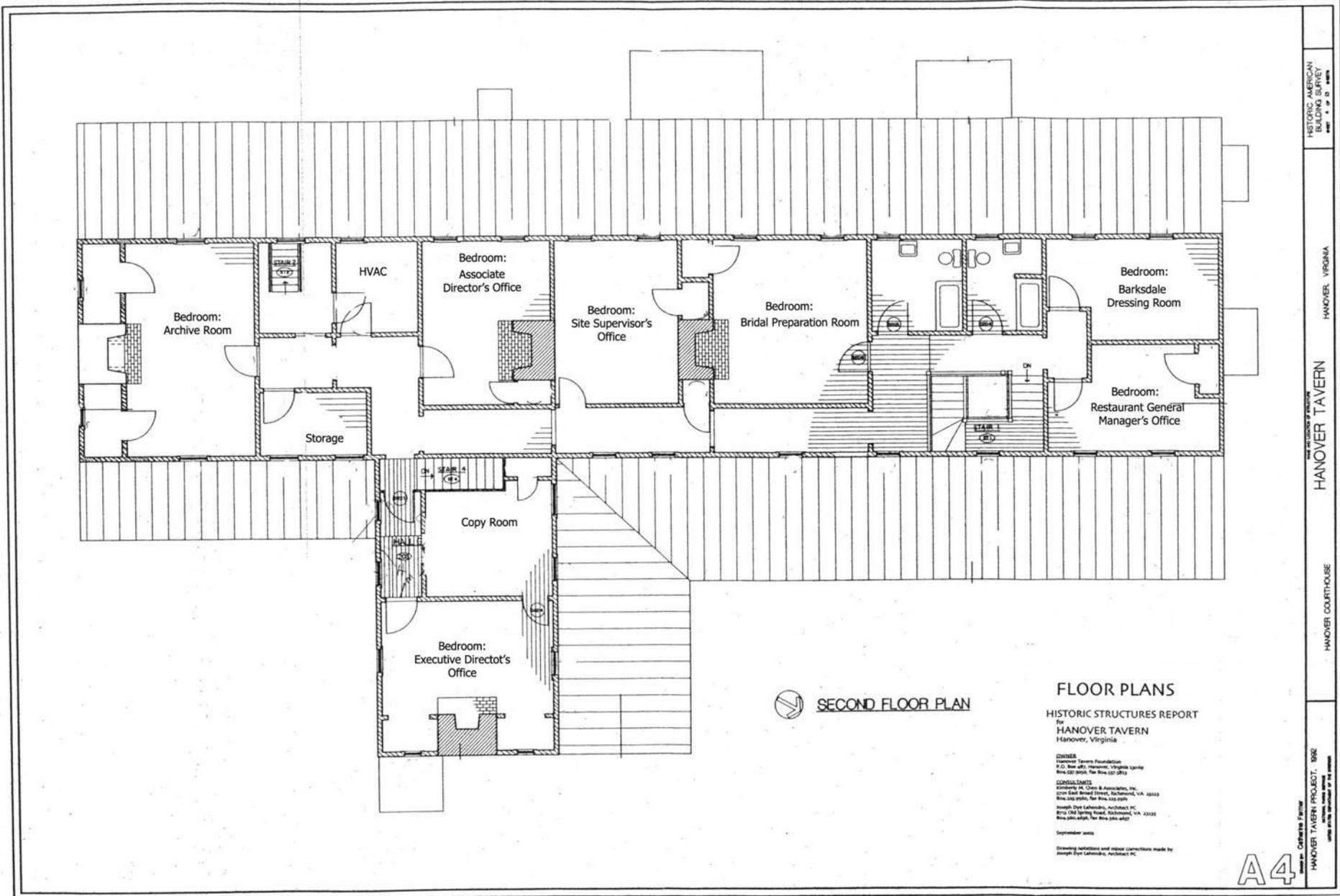
The first floor of the building consists of 10 rooms. The rooms at the southwest end of the building (The Washington Room, the Arch Room, and the Post Office/Tap Room) are utilized primarily for private functions and business meetings, as well as for additional restaurant dining when necessary. The Parlor, located centrally on the first floor, is currently used to display historic exhibits for the self-guided tour. However, the room is

closed off during Barksdale shows, because of its location directly above the theater. The displays in the Parlor are not permanent, as this room is also available for private functions. The Center Hall contains the main stairwell to the second floor, and is used primarily as a hallway. The final room, the Dining Room, at the northern end of the building is currently used as storage, but will house Civil War exhibits as part of the Sesquicentennial celebration, beginning in late 2011.

The second floor of Hanover Tavern consists of twelve rooms, seven of which were historically the Tavern's bedrooms. The rooms are now used by the Hanover Tavern Foundation, the restaurant, and the Barksdale Theatre as offices, dressing rooms, bathrooms, and utility rooms. In addition, there is a bridal preparation room on the second floor that is used before weddings.







SECOND FLOOR PLAN

FLOOR PLANS

HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT  
for  
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Hanover, Virginia

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September 2014

Drawing notations and minor corrections made by  
Joseph Dye Laboratories, Architect PC

A4

HISTORIC AMERICAN  
BUILDING SURVEY  
1987 1 1 13

HANOVER, VIRGINIA

HANOVER TAVERN

HANOVER COURT-HOUSE

OWNER: Conderly & Chen  
HANOVER TAVERN PROJECT: BR2  
DATE: 09/24/14  
SCALE: AS SHOWN ON THIS DRAWING

## **Current Exhibits & Signage**

According to the Hanover Tavern Foundation's 2006 *Interpretation Plan*, every room in the Tavern's first floor is theoretically an exhibit space for varying degrees of historical interpretation. During the scope of study however, the *Dining Room* (Room 4) was closed to the public in preparation of a forthcoming, temporary Civil War exhibit. Thus, this room is not analyzed as an exhibit space though the existing, long-term interpretive signs are discussed. Also, the local artists' exhibit space in the *Main Stairwell* (Room 1) was in transition between installations, and since the *Arch Room* (Room 5) displays an assortment of historical or historic-themed art without interpretation, neither of these two rooms are analyzed in this study. Furthermore, the *Main Stairwell* (Room 1), and the *Center Hall* (Room 3), each lack exhibit displays and their only interpretive signs are not room-specific. Therefore, these rooms are also excused from the exhibit analysis. Lastly, the furnished tavern setting in the *Parlor* (Room 2) was dismantled half -way through the study, so its exhibit analysis is based on photographs and memories from visits earlier in the season and their object labels are not included in the interpretive sign inventory.

The room numbers and names refer to the nomenclature used in the red, self-guided tour brochure, provided by the Hanover Tavern Foundation. To simplify any spatial references, the compass headings North, South, East, and West are used such that the Tavern is oriented with its front porch facing Route 301, due East, and the veranda facing due West.

### **Exhibits**

The use of exhibits in a museum allows visitors to see with their own eyes tangible manifestations of a site's interpretive themes. With light interpretation and a coherent narrative, the arrangement of two and three-dimensional objects, documents, and artifacts enables visitors to make their own connections to the past and to draw their own syntheses of meaning. An analysis of Hanover Tavern's current exhibits and exhibit space is vital for understanding the means in which the Foundation conveys its history.

*"An effective exhibit gives reign to the visitor's imagination. It should create a direct link to an authentic past, a sense of immediacy and intimacy."* – National Park Service Museum Handbook

## Analysis

The Tavern's 2006 *Interpretation Plan* states that:

*Hanover Tavern Foundation will rely on a material culture approach, supported through its collections, landscape, furnishings, and building as objects that can relay the experiences of people from the late eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Guided tours will be object focus (sic), linking to the broader themes outlined in the Interpretation Plan.*

There are very few exhibits currently in the Tavern which match this mission. The *Washington Room* (Room 6), which according to the *Interpretation Plan* is the site of a temporary transportation exhibit, consists only of interpretive panels and contains no actual objects. Therefore, while the number of interpretive signs in Hanover Tavern is plentiful, actual exhibits - that is the physical display and interpretation of objects, documents, or models - is restricted to a handful of examples broken into two categories: material exhibits, and architectural exhibits, discussed below.

### Material Exhibits

The material objects on display in Hanover Tavern consist of a small inventory on the lower level of the building. These three objects are not grouped into a collective "exhibit" but they include: an original theater chair from Barksdale's first incarnation; a small scale model of the Tavern building; and an early historic interpretive sign that once hung outside the building facing Route 301.

The remaining material objects are confined to the *Parlor Room* (Room 2). These include a variety of authentic furnishings that are presumably original to the building or are accurate substitutes. The remaining objects on display in the Parlor Room establish a tableau of an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century tavern setting. These presumably reproduction objects include a children's game, playing cards, candles, place settings, and a parchment facsimile of Patrick Henry's 1775 "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech. Some, but not all, of these objects and furnishings are accompanied by white, foam-core board object labels.

As an exhibit, this space is conflicted. It is neither a museum room with original artifacts in protective displays, nor is it completely a recreated eighteenth-century tavern tableau, although it attempts to be both. Unrelated interpretive panels on the wall compromise the desired authenticity of the furnished tavern scene. Those panels are also a challenge to read because of their distance from the center pathway through the room, which is demarcated with stanchions. According to National Park Service museum standards, the purpose of a furnished room is to provide museum collections with context. The result in the *Parlor Room* is a misleading portrait of this tavern space, suggesting that children played games alongside Patrick Henry as he drafted his famous speech, a speech that he delivered sixteen years before the current Hanover Tavern was constructed.

### Architectural Exhibits

Other than the tavern itself, which is indeed an exhibit as a whole, the architectural exhibits include a total of four cutaways and their respective signage. These cutaways showcase construction and design elements of the Tavern by exposing the architectural nuances that have otherwise been buried under generations of paint and plaster. The *Dining Room* (Room 4) hosts two cutaways but again, this room is currently not open to the public. The *Washington Room* (Room 6) reveals another cutaway, and the *Post Office/Tap Room* (Room 7) reveals the largest of these cutaways, “the cage.” The

*Dining Room* (Rooms 4) and the *Washington Room* (Room 4) use the white foam-core board interpretive sign to explain the cutaways, while the *Post Office/Tap Room* (Room 7) uses a sturdy vinyl sign (style 3, below).

Even though their accompanying signage lacks consistency, these Architectural Exhibits prove to be highly effective means of conveying several important interpretive themes. For it is in these areas that visitors have a chance to use authentic, tangible evidence to make connections to the past.

### Conclusion

While special tours and a forthcoming audio tour provide docent-guided interpretation, the common visitor is meant to experience these exhibits on a self-guided walking tour. However, the loose arrangement of exhibits throughout Hanover Tavern is not organized with a narrative flow in mind. As the National Park Service *Museum Handbook* describes, “A successful museum exhibit tells a good story. The exhibit connects to viewers through objects, label copy, dioramas, exhibit props, and other resources.” Even with a tour brochure in hand, a visitor’s walk through the Tavern follows neither a thematic arch, nor a geographic sequence, nor a chronological order. The rooms are numbered 1-7 on the brochure but this labeling does not correspond to a narrative history nor to a practical sequence. For example, reading the brochure as inclined from left to right, one experiences Rooms 5 and 6, 7, 1, 2, 4, and finally 3. Also, according to the Tavern’s *Interpretation Plan*, Room 3 (the *Center Hall*) is intended to be the starting point for tours. This is certainly not obvious to visitors for this room is neither near a physical entrance (a natural starting point), nor is it the first room listed on the tour brochure (in fact, it is the last).

Regardless of content, the exhibits’ effectiveness is compromised due to the Tavern’s priority for meeting space, dining, and theatre performances. As it is, the *Parlor*, *Central Hall*, and *Dining Room* (Rooms 2, 3, and 4, respectively) are closed whenever there is a play in the theater below. As evident during the site visits for this study, the exhibits in these rooms are also dismantled periodically or are locked behind doors during transition without any attempt to entice visitors to return to see a finished exhibit. Because the *Arch Room* and the *Washington Room* (Rooms 5 and 6) are often used for dining and meeting rooms, museum visitors are required to tiptoe around private functions in order to reach their desired exhibits.

## Interpretive Signage

Interpretative signs use text and photographs to convey pertinent information so that visitors can make their own connections to the meanings inherent in a resource. Such signs have the ability to steer visitors towards a constructed experience in the absence of a docent-guided tour. Signs can be broad in focus: capturing major theoretical concepts, or they can be narrow: providing explanation or context of individual artifacts, rooms, and exhibits. Regardless of scope, signs must be focused and concise or they will lose the visitors' interest and they must always relate to a greater interpretive theme. An analysis of the existing interpretive signage is vital for understanding the means in which Hanover Tavern currently conveys its history.

*Through interpretation – understanding; through understanding – appreciation; through appreciation – protection. – Freeman Tilden*

### Analysis

Hanover Tavern currently has a total of thirty-eight interpretive signs, though one is a “historic” sign that is presented as both an artifact and an interpretive panel. Of the remaining thirty-seven markers, two are located outside the building and are the property of separate historical commissions. These include the “Hanover Tavern” sign from the Patrick Henry Road to Revolution series and the “Hanover Tavern: War Comes to Hanover Court House” sign from the Virginia Civil War Trails commission. Each of these exterior signs are located in or near the parking lot approximately thirty feet from the pedestrian ramp leading to the main, ground floor entrance of the Tavern. The remaining thirty-five interior signs correspond to the themes, goals, and objectives spelled out in the Hanover Tavern Foundation’s 2006 *Interpretive Plan*. The plan establishes the two primary interpretive themes as “Changes

Over Time” and “How We Do History.” The six secondary themes are listed as “History of Hanover Tavern,” “Transportation and Taverns,” “Adaptive Reuse,” “Public and Private Space at Hanover Tavern,” “Restoration,” and “Taverns-General.” Also in accordance with the *Interpretive Plan*, three interpretive signs contain the youth-friendly Thilman Mouse featurette.

Visually, there is no consistent correlation between the interpretative themes of these thirty-five signs so for the sake of analysis the signs are grouped into one of five aesthetic styles.



**Style 1. Hanging Vinyl Banners**

**Colors:** red, gold, black

**Total number:** six

**Location:** *Main Stairwell, Center Hall, (Rooms 1 and 3), and ground floor*

These banners hang loosely from tall, vertical stands. They are all printed in consistent Hanover Tavern brand colors and display the wagon wheel logo. They feature bold headings and succinct descriptions of the various roles the Tavern has served over its two hundred years of activity.

The six banners are listed below with their headings and location in the tavern.

**“You’re Welcome to Stay”** – ground floor, facing hallway between pub and restaurant.

**“Welcome Travelers”** – ground floor, facing entrance at bottom of central stairwell.

**“Treading the Boards”** – ground floor, between Barksdale Theatre and the bathrooms.

**“The Life and Times of a Tavern”** – 1<sup>st</sup> floor, at the top of stairwell in Room 1.

**“One Stop Shopping”** – 1<sup>st</sup> floor, on the landing between Rooms 1 and 2.

**“My House is Your House”** – 1<sup>st</sup> floor, in Room 3 next to doorway to Room 4.

**Style 2. Mounted Vinyl Panels**

**Colors:** maroon, beige, and faded sky blue

**Total number:** nine

**Location:** *Parlor Room, Dining Room (Rooms 2 and 4)*

These interpretive plaques are all located at eye-level and are confined to Rooms 2 and 4. They convey a wide range of themes including room significance, Tavern building significance, preservation and restoration methodology, historiography, and local historic significance. Most feature headings in a cursive or italic font. These nine panels are listed here by their headings, followed by their theme and their location.

**“One Man’s Tavern is Another’s Theatre”** – traces evolution of the Hanover Tavern blueprints, on west wall of Room 4.

**“From Ordinary to Extraordinary”** – explains 2005 additions and restorations, on north wall, Room 4. Also displays Thilman Mouse featurette.

**“Not Just Decoration”** – an analysis of the paint used in the Tavern’s history, located on north wall, Room 4.

**“Has Hanover Tavern Been Restored or Preserved?”** – an explanation of the Tavern’s preservation efforts, located on east wall, Room 4.

**“The Great Debate”** – an explanation of the dendrochronology practice for dating building materials, located on south wall, Room 4, to the east of entrance. Contains the Thilman Mouse featurette.

**“1791 - Public and Private Spaces”** – interprets original usage of the parlor room, located on west wall, Room 2.

**“1861 - A Boarding House”** – explains status of Tavern at the time of the Civil War, located on north wall of Room 2 to the west of doorway into Room 3.

**“1953 - A Living Room”** – interprets usage of room during Barksdale era, located on north wall Room 2, to the east of doorway to Room 3.

**“1997 – Hanover Tavern: A Showcase”** – explains the use of Tavern as Richmond Symphony League’s Designer House, east wall Room 2.

**Style 3. Mounted Vinyl Panels**

**Colors:** golden beige, grey, dark green

**Total number:** four

**Location:** *Post Office/Tap Room (Room 7)*

The four panels of this style are limited to Room 7 and are primarily concerned with construction, archeology, restoration, and preservation. All panels follow a distinctly different style than any of the other interpretive signs in that they have bold, blocky letter headings, and are traced in two bands of colored trim. They are listed below by their headings, followed by their location on the walls of Room 7.

**“The Cage Bar”** – a one-of-a-kind panel for Hanover Tavern in that it addresses the preservation concerns for the room solely through a method of posing and then answering pertinent questions. West wall, next to cage display. Contains the Thilman Mouse featurette.

**“Research”** – does not explain initial usage of room but rather the evolution of the space over the subsequent two centuries. North wall.

**“Behind and Beyond the Tavern Walls”** – briefly interprets initial usage of room and follows with a description of the discovery and archeology process. The second half of this large panel acknowledges the individuals and institutions that worked on the research and preservation process. East wall.

**“Findings”** – a thorough explanation of construction process, materials, and wall coverings. South wall.

**Style 4. Mounted Vinyl Panels**

**Colors:** faded red/rose and teal green

**Total number:** ten

**Location:** *Washington Room (Room 6)*

These ten interpretive markers are limited to just Room 6, the Washington Room. They are consistent in their color scheme but inconsistent in their text font: some have italic headings, some have bold headings, several have no headings at all. Also, they are inconsistent in their interpretive themes. According to the Foundation's 2006 *Interpretation Plan*, this room contains the temporary "Transportation Exhibit" but in addition to transportation-themed panels, some signs focus on Hanover County's history, and some interpret the lineage of ownership. Furthermore, neither the signs nor the brochure explain the purpose of the room itself, which is something that interpretive signs in other rooms do attempt to accomplish. Signs are named below by their headings (when available) and followed by their position in Room 6.

**"America Hits the Road: from Carriages to Automobiles, Hanover Tavern Welcomes Travelers"** – traces change in transportation methods from 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. North wall, immediately east of doorway.

**"Hanover Virginia"** – light on interpretive text but features 1801 Mutual Assurance Policy and drawing of Thilman property. North wall, east of adjacent panel.

**"Hanover Courthouse Complex"** – explains significance of the courthouse, the Parson's Cause, and the connection of the Tavern to court days. East wall.

**No Heading** – describes the significance of the Virginia Central Railroad but does not reference the Tavern. East wall.

**No Heading** – brief explanation of the 1862 Battle of Hanover Court House. East wall.

**No Heading** – traces evolution of the post office in Hanover County including its role at the Tavern. West wall.

**No Heading** – mentions Jourdon Woolfolk's acquisition and ownership and vaguely alludes to his "major renovations" in 1928.

**No Heading** – explains the automobile boom in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the Kline Kar manufacturer in Richmond.

**No Heading** – explains the acquisition of the Tavern by Barksdale in 1953. (Note: this panel contradicts the earlier panel about Jourdon Woolfolk's heirs selling off property in 1955). North wall.

**No Heading** – panel explains Hanover Tavern Foundation's Phase I and Phase II of restoration. North wall, west of doorway.

**Style 5. Foam Core Board**

**Colors:** white with black text

**Total number:** five

**Location:** *Dining Room, Washington Room (Rooms 4 and 6), and ground floor*

These five individual signs appear temporary in nature and are not relegated to one particular room or another. They are small, white, rectangular panels with very small, black font. They are used for a variety of thematic purposes and do not contain headings but can all be considered label copy as they pertain to an adjacent display or artifact. They are listed below based on their purpose and their locations.

**Artifact Description** – identifies one of the original wooden seats from Barksdale Theatre, located in the hallway between the theater and bathrooms.

**Cutaway Description** – reveals possible location of a former exterior door. Northeast wall of Room 4.

**Cutaway Description** – reveals framing method of construction. West wall, Room 4.

**Cutaway Description** – reveals lath strips and construction. West wall, Room 6.

**Artifact Description/Clarification** – identifies the large, historic artifact “Welcome to Hanover Tavern” sign. This new panel clarifies the inaccuracies in the original. Lower level, south wall, hallway between restaurant and pub, adjacent to large sign.

## Conclusion

By arranging these interpretive signs by their aesthetic type it is evident that there is no consistent connection between content and style. While some styles are confined to just one room or another, there are several locations in Hanover Tavern that exhibit more than one style side by side. Also, since the styles of signs are not associated with one interpretive theme or another, there may be up to two or three styles and seven themes represented within a single room. The overall effect is thus a disjointed visitor experience where the signs often change style regardless of theme. This disjointedness creates a lack of unity to the building as a whole and fails to isolate interpretive themes into more digestible separate exhibits.

Furthermore, while four of the sign styles are of professional quality and are visually pleasing, the fifth style - made with fine print black text on white foam-core board – appears impromptu as if to suggest the information therein is worthy neither of a professional sign nor the visitors' attention. This diminutive signage, as used with the architecture cutaways (other than the "cage" for example) undermines any significance the Tavern may be trying to impart to the visitor. Thus, something that is important enough to be considered a primary theme is interpreted like it is an afterthought.

In terms of content, the interpretive signs, and by extension, exhibits, often repeat themes and subjects to the point of redundancy. While overlap can be helpful to convey multi-thematic connections, simply rereading the same information becomes tedious. For instance, there are at least four separate signs that explain Barksdale's acquisition of the Tavern in 1953. Without narrative flow to the exhibits and signs, some pieces of the Hanover Tavern story are repeated while other particulars are left out entirely. For all the references to Patrick Henry, who in all likelihood had no connection to the 1791 building that stands today, there is scant reference to the incredible story of Barksdale's Civil Rights feats. For it is here, with Barksdale Theatre's half-century legacy, that the Tavern hosts some of its most unique and remarkable history. With its integrated casts, integrated audiences, and its African American-themed subject matter, Barksdale Theatre challenged Jim Crow customs and it did so across the road from the seat of county government. Yet, a visitor would never learn that from the self guided tour brochure or interpretive signs. Additionally, the Tavern's signs and exhibits omit a discussion on the role of slave labor during its antebellum period, even though this topic is expressed in the *Interpretation Plan*.

Faced with thirty-eight interpretive signs, seven interpretive themes, and five aesthetic styles, the Hanover Tavern visitor is bombarded with signage that is both redundant and inconsistent at the same time. The resulting lack of focus challenges the visitor to stay engaged and thus impedes their appreciation of the historic resource.

## **Media & Advertising**

Hanover Tavern utilizes five advertising categories and 20 media outlets. These outlets include newspapers, magazines, television stations, website forums, and radio stations. The media/advertising forums used by Hanover Tavern are well recognized nationwide by history aficionados and play-viewers alike. The Tavern has also been able publicize events to the local population by utilizing local newspapers and publications.

Hanover Tavern utilizes magazines and newspapers to spread the word about the venue, and general offerings. The Tavern utilizes web forums such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* to allow researchers to find historical information, and information related to events. Hanover Tavern utilizes the following news/media outlets:

**I. Newspapers (3):** *Richmond Times Dispatch, Herald-Progress, Mechanicsville Local*

**II. Magazines (7):** *Lifestyle, Style Weekly, Civil War Trails, Richmond Family, Boomer Magazine, Richmond Magazine, North of the James Magazine*

**III. Television Stations (5):** *NBC12, CW Richmond, CBS6, ABC8, PBS Artsline,*

**IV. Website Forums (7):** *Richmond.com, Virginia.org, ConnectRichmond.org, VisitRichmondVA.com, Richmondias.org, Zevents.com, Townhound.com, Facebook, Twitter*

**V. Radio Stations (1):** *NPR Artsline*

## **Rack Cards**

Hanover Tavern also uses “Rack Cards”, as an internal advertising forum. The rack cards circulated by the Tavern can be classified into four categories: Barksdale Theatre, history, speaker series, and general events. The Barksdale Theatre rack cards relay information such as play dates and times, and upcoming shows. The Barksdale Theatre Company has been providing such renowned shows as “Nonsense”, “A Thousand Clowns”, and “Irving Berlin’s: White Christmas” since 1953.

The History rack cards obtained from the Tavern provide tourist or local history aficionado with a glimpse of the rich history Central Virginia has to offer. The “Road to Revolution: Historical Trail” and “Virginia Historical Society” card are excellent ways of advertising Hanover Tavern as well as Central Virginia. However, while Hanover Courthouse is mentioned, Hanover Tavern does not appear on these rack cards as a site of interest. This is an obvious opportunity lost for current and prospective patrons of the Tavern who would like to learn of its detailed history.

The Speaker Series rack cards provide general information on history-themed lectures held at the Tavern. Generally the lectures are scheduled once a month and cover a wide range of topics, such as “Historical Footprints in Virginia”, the Civil War in Hanover County, and the significant architectural features of Hanover Tavern.

The General Event rack cards are utilized to keep local constituents informed of family events, musical series, and contact information related to dining, guided historical tours,

and the theatre. Family events such as “Magical Mornings” and “Second Saturday Stories”, allow children to view puppet and magic shows, arts and crafts, and further allow kids to enhance their imaginations with “Classic Folklore Stories.”

### **Internet Searches**

Internet searches allow people to access a plethora of information by using key words to center in on a particular topic. A popular form of internet search is Google. Using Google, the Historic Preservation Applications Team performed an analysis of internet accessibility drawing on key words and topics. Internet search topics included History (i.e. Historic sites Hanover, Hanover County History), Event Space (i.e. Corporate meeting space Hanover, Event space with catering Hanover), Activities (i.e. Family events Hanover, Entertainment Richmond) and On-site Partners (Theatre Richmond, Dinner theatre Virginia). When performing a search, Hanover Tavern

does not come up as a result using search terms such as ‘history,’ ‘event space,’ or ‘activities’. While Hanover Tavern’s website does not appear when searching ‘Hanover Tavern’, various other references categorize Hanover Tavern in compound databases. ‘Hanover Tavern’ itself is not listed as a sponsored search result. A disconnect occurs when searching for information related to Hanover Tavern. The only immediate references when a search is performed are for the Barksdale Theatre and not Hanover Tavern as a singular entity or an entity comprised of three parts. Generally, if an internet searcher has not found what they are looking for they will not venture beyond the first page of search results. Lack of proper advertising is a direct correlation to a lack of patronage. In order to turn this weakness into a strength, the tavern must advertise through sponsored links, where search results are easily accessible and can be found on the first page of search results.

## **Events, Visitors and Membership Data**

### **Events**

Events are a major part of how Hanover Tavern interprets and displays its history. Hanover Tavern currently has several events throughout the year, averaging four to five per month, designed to raise funds, awareness, and interest in this historic site. These events, sponsored by the Hanover Tavern Foundation, include a concert series, lectures, crafts and hands-on activities, musical performances, sporting events, bus tours, living history, and film showings. There are significant differences in charges for events, as some are as high as \$75 and others are free with a suggested donation.

In 2011, the Tavern is scheduled to hold thirty-five events. Eight events are offered in the morning (prior to 12 pm), four in the afternoon (12 pm to 5 pm), and 23 in the evening (after 5 pm). Six events directly relate to the pub and include food and/or drink (alcoholic, and non-alcoholic). Out of all the events, only four are specifically for children, while only one is for attendees “21 and older” and one is for seniors. The remaining events are appropriate for all ages. It should be noted that many of the events are a part of a series such as the *Magical Mornings* and the Civil War film series so they have the same reoccurring themes and aspects. Only seven of the events are unique in that they only occur once. The rest have different presenters or different tasks but engage the same general audiences.

The duration of events ranges from one hour to several hours with the majority lasting between one and two hours. The events are all held in different areas of the Tavern and its grounds with nine scheduled to be held in the Arch Room on the first floor, nine in the theater, Taylor and Pub Room on the ground floor and four that utilize the entire building. A number of events are held on the grounds, in the tent and on the Patio. A few events sponsored by the Foundation are held away from the Tavern, namely the bus tours, history conferences, and golf tournaments.

The Tavern can also be rented for both large and small private events such as wedding ceremonies, receptions, dinners and luncheons as well as meetings and retreats.

## Visitors

These diverse events attract attendees of varying age, gender, and race. Musical performances and the speaker series attract about thirty people per event, with the craft fairs, Harmony in Hanover, and the plays receiving between 100-200 visitors per day. By far, the most popular events are the *Harmony in Hanover* concerts.

This concert series is popular because it mixes several venues, takes place in warm weather, and allows access to the pub for food and alcohol. Hanover Tavern's visitors range in age from one to seventy-five or more years old and represent a variety of ethnic groups; however the majority of visitors are over forty-five and White. Men and women visit Harmony in Hanover in equal numbers, but women predominate in visits to the Theatre and the craft fairs.

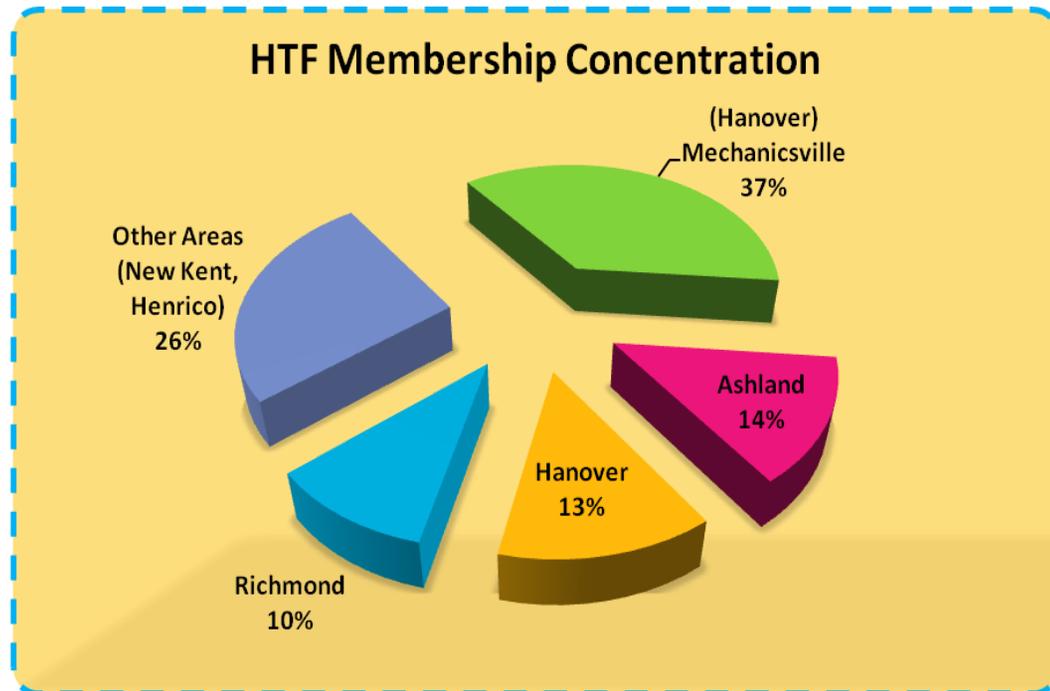
## Conclusions

The Tavern Foundation sponsors a large number of events for a small historic site and each event tends to be unique in content, and held at different times with varying groups, ages, and goals. These numerous Foundation sponsored events are in addition to regular dining, private events, and Barksdale Theatre performances that also take place in the building. This wide array of activities can result in conflicts as was experienced by members of the Historic Preservation Applications Team when they tried to tour the building during scheduled times and while attending a lecture. In at least one instance, a lecture by a renowned architectural historian was moved at the last minute to the Pub downstairs to make room for a private event in the Arch Room on the first floor. There was a significant *disadvantage* in this, as attendees and presenters were distracted by wait-staff moving in and out of the room.

## Membership

The Hanover Tavern Foundation was established in 1990 to acquire the Tavern and the 3.5 acre site. The Foundation is committed to restoring the Tavern, promoting its historic significance and assuring its continued vitality as a community resource. Memberships in the Foundation range in price from \$30 for a Senior membership to \$250 at the Tavern Keeper level. The benefits of membership include a free guided tour admission (normally \$4 for adults), advanced mailing of the seasonal newsletter and calendar of events, and discounts at the gift shop, the Tavern and Pub, and the Barksdale Theatre. Membership dollars support all educational and historical programming and cultural events hosted by the Hanover Tavern Foundation, and the maintenance and preservation of our historic colonial era building. Membership as of December 1, 2010 stood at 115 which is an increase over 2009. The majority, 37 percent, of the Foundation members are drawn from the Mechanicsville area of Hanover County, followed by 26 percent from other parts of Virginia, Washington DC and other states.

The next highest concentrations are 14 percent are from Ashland and 13 percent from other parts of Hanover County followed by 10 percent from the city of Richmond. These numbers indicate a localized participation and membership in the Foundation.



## **Heritage Tourism**

According to a 2009 study of tourism by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Marketing Council, 78 percent of domestic leisure (i.e. non-business travelers) do cultural and heritage activities while traveling. People attracted to cultural and heritage activities also travel more frequently and spend more money while traveling.

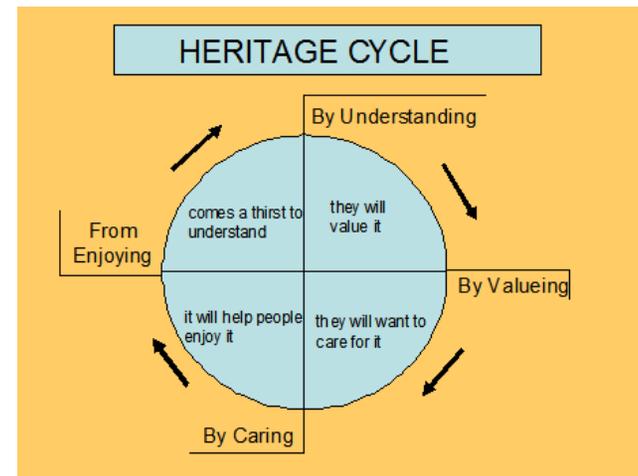
The majority of cultural and heritage travelers (65 percent) say they seek travel experiences “where the destination, its buildings, and surroundings have retained their historic character.” They are more likely to travel longer distances to get the historic and cultural experiences they seek, and half say they prefer educational experiences while traveling.<sup>1</sup>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed five guiding principles to create sustainable cultural heritage tourism programs in local areas:

- Collaborate
- Find the fit between the community and tourism
- Make sites and programs come alive
- Focus on quality and authenticity

- Preserve and protect historic resources<sup>2</sup>

These guiding principles suggest that vibrancy and authenticity are as important to historic sites as the site’s preservation. The conclusion may also be made that in order to attract heritage and cultural tourists in larger numbers, the historic character of the building, its surroundings, and the events held there, must be maintained, and the quality of interpretive materials and programs must be high.



<sup>1</sup>[http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/pressreleases/CHT\\_release\\_Oct\\_20.pdf](http://mandalaresearch.com/images/stories/pressreleases/CHT_release_Oct_20.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/heritage-tourism/additional-resources/2011-CHT-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.cultureindevelopment.nl/Cultural\\_Heritage/What\\_is\\_Cultural\\_Heritage](http://www.cultureindevelopment.nl/Cultural_Heritage/What_is_Cultural_Heritage)

## Case Studies

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The eastern United States has a rich stock of historic taverns that continue to tell the story of eighteenth-century life to interested visitors. Like Hanover Tavern, these establishments have and continue to face the unmistakable challenge of remaining viable, historic entities within the communities they inhabit. Therefore, discussion of the following taverns seeks to compare the experience of these establishments in transmitting tavern history to guests and managing tavern functions to that of Hanover Tavern. It is the hope that such comparison will assist in the charting of Hanover Tavern's future.

### Colonial Williamsburg Taverns

The historic district of the City of Williamsburg, Virginia, also known as "Colonial Williamsburg," is one of the foremost centers for the interpretation of the culture and political life of the period surrounding the American Revolution. Enjoying strong association with many early figures in United States history, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, Colonial Williamsburg has become a Mecca for visitors worldwide interested in the origins of democracy, historic restoration, and slavery in eighteenth-century Virginia.

Among the more than 500 restored and reconstructed buildings located on the 301-acre historic area, there are an assorted number of historic taverns, including Christiana Campbell's, Raleigh Tavern, and Wetherburn's Tavern. Keeping with the character of eighteenth-century taverns, Williamsburg Tavern's served multiple purposes, including lodging, meals, and entertainment. Today, however, in expressing the importance taverns played in colonial life, the majority of

Williamsburg taverns serve a *single, fixed purpose*: a place for guests to dine.

Although many of the Colonial Williamsburg taverns are reconstructed and, therefore, are not offered for tour, guests receive a heavy dose of eighteenth-century tavern life. According to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "Wait staff in eighteenth-century dress serve guests and enhance the dining experience with explanations of colonial dining habits and food preferences, lively exchanges with character interpreters and music of the era played on period instruments."<sup>4</sup> For instance, guests at Christiana Campbell's can expect traditional tavern fare, such as cabbage claw and spoon bread, while those at King's Arm Tavern are seated at Queen

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<sup>4</sup> Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, "Colonial Williamsburg Historic Taverns Serve 18<sup>th</sup> Century Favorites Adapted for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Tastes," <http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.org/Foundation/newsroom/2010Presskit/2010%20Tavern%20Dining.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2011).

Anne-style tables set with yard-square linen napkins and brass candlesticks.

One notable exception, however, is Wetherburn's Tavern, which exclusively offers tours to guests with a Colonial Williamsburg admission pass. On a 30-minute, guided tour of the Tavern, guests are led through a number of exhibit rooms that accentuate the interaction that went on between the gentry, middle class, and slaves at the Tavern. For instance, in the dining room, faux food has been created to emphasize the



**Figure 1. Faux Table Setting for the Gentry (above) and Slaves (below)**



social hierarchy of dining (Figure 1), while antique furnishing grace several bedrooms to show the difference in sleeping quarters (Figure 2). The Tavern also features a fully furnished laundry, smokehouse, dairy, and well, which allow guests a better picture of the work that went on behind the scenes at the Tavern.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 2. Gentry (above) and Slave (below) Sleeping Quarter Furnishings**



<sup>5</sup> Mary Miley Theobald, "The New Look of Old Wetherburn's," *Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/wetherburns.cfm> (accessed March 26, 2011).

## Old Talbott Tavern

The small town of Bardstown Kentucky is home to a tavern of similar age, original purpose, and current usage as Hanover Tavern. The Talbott Tavern was constructed in 1779 in what was then the American frontier. Adjacent to the courthouse, the tavern served as a hub for commerce, a harbor for weary stage road travelers to rest for the night, and a place for a wide-ranging clientele to gather and socialize.

In the heart of Bardstown's historic district, the Old Talbott Tavern's revenue generators today are its restaurant, pub, and bed & breakfast and although it lacks a formal museum, the tavern is effective in conveying its historical significance for a number of reasons. While it is not staffed with costumed waiters, hostesses, or interpreters the tavern conveys its history through general atmosphere created by decoration and purpose. The current purpose of the building has not strayed much from its original eighteenth- and nineteenth-century uses in that it provides a place to dine, sleep, and socialize. Old Talbott Tavern serves its meals in two large dining rooms that use antique or period style furniture. The exposed timber rafters, stone fireplace, and consistent "frontier" themed art and decorations also help establish an historic milieu. The menu itself - while containing some elements of modern cuisine - features authentic recipes and regional meals that convey the essence of a past era. The Talbott offers lodging on its second floor with individual rooms named after famous guests like Daniel Boone and Abraham Lincoln. This notion that visitors today can still stay in an inn-like setting the way stagecoach travelers used to helps to establish a feeling of

historic, though practical, purpose. Furthermore, while the average lunch or dinner customer will not get to see the private lodging rooms, they are encouraged by the tavern's hosts and hostesses to inspect the artifacts and displays in the upstairs lobby of the inn while waiting for their dinner seats to become available.

The tavern is not cluttered with too many interpretive signs but there is a concise historic marker on the outside of the building next to the main entrance that is impossible to miss. Also, the side of the building is marked in big numbers: "1779" - the year the tavern was constructed. The dates and the signage are ways that the Old Talbott Tavern has incorporated its history into the visitor experience rather than separating it from the dining and lodging purposes.



## **Michie Tavern**

Despite its out-of-the-way location, Michie Tavern receives thousands of visitors every year, due primarily to its location en route to Monticello and Ash Lawn, the homes of two well known U.S. Presidents. Michie sits high on the side of a small mountain, standing out from its natural surroundings of forests and valleys.

The tavern building, a National Historic Landmark, is large, and much of its mass fronts the road. It is a gable roof, two-story, clapboard structure, and adjacent additions are one-story with dormers and porches giving the building a length of over 100 feet. In front of the tavern is a small gazebo, and large deciduous trees shade the entire lawn which is partially covered in English ivy.

After parking in a large and spacious lot, visitors walk up the cement sidewalk and brick steps to the main entrance. The main door is on the north façade with several other entrances, and is insufficiently marked. The correct door to enter for a tour is not clear from the signage. Aside from the tour, people may visit the working tavern restaurant, which serves a variety of Southern food. Servers in period costume present meals inside with a fireplace providing warmth and ambience.

There is a gift shop with knowledgeable staff. The shop itself was well stocked and supplied with many interesting and appropriate items for sale. Tour guides allow students to take a tour free of charge but rates range from \$4.50 to \$9.00 for

others. Groups proceed upstairs where they are either guided, or given instructions on how to proceed on a self guided tour.

Tourists on a self guided tour can opt to play a prerecorded message each of which lasts five to ten minutes and describes in detail the history of each room and the time period. In places, visitors are free to touch various items, most of which are antiques. On each floor are several rooms fully decorated, appearing as they did in the eighteenth-century.

When tourists complete the tour inside, they can proceed outside to the back of the building where they can investigate a



smokehouse, dairy, kitchen, and other aspects of the yard. These areas are open to the public and fully displayed as they would be in the eighteenth century. These buildings, however, were reconstructions of originals, although the kitchen is a circa-1797 log cabin moved from a nearby location. The pathway that visitors follow leads back down to the tavern and the parking lot, past a blacksmith shop and another outbuilding, which closes during the winter season.

## Rising Sun Tavern

This tavern was built in 1760 as a private residence for Charles, the brother of George Washington, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. It remained a single-family home for over thirty years, until its sale and conversion to a tavern in 1792. It was the only fine tavern within fifty miles, i.e. the only tavern serving an upper-class clientele and ladies on the way from Alexandria to Hanover Tavern. Today, the tavern is a registered National Historic Landmark, and is used only as a museum. It is situated within a vibrant and extensive historic district, and co-advertises with the historic apothecary museum situated a few blocks away. A historic hanging sign greets visitors, who are directed up to the front porch and front door, where a small sign indicates the hours of the museum, and warns visitors that they will find no drink inside, since the tavern lost its license a hundred years ago.

Upon entering and paying the \$5 entrance fee, the visitor is greeted in the entry hall by a costumed interpreter, who speaks as if the visitor is an eighteenth-century guest. The guide shows the 'guest' around the building and its amenities, in a bid to convince them to stay at the tavern. Each room is fully fitted out with period furnishings and decorations, with several unique antiques, the use of which is explained in detail by the interpreter. The upper-class sitting room, ladies sitting

room, office, and lower-class tap room are situated downstairs, and are included in the guided tour. The interpreter directs the 'guests' upstairs to look around the bedrooms, and the use of the four rooms, also fully furnished and decorated in period style, are explained in brief written displays.



The most striking elements of the Rising Sun Tavern were the interpreters – who were extremely well-informed about the history and daily life of the period, and who contributed significantly to the historic atmosphere through their well flushed-out characters – and the detailed décor and unique period objects, which brought the idiosyncratic habits of the eighteenth century to life. This is a small historic site that is very effective as a museum and historical experience. This is due in large part to the guided tour, which is an expected part of the visit.

## Conclusion

Examination of the aforementioned taverns reveals that in transmitting history to guests and managing tavern functions, these establishments largely limit themselves to a select number of functions. While some, such as Michie, offer both tours and dining, they are clearly separated from each other architecturally. Most of these successful taverns focus on one function, and all, without exception, make history the primary focus. In playing to their strengths and prioritizing historical interpretation and atmosphere, each tavern leaves visitors with a greater understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century life.

## Survey Results

### Current Patrons' Perceptions (Internal)

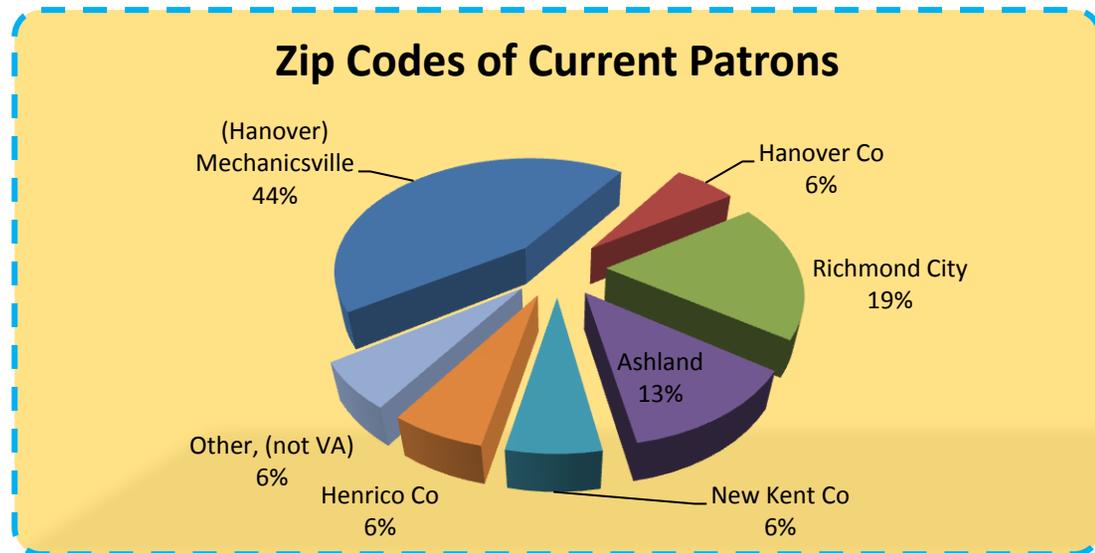
In an effort to gain a better understanding of how Hanover Tavern is currently utilized and perceived by those who frequent it, current patrons of the Tavern were surveyed. Questions not only sought to determine the Tavern's potential historic value among current patrons, but also to gain a better picture of exactly who those customers are (Appendix). A total of sixteen internal surveys were administered over a two-week period beginning Tuesday, March 15, 2011 on various days and times at Hanover Tavern, including after several special events.

#### Patron Demographics

Of those surveyed, 50 percent indicated Hanover County zip codes as their residences. Remaining respondents came from within the Greater Richmond Region, including the City of Richmond and the Town of Ashland (see figure). The average patron participating in the survey was approximately fifty years of age, evenly represented by males and females. Furthermore, all of those surveyed were White and most were in a party of two.

#### Utilization of Hanover Tavern

Of those patrons surveyed, 87 percent have visited Hanover Tavern five times or less within the past year. When asked what most often brings them to the Tavern, 59 percent of patrons named the "restaurant" or "food," while others indicated the "theatre" (35 percent) or "events" (6 percent).



Such trends indicate that Hanover Tavern is currently underutilized as a destination for a historic tour.

### **Marketing of Hanover Tavern**

Among current patrons surveyed, most initially heard about Hanover Tavern through friends or family members (35 percent) or as a result of simply residing/working in Hanover County (25 percent). The internet also appears to be an important advertising medium, as 69 percent of survey respondents had visited the Hanover Tavern website and 50 percent indicated “email” as their preferred method of contact for future Tavern events.

### **Perceptions and Attitudes of Hanover Tavern**

Of those patrons surveyed, 94 percent were aware that Hanover Tavern is a Historic Landmark. When asked of any specific history related to the Tavern, most associated it with Patrick Henry, the Barksdale Theatre, or the Courthouse Complex. In general, Hanover Tavern is very well received by current patrons, as 94 percent of survey respondents indicated that they would both recommend the Tavern to a friend or family member and intend to visit the Tavern again in the future. Furthermore, 52 percent of survey respondents named the Tavern’s “history” and “survival” as its most valuable asset.

However, when it comes to how the history of the Tavern is conveyed, there is a significant disconnect. While 93 percent of survey respondents indicated they had taken a historic tour of the building in the past, the majority of respondents classified their experience as mediocre. Comments received by current patrons include:

**“Informative, but didn’t always feel welcomed. Needed more directions, more exhibits.”**

**“Exhibits interesting, but static.”**

**“There wasn’t much to look at, just a lot of signs. My son wasn’t interested in anything, but he normally loves museums.”**

**“Wish there was more information, felt like I was intruding.”**

Respondents were also asked to name the location of other historic sites they may have visited in the past. Among those named include Colonial Williamsburg and sites in Richmond and Washington, DC. Comparing their experience at Hanover Tavern with these and other sites, survey respondents said:

**“Had neither exhibits nor a story.”**

**“Great look and location....not many exhibits.”**

**“Not authentic. Too many renovations to feel real.”**

The survey respondents’ observations were compounded in order to formulate recommendations for enhancing their experience at the Tavern, including more exhibits and historical events, period costumes, and better use of upstairs.

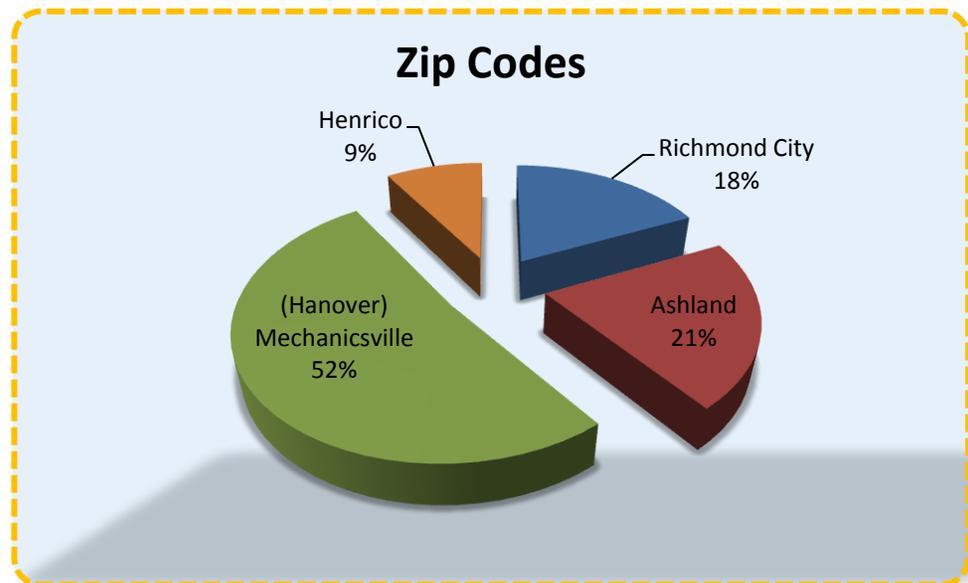
Given the attitudes expressed by survey respondents, current patrons understand and appreciate the historical significance of Hanover Tavern. However, individuals appear disenchanted with the *manner* in which that history is conveyed.

## **Hanover Community Perceptions (External)**

A major aspect of the plan for Hanover Tavern includes understanding general community perceptions of the Tavern, as obtained from a small sample of Hanover County residents. The researchers came up with a separate survey, targeting the general population of Hanover County. Researchers choose to approach residents at several external locations in various parts of the County. This survey included some questions which were more general than the questions aimed at current patrons, assuming some residents would not even be aware of the Tavern. Questions were designed in a decision-tree format, with the purpose of uncovering the basic impression that various residents have of the Tavern. Then, more details were sought if possible. A total of 39 external surveys were administered over a two-week period beginning Tuesday, March 15, 2011.

### **Resident Demographics**

Eighty-five percent of residents surveyed were White, and fifteen percent were Black. The average respondents' age was forty years old and the average number of years lived in Hanover County was thirteen. The sample was represented as thirty-eight percent male and sixty-two percent female. Although all surveys were conducted at places of civic engagement within Hanover County, only sixty-three percent of respondents gave zip codes from Hanover (45 percent from Mechanicsville and 18 percent from Ashland). Twenty-nine percent of respondents offered zip codes from Richmond City, and eight percent from various parts of Henrico County.



### **Perceptions and Attitudes of Hanover Tavern**

Thirty-one of the thirty-eight respondents (or 79 percent) had heard of Hanover Tavern, and twenty-two (56 percent) had been there at least once. Of the respondents who had never heard of Hanover Tavern, most were also unaware that a dinner theatre option existed in Hanover. Of the respondents who know about Hanover Tavern, but have never been, interesting reasons were offered as to why each had not visited. This includes:

“Not on my radar,” “I don’t go that way,” “I thought it was a bar” and “I go to Willow Lawn to see the Barksdale Theatre”

Many things “came to mind” among the respondents who had heard of the Tavern. Common words and phrases include:

“Dinner Theatre,” “Bar,” “Restaurant,” “Courthouse,” “Barksdale,” “Patrick Henry,” and “Historic”

The surveys asked further questions of the respondents who identified themselves as patrons. When asked to rank the overall satisfaction of their experience at Hanover Tavern, on a basic scale (1=bad, 5=excellent), the average score was (3.4). A few aspects which were commonly said to be most liked included:

“The ambiance [or] atmosphere,” “the food,” “the play,” “the architecture”

Some aspects which “could have been better” included:

“The service,” “exhibits/museum,” “the historic tour,” and “activities/history for African Americans”

One respondent said, “I’d like to be able to view the entire building.”

Only thirty-two percent of respondents remember utilizing the historic tour, and some mentioned their “confusion” or disorientation with it. One individual mentioned the historic tour as “disjointed,” and “lacking wayfinding orientation.”

### Areas for Outreach and Exploration

The vast majority of respondents identified the internet as their primary source of access to media. A significant majority also cited print media outlets such as *The Richmond-Times Dispatch* and *Style Weekly*, as their main source of media. When inquiring about the sort of activities and events which respondents chose to incorporate in their social lives, most cited family events. Other activities/events included:

“Music events -outdoor concerts”, “arts” and “crafts,” “festivals,” “beer/wine tasting,”

“Living history and themed dining -reenactments”

**Internal Perceptions (Foundation & Board)**

In the summer of 2010, the Marketing Committee surveyed Foundation staff and board members, the impressions of eleven respondents are summarized below:

**Impressions of Hanover Tavern: (responses listed in order of strength (recurring answers))**

- 1) What makes HT unique?
  - a. History
  - b. Building
  - c. Social gatherings
  - d. Location
- 2) Best Benefit HT provides is:
  - a. Multipurpose gathering place (theatre, dining, events)
  - b. History
  - c. Family activities
- 3) HT’s greatest weakness:
  - a. Lack of awareness/understanding of its offering/brand
  - b. Constant transition/change
  - c. Slow service at restaurant
  - d. Far from interstate
- 4) Agreed to serve on the board because:
  - a. Love of history and want the community to understand what HT has to offer
  - b. To give back to the County

To further understand these findings, the VCU Preservation Applications Team emailed the Hanover Tavern Foundation board of directors, marketing committee, and staff the following question: “What do you think the Tavern’s priorities should be in order for visitors to better appreciate Hanover Tavern as a historic resource?”

Out of the thirty-two polled, only five responded. From those responses, it was evident that there is a lack of cohesive vision amongst the Tavern’s decision makers. Although several of these priorities overlapped, there were a few instances of mutually exclusive priorities.

While the foundation clearly shares a passion for the Tavern’s history, the tactical disparity amongst the Tavern leadership may inhibit progress towards a unified goal.

## **Assets and Liabilities**

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An assessment of Hanover Tavern's assets and liabilities will serve as a concluding analysis of the challenges the Tavern faces in promoting its historic resources, and the opportunities it can utilize in pursuing this mission. This summary of the main findings from our existing conditions research also serves as an introduction to our recommendations in the following section.

### **1. Assets**

- Centrally located in Hanover (near courthouse)
- Large size of building
- Board and volunteers
- Artifacts and exhibit space available
- Number and scope of events and activities
- Varied offerings of food, history, and theater
- Sponsors, partners, and network affiliates
- Fascinating history

### **2. Liabilities**

- Location in Virginia (outside of Richmond metro region)
- Limited regional interest in site (interest is mostly local)
- Broad mission
- Small size of rooms in historic tavern (which limit diversity of use)
- Lack of acreage around tavern for growth, outbuildings, and large events
- Poor directional signage
- Difficulties relating to coordination of events and spatial use among three entities
- Confusion regarding historic events and persons (Patrick Henry's connection to the Tavern)
- Focus on muddled history while missing interpretation of more significant events

## Recommendations for Hanover Tavern

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### Goal 1: Establish a unified vision for Hanover Tavern.

**Why:** Hanover Tavern currently engages in a broad range of activities. However, this multipurpose approach is currently an impediment to the Foundation’s goal of showcasing the Tavern’s unique, rich history to guests. As the case studies of other historic taverns show, the majority of establishments successfully express historical significance to guests via a limited number of ways. Equal weight must be given to the “historic leg” of the three-legged stool.

**What:**

- Consider refocusing the mission of Hanover Tavern – “restore, preserve, and utilize Hanover Tavern as an historic, educational, community and cultural resource.”
- Revisit guiding documents, including the Interpretive and Education Plan.
- Identify immediate, short-term, and long-term goals for creating a greater sense of historic appreciation among guests. Annually revisit goals and revise as appropriate.

### Goal 2: Prioritize the museum and exhibits over other Tavern functions.

**Why:** As it currently stands, guests coming to the Tavern to experience a self-guided tour may be precluded from viewing the exhibits of a particular room due to a meeting or other Tavern function.

**What:**

- Establish a more permanent schedule for self-guided audio tours to ensure guests are able to obtain the full experience. Such information should be displayed on both the Tavern website and brochures.
- Concentrate exhibit rooms towards the center of the building, with rooms for meeting space on the periphery of the building. This will ensure patrons walk through exhibits on their way to a meeting or dining as opposed to visitors walking through a meeting or diners on their way to exhibits.
- Direct those visitors coming to view the Tavern as a historic site to enter the building through the Tavern’s historic entrance facing Route 301 as opposed to the newly constructed entrance in the rear of the facility.

**Goal 3: Rehabilitate the Tavern's current stock of exhibits.**

**Why:** In surveying both current and external patrons, a large number of respondents indicated the quality and quantity of exhibits as one of the largest impediments to a first-rate experience. In revamping how the significance of place is expressed to visitors, the Tavern will better capture the attention of visitors and, ultimately, aid in Hanover Tavern being appreciated as a historic resource.

**What:**

Directional or wayfinding signage should be placed on the first floor, ensuring guests are properly oriented, avoid second floor access, etc.

- Balance interpretative signage with artifacts/antiques, pictures, displays, and sounds in exhibit rooms, which allows visitors to draw their own connections and appreciations for the Tavern's history.
- Provide interpretative signage that does not command a long period of time to read, accurately portrays the Tavern's origins, and is limited to a select number of aesthetic styles.
- Have models or diagrams on display showing various construction periods of the Tavern.
- Establish a narrative flow for visitors' museum experience, such as matching geographic room sequence with interpretive sequence. This should also be reflected in the self-guided tour brochure received by guests.
- Consider eliminating traces of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in exhibit rooms.
- Make greater use of the second floor to showcase Tavern history, such as setting up exhibits showing guests the accommodation 18<sup>th</sup> century travels might expect while staying at the Tavern.

**Goal 4: Showcase the Tavern's lesser known history.**

**Why:** The majority of history currently conveyed to visitors concerns the Tavern's connection to the period surrounding the American Revolution. It is obvious from answers supplied by respondents during both surveys that many, not surprisingly, associate the Tavern with Patrick Henry. However, the Tavern has a more expansive story to tell. This will not only help to expand the Tavern's potential visitor base, but also help to improve historic accuracy and consistency.

**What:**

- Explain/interpret the operation of the Tavern in terms of ownership, staff, slaves, women and how labor would have changed after emancipation.
- Express the significance of the Barksdale Theatre: first dinner theatre, African American playwrights/plays/actors, integrated audience, etc.

**Goal 5: Seek to utilize the Hanover Tavern & Pub and Barksdale Theatre in fostering a historic atmosphere.**

**Why:** Although lessees, both the restaurant and Barksdale Theatre currently serve as the Tavern's most prominent and popular uses. In fact, when asked what most often brings them to Hanover Tavern, 94 percent of survey respondents (current patrons) indicated either the "restaurant" or "theatre." Therefore, in expressing the historical significance of the Tavern to visitors, these entities have the potential to be a powerful force.

**What:**

- Gauge the possibility of creating a historic pub look and feel complete with period furniture, lighting, decoration, music, cuisine, and possibly costumed interpreters and wait staff.
- Request that Barksdale Theatre use vintage 1950s playbills/signage and host an annual play related to the Tavern's history.
- Encourage staff, including those at the hostess stand, to invite guests to view the museum/exhibits upon entering or exiting Hanover Tavern.

**Goal 6: Host more events related to Tavern history.**

**Why:** Among current patrons, hosting additional events related to the Tavern’s history was identified as something that would “enhance their experience at the Tavern.” Again the overall conclusion drawn from the current patrons’ survey was that patrons understand and appreciate the historical significance of Hanover Tavern, however, are disenchanted with the *manner* in which that history is conveyed.

**What:**

- Host a greater number of existing events (e.g. lectures) on the first and second floor of the Tavern, as apposed to the restaurant or Barksdale Theatre.
- Host new events specifically related to Tavern history or history of the surrounding region, such as court day, African American theatre, etc.

**Goal 7: Collaborate with organizations and groups in the community and other historic museums/ taverns throughout the State.**

**Why:** Partnering with local organizations and groups will not only create a “word of mouth” campaign for Hanover Tavern, but potentially provide a regular, dependable source of visitors. Furthermore, other historic museums/taverns may supply Hanover Tavern with valuable guidance in managing multiple functions, attracting visitors, etc.

**What:**

- Contact, visit, and potentially coordinate programs with other historic museums/taverns.
- Revisit Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and launch a campaign to attract Hanover County and regional school systems.
- Coordinate with the Hanover Historical Society and County to host events at Hanover Tavern and on Courthouse Complex grounds.
- Reach out to local facilities potentially interested in group tours, including assisted living facilities, community centers, etc.

**Goal 8: Vigorously advertise and promote Hanover Tavern.**

**Why:** When asked how they initially heard of Hanover Tavern, 60 percent of current patrons indicated either “friends or family members” or simply as a result of living/working in Hanover County, as opposed to other advertising techniques Hanover Tavern engages in. Robust advertising and promotion will also be needed to successfully compete against those historic sites from the surrounding region, including Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Washington, DC.

**What:**

- Proactively obtain contact information from those visiting Hanover Tavern. A large number of survey respondents indicated “email” as their preferred method of contact for future Hanover Tavern events.
- Make greater use of the internet (including the Hanover Tavern website) and print media (i.e. local newspapers) in advertising Tavern events/functions, as these were indicated by respondents in both surveys as their primary sources of information.
- Target niche markets – Civil War sites, county and regional historic museums, use heritage tourism marketing councils, historic taverns database, etc.

## A. Appendices

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### A.1. Sample Surveys

#### a. Current Patrons

This survey was aimed at current patrons of the Tavern. The survey was administered orally at various Hanover Tavern events. The objective of this survey was to inquire into the current patrons' utilization of the Tavern and to hopefully uncover the collective experience of patrons with the various uses present at the Tavern. In general, we sought to discover whether the current patrons were accessing the Tavern's historic, restaurant and theater amenities as individual pieces (and if so, which of these most commonly) or collectively as intended.

The information obtained from this survey may be used as part of a Virginia Commonwealth University project to determine how Hanover Tavern can be better utilized and appreciated as a historic resource. You have the opportunity to obtain additional information about the survey and have any questions answered to your full satisfaction. You are free to withdrawal from the survey at any time and discontinue participation at any time.

1. What brought you to Hanover Tavern this morning/afternoon/evening?
2. How many times have you visited Hanover Tavern in the past year?
  - a. If often:
    - i. What do you most often come to Hanover Tavern for?
    - ii. Are there any events and/or activities you would like to see the Tavern offer?
3. How did you initially hear about Hanover Tavern?
  - a. Have you ever visited the Hanover Tavern website?
  - b. How would you like to receive information about future Tavern events?

4. Are you aware Hanover Tavern is a historic landmark/museum?
  - a. If “yes:”
    - i. Do you know of any specific history related to the Tavern?
    - ii. Have you ever taken a tour of the building/museum?
      1. If “yes:”
        - a. What was your experience?
        - b. How often do visit other historic sites and which ones?
        - c. How does it compare to other historic sites you may have visited?
        - d. Would you be interested in taking an audio tour in the future?
      2. If “no:”
        - a. Would you be interested in learning more about the history of the Tavern through a tour or any other special events?
5. What do you value most about the Tavern?
6. What would enhance your experience at the Tavern?
7. Would you recommend Hanover Tavern to a friend of family member and why?
8. Do you plan to visit the Tavern again in the future and why?

Demographic Data:

- Zip code
- # of years as resident in current county
- Male/female
- Approximate age
- Race
- How many with group?
- Email address (if want to receive additional information)

**b. Hanover Community Perceptions**

This survey was aimed at general residents of the Hanover community. The students identified a few targeted demographics which we felt could be easily engaged such as elderly residents, college students, and active participants of various public Hanover County community meetings. This was due in part to the obvious concerns over accessibility and the danger of being perceived as solicitors. Therefore, places of civic and community engagement were sought for facilitation of the external surveys; where residents were assumed to be spending free time, rather than running errands or working.

The information obtained from this survey may be used as part of a Virginia Commonwealth University project to determine how Hanover Tavern can be better utilized and appreciated as a historic resource. You have the opportunity to obtain additional information about the survey and have any questions answered to your full satisfaction. You are free to withdrawal from the survey at any time and discontinue participation at any time.

1. Have you ever heard of Hanover Tavern?

**If Yes....**

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Hanover Tavern?
2. Have you ever been to the Tavern?

**If Yes...**

- a. How many times have you visited the Tavern in the last year?
- b. What was the purpose of your visit? (dining, special program/event, theatre, other)
- c. How would you rate the satisfaction of your visit (1 being poor, 5 being excellent)?
- d. What did you like the most about your experience?
- e. What could have been better?
- f. What drew you to the Tavern?
- g. Would you return to the Tavern?
- h. If so, for what? (history, cultural events, art, dining, and/or theatre)
- i. Did you utilize the historic tour?
- j. Who do you think owns/operates the building?
- k. Which media do you use to learn about activities/events in your community?

**If No....**

- a. Why haven't you visited?
- b. In what type of activities/programs would you participate if they were offered at Hanover Tavern?
- c. Who do you think owns/operates the building?
- d. Which media do you use to learn about activities/events in your community?

**If No...**

1. Are you aware there is an historic Tavern in Hanover where folks can dine, enjoy live theatre, attend concerts, and tour the historic Tavern?
2. Which media do you use to learn about activities/events in your community?
3. Would you like to learn more about this community center and historic site?

2. Does your community sponsor daily tours to museums or attractions?

**If Yes....**What sort of activities?

- a. Do you have an interest in dinner theatre or history?

**If Yes...**How often and where do you go?

- a. What types of events/activities would encourage you to visit Hanover Tavern?  
(i.e. historic events, family events, educational events, concerts, fairs and festivals)

Demographic Data:

- Zip code
- # of years as resident in current county
- Male/female
- Approximate age
- Race
- How many with group?
- Email address (if want to receive additional information)

## A.2. Class Internet Search for *Hanover Tavern* - using *Google*

### History

- Historic sites Virginia
  - Did not appear on any students' Google search
- Historic sites Richmond
  - Did not show up as a Google search, but appeared on a Google map
- Historic sites Hanover
  - Links appear on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> page; *National Register/VA Parks website, Hanover Tavern, Barksdale Theatre*
- Hanover County history
  - 1<sup>st</sup> page of Google search: The "Historic Resources" portion of the Hanover County website mentions Tavern. Also 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> page of Google; Hanover Tavern website is shown
- Patrick Henry Virginia
  - If "Patrick Henry Hanover" is entered into Google, the Hanover Tavern website is found
- Civil War sites Virginia
  - Did not appear on any students' Google search

### Event Space

- Event space Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student's Google search
- Event space Hanover
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> page of Google; a link to Hanover Tavern's "facility rentals" section of the website is listed
- Corporate meeting space Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student's Google search
- Corporate meeting space Hanover
  - Several rental/networking websites contain a link to Hanover Tavern
- Meeting space rental Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student's Google search
- Event space with catering Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student's Google search
- Event space with catering Hanover
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Google link is referencing "Michelle's at Hanover Tavern;" a name which is no longer used by Hanover Tavern

### Activities

- Family events Hanover
  - Google redirects search to Hanover Tavern’s “Twitter” page. A few pages down “tickets.com” is found advertising for “Nonsense”
- Family events Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student’s Google search
- Free activities Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student’s Google search
- Entertainment Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student’s Google search
- Music Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student’s Google search

### On-site Partners

- Rehearsal dinner Richmond
  - Did not appear on any student’s Google search
- Wedding reception Richmond
  - “Richmondbridalshowcase.com” lists Hanover Tavern as a potential venue
- Historic wedding site Richmond
  - “Richmondbridalshowcase.com” lists Hanover Tavern as a potential venue
- Theatre Richmond
  - On the 1<sup>st</sup> Google page, Barksdale Theatre Group’s “Nonsense” is listed
- Dinner theatre Richmond
  - 1<sup>st</sup> page of Google brings up the Barksdale Theatre & Virginia.org which redirect the search to Hanover Tavern
- Dinner theatre Virginia
  - 4<sup>th</sup> page of Google bring up Barksdale Theatre website
  - If you type in “first dinner theatre” Barksdale is first link

## B. References

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### B.1. Hanover Tavern Foundation

#### a. Interpretation Plan

This document was prepared by Jennifer E. Schero, Hanover Tavern director and curator, and adopted by the Hanover Tavern Foundation in 2006. The Interpretation Plan outlines the mission and philosophy of the foundation as they navigate through various challenges such as; “prioritizing funding, planning for future programming, searching for partnerships, communicating the importance of Hanover Tavern, and to provide sound support for best practices with regard to educational programs, facility rentals and exhibition development.” This document served as a tremendous guidebook for all recommendations of the historic preservation analysis.

#### b. Education Policy

Also prepared by Jennifer E. Schero and adopted in 2006, the Education Policy establishes the role of the Education Department for the Foundation. The policy provides 10 “aims” for the Foundation and 3 “objectives;” based on the tenants of “access, growth and quality.” This policy document has served the historic preservation analysis by identifying an action plan as well as key standards for any and all future educational programs.

#### c. Website

<http://www.hanovertavern.org/>

The Hanover Tavern website provides ample information on the various functions, contacts, and resources which may of interest to visitors of the tavern. The history section of the website has been used to reference historical details.