

DRAFT
Assessment of the Heritage Tourism Potential of
Benjamin Cooper Tavern
For the
Camden County Historical Society
Part of the Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study

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April 2021

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Chapter 1. Executive Summary and Introduction

1. Executive Summary

This Assessment of the Heritage Tourism Potential of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern provides the Camden County Historical Society with two options for operations of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern once it is restored and opens to the public in 2025. During the three-year restoration period from 2022-2025, the CCHS as the leaseholder of the site, must prepare to expand its organizational capacity to restore and manage a new historic site along with its current museum, research library, and historic site in the Parkside neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Brief history of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

The Benjamin Cooper Ferry and Tavern is associated with the Cooper family, one of the earliest settlers in the city and county. Built in 1743, only Pamona Hall, built in 1762 is older. The building was an important commercial and transportation facility from the 18th into the early 20th century. For more than 150 years the Cooper family ran a ferry from this site, making it a strategic location between Philadelphia and Camden. In the 18th century the ferry was site of innumerable public sales and auctions including slave auctions. During the Revolutionary War, the Benjamin Cooper Tavern was used as an outpost for Colonel Robert Abercrombie of the 37th Regiment. Abercrombie used his position here to prevent a surprise attack on the Delaware River when the British held Philadelphia in 1778. In the 19th century, many ferry taverns like the Cooper Tavern, began to convert their grounds into pleasure gardens. Much of the area around the Cooper Tavern turned to ship building in the 1800s.

By 1876, the property was owned by the John H. Mathis Company who used it as the main office. In the 20th century, Mathis Ship Works had 100 workers producing luxury yachts here. During World War I, the Emergency Fleet Corporation awarded Mathis Shipbuilding contracts for 15 subchasers, minesweepers, tugboats and sea plane hulls. The company produced similar ships for the WWII war effort.

The property has been vacant for more than 20 years. It suffered a fire in 2012, which burned the majority of its roof. The Coopers Ferry Development Corporation applied for funds to have the roof replaced. Recently, the Camden County Historical Society entered into a lease with the private owner, to seek funds to restore the building and open it as the American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey in 2025, at the start of the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War festivities.

Two options for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

The Camden County Historical Society has not yet determined whether it has the organizational capacity to manage the Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a full time Visitor

Center/Museum/Office space for nonprofit organizations, or as a part time Museum/Office space. There are chapters about each option, with a focus on the making the historic site visitor ready. This three-year period from 2022-2025 when the site is being restored, will permit the historical society to experiment, fundraise and begin to develop its initial educational programs to build an audience for this site. Once the Benjamin Cooper Tavern opens to the public in 2025, public programming can begin at the new museum.

What is a Visitor Ready Historic Site?

The New Jersey Revolutionary War Sites: Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment report, prepared for the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in 2020, makes it quite clear what they consider a “visitor ready” historic site. The authors identify seven components that characterize a site that is fully prepared to welcome visitors. We include this information in this heritage tourism assessment because the development of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern should be planned and managed to meet these basic criteria that visitors want and expect at any historic site.

Should the Camden County Historical Society staff be successful in winning capital matching grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust to restore this building, the CCHS will need to make a significant financial investment in the Benjamin Cooper Tavern by providing 50/50 matching funds. This investment to restore the building and make it handicapped accessible is the initial step towards transforming this site into the important visitor destination that it could be. The site will need dedicated paid staff and creative programming to harness its potential to tell stories about the Revolutionary War era and make those stories relevant to today’s visitors.

Ownership recommendations and yearly financial support

We recommend that the Benjamin Cooper Tavern be owned by a governmental entity, either the State of New Jersey through the Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry or through the Camden County Department of Parks System. In turn, either entity would lease the Benjamin Cooper Tavern on a long-term basis to the Camden County Historical Society to operate and manage as a historic site open to visitors on a regular basis.

The government owner, either the State of New Jersey or Camden County, would fund the following activities: all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, grounds maintenance/snow removal, minor repairs and paint. The state or county would need to provide \$30,000 yearly along with maintenance costs noted above.

Endowment needs

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern will need an endowment that will generate interest to support the operations of this site. It is common that 5% of the endowment’s yearly earnings be set aside for

operations and management. Based on our initial budget, we estimate that this site will need \$150,000 annually from endowment investments from a corpus of \$3 million dollars.

Full time operations 5 days a week

Chapter 5 provides a narrative about activities at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern when it is open five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday from 10AM to 5PM, year-round. This site will serve several functions. First, it is the American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey. Second, it is a Visitor Center designed to lure travelers who want to know more about this site and the other historic, recreational, and shopping attractions throughout South Jersey. Third, it is a trail head for the North Camden and Cramer Hill Trail, and one public restroom is open when the site is open to the public five days a week. Finally, to pay the bills, the CCHS has rehabilitated the four second floor bedrooms as offices for nonprofit organizations.

About the Museum

The main emphasis of the museum is the Revolutionary War as fought in South Jersey. The permanent exhibits will identify all the locations of Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes in South Jersey on a map and in an exhibit. Travelers will be encouraged to use the Travel Story App to go and see these sites throughout Camden County.

Other exhibits will tell the story of the many generations of the Cooper Family that lived here and worked at the ferries starting in 1682.¹ Because the tavern and ferries were hubs of both transportation and commerce, the site hosted “innumerable public sales and activities including slave auctions.”² Permanent exhibits will be located in the two smaller rooms in the tavern wing (c. 1770), about the site after the property was sold from Cooper ownership in 1854 to become a ship building facility from the 1860s through the Second World War. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Mathis Company produced luxury yachts here and the tavern was its headquarters. During the two World Wars the site was used for war production.³

The Visitor Center, rentals

As a full time, operation there will be a Visitor Center located in the large one-story brick addition c. 1917. Two Visitor Center staff members will provide information and advice to visitors when the site is open. The staff provides maps, brochures and rack cards from South Jersey tourist destinations, as well as visitor information from all of the Crossroads of the American Revolution sites in the state. Regular programming beyond tours is critical to generate repeat visitors. On Mondays and Tuesdays when the site is closed to the public, the Visitor Center is rented out for small events (\$7,500 yearly). The rental of the four bedrooms on

¹ Greenberg, Gail. National Register Nomination Benjamin Cooper Tavern, 1980, page 1.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., 4.

the second floor will generate \$24,000 yearly for operations. The handicapped accessible restrooms would be open when the museum is open five days a week.

Budget for Full Time Operation

A preliminary budget for the opening year 2025 is \$300,000. Half of the budget (\$150,000) comes from interest from the \$3 million dollar endowment. Another \$30,000 comes from the state or county who owns this property. The rest of the revenue comes from rentals of the four second floor offices (\$24,000 total), admissions (\$30,000), other rental income (\$7,500), school fees, grants, and small gifts from the board.

Part Time Operation

The CCHS may decide that raising \$3 million dollars to endow this historic site is unlikely, so they can opt for a part time visitor attraction, open three days a week for visitors on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout the year. This operation would require having the exact same museum, and office space and other rentals, but offer no formal visitor center. Docents would still provide guided tours several times a day when the property is open. No matter whether a full or part time operation, this site must offer regular, engaging programming and events for a very diverse audience to generate repeat visits.

The budget for a part time operation is \$132,000 and anchored by an annual grant of \$30,000 that comes from the state or county owner. The City of Camden provides an annual grant of \$20,000. The rest of the revenue comes from earned income from rentals of the offices (\$24,000), rentals of the event space (\$10,000), grants, sponsorship, ticket sales, and small gifts from the board.

Conclusion

As the Camden County Historical Society plans its grant applications for restoration, the historical society must determine whether it can afford a full time or part time operation. Much depends on whether the society is successful in making its case to the State or County for ownership of the site. Other funding sources must be tapped for an endowment, which if \$3 million can be raised, will permit the historic site to be open and to operate as a full-time museum and visitor center. We wish the Camden County Historical Society the best of luck in their efforts raise sufficient funds to make this the Benjamin Cooper Tavern into a major visitor attraction for South Jersey.

Chapter 2. Introduction

Purpose of report

This report is the culmination of a brief Assessment of the Heritage Tourism Potential of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern in Camden, New Jersey. It provides advice to the Camden County Historical Society, the leaseholder of the property, which will run and manage the Benjamin Cooper Tavern once it is open to the public, which is estimated to be in 2025.

This Assessment of Heritage Tourism Potential also focuses on the three-year rehabilitation period from 2022-2025 before the site opens to the public. During this period, the historical society must prepare to expand its organizational capacity to manage a new historic site along with its current museum, research library, and historic site work.

Funding provided by the New Jersey Historic Trust

This project has been funded in part by a grant from the Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund, which is administered by the New Jersey Historic Trust. This heritage tourism assessment is a component of the *Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* for this property.

History and Significance of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

We provide this brief capsule history of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, which comes from the National Register Nomination prepared by historian Gail Greenberg in 1980.⁴

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern was built in 1743 and is the oldest building in Camden. The building was an important commercial and transportation facility from the 18th into the middle of the 20th centuries. The Benjamin Cooper Ferry and Tavern is associated with the Cooper family, one of the earliest settlers in city and county. The site also played a key role during the colonial and Revolutionary War periods. The property is also significant to the history of the travel and shipbuilding industries, which made Camden an important location on the Delaware River.

Benjamin Cooper built this site. His father, William Cooper, was one of the members of the Assembly from the Third/Irish Tenth in 1682-1683 and 1685. In 1687, he was appointed by the Assembly of New Jersey to be one of the Council of Proprietors. He was a commissioner for the division of lands, and in 1694 he was appointed judge of the Gloucester County Court.

The ferrying business and the Cooper name were synonymous for generations. Coopers Point, where the Benjamin Cooper Tavern stands, was part of the original William Cooper survey of 1682. William probably operated a ferry here during the summer of 1682. A ferry was certainly in operation prior to 1708. A deed by William Cooper to his son, Joseph, dated February 18,

⁴ Greenberg, Gail. National Register Nomination Benjamin Cooper Tavern, 1980, page 1.

1708 conveyed a 212-acre tract including a ferry at Coopers Point. In 1728, Benjamin leased the land and ferry from his brother and operated it until 1766. Benjamin in turn leased the ferry to his son, Samuel, for ten years. The lease encompassed the land and ferry business, including the ferry house and other houses. In 1769, he sold the business and property outright for 395 pounds. Ownership stayed in the Cooper family until 1854. After 1854, the ferry was operated by the Camden and Atlantic Ferry Company until the Delaware River Bridge was completed in 1926. The ferry business closed a few years after.

Thus, ferries were established early here, and all major roads led to the river. Indeed, the Cooper ferries were among the most conspicuous travel points during colonial and Revolutionary times and carried a large volume of trade and travelers between Philadelphia and Jersey.

In 1727, Benjamin Cooper was granted a tavern license at Coopers Point for the public house he had opened at his wharf on the Point. In 1739, in applying for renewal of the tavern license, his petition stated: "Benjamin Cooper yeoman has made a wharf and built a house on the side of the river Delaware opposite Philadelphia and intends to keep a ferry from said house to Philadelphia and the keeping of a ferry your honors well knows renders it Necessary the said Benjamin should keep a public house or house of Entertainment at said house or the house he now lives in; and said Benjamin is a man of Credit and Estate." "The house he now lives in" referred to in the tavern renewal request was the 2 1/2 story brick fieldstone building built in 1734, the subject of this application.

At a strategic location between Philadelphia and Camden, Benjamin Cooper's Ferry was the site of innumerable public sales and activities, including slave auctions as indicated in an advertisement in the Pennsylvania Journal on May 27, 1762.

"Just imported from the River Gambia, in the Schooner Sally, Barnard Badger, Master, and to be sold at the Upper-Ferry (called Benjamin Cooper's Ferry), opposite to this City, a Parcel of likely Men and Women SLAVES, with some Boys and Girls of different Ages. Attendance will be given from the Hours of nine to twelve o'clock in the Morning, and from three to six in the Afternoon, by W. COXE, S. OLDMAN, & Company. N.B. It is generally allowed, that the Gambia Slaves are much more robust and tractable, than any other Slaves from the Coast of Guinea, and more capable of undergoing the Severity of the Winter Seasons in the North American Colonies, which occasions their being vastly more esteemed and coveted in this Province and those to the Northward than any other Slaves whatsoever. (-The Pennsylvania Journal, No. 1016, May 27, 1762.)

Benjamin Cooper's third wife was Elizabeth Cole. Elizabeth lived in the c. 1734 house after their marriage. When Benjamin died in 1772, his son Joseph inherited the property. Both were Loyalists, who suffered at the hands of the British and had their properties damaged by enemy forces. British harassment was brutal, and the two brothers were arrested in March 1778. The

Benjamin Cooper Tavern was used as an outpost for Colonel Robert Abercrombie of the 37 Regiment. He used the position here to prevent a surprise attack on the Delaware River when the British held Philadelphia in 1778.

In the 19th century, the ferry taverns had begun to convert their grounds into pleasure gardens using the names William Coopers Gardens and Uncle Billy's Gardens. During this period, the area around the Cooper Tavern was associated with ship building. By 1876, the property was owned by the John H. Mathis Company who used the house as the main office. In the 20th century, Mathis Ship Works had 100 workers producing luxury yachts . During World War I, the Emergency Fleet Corporation directed an accelerated shipbuilding program in Camden County. Mathis Shipbuilding received a contract for 15 subchasers, minesweepers, tugboats and sea plane hulls during World War II. The Mathis Company assembled minesweepers, subchasers, and other small vessels as well as diesel cargo ships and supply tankers for the armed services.

The property has been vacant for more than 20 years. It suffered a fire in 2012, which burned the majority of its roof. The Coopers Ferry Development Corporation applied for funds to have the roof replaced. Recently, the Camden County Historical Society entered into a lease with the private owner to undertake the restoration activities and plan for the opening of the American Revolution War Museum of South Jersey in the building in 2025.

Use options for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

The Camden County Historical Society has not yet determined whether it has the organizational capacity to manage the site as a full time Visitor Center/Museum/Office space for nonprofit organizations, or as a part time Museum/Office space for nonprofit corporations. We have supplied chapters about each option, with a focus on the making the historic site visitor ready for the upcoming 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War. This three-year period from 2022-2025 when the site is being rehabilitated will permit the historical society to experiment and begin developing its initial educational programming at the Camden County Historical Society's own auditorium in the Parkside neighborhood of Camden. Once the Benjamin Cooper Tavern opens to the public, programming can begin in the site's multi-purpose room, the old 1917 Mathis Company addition.

Ownership recommendations

The Camden County Historical Society has a very long track record of maintaining, interpreting and restoring Pamona Hall, which is owned by the City of Camden but leased on a long-term basis to the Camden County Historical Society. The CCHS operates the site as part of its campus of buildings in the Parkside neighborhood of Camden.

We are recommending that the Benjamin Cooper Tavern follow this workable and reasonable lead. We recommend that the Tavern be owned by a governmental entity, either the State of

New Jersey through the Department of Environmental Protection Division of Parks and Forestry or through the Camden County Department of Park System. In turn, either entity would lease the Benjamin Cooper Tavern on a long-term basis to the Camden County Historical Society to operate and manage as a historic site open to visitors on a regular basis.

The government owner, either the State of New Jersey or Camden County, would fund the following activities: all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, grounds maintenance/snow removal, minor repairs and paint.

The state or county would need to provide some funds each year for operations. We are recommending a grant of \$30,000 yearly from either source above the cost for maintenance and operations. The remaining costs for operating the site will be raised by the Camden County Historical Society yearly from admission, rental of upstairs rooms to other nonprofits, and an endowment that would be needed to undergird the financial operations (see later section on endowment). See anticipated budgets for 2024 (the year before the site opens to the public) in Chapter 3, for 2025 assuming the site is open full time five days a week) in Chapter 4, and for 2025 assuming the site is open part time (three days a week) in Chapter 5.

When it is open to the public, the Camden County Historical Society would be responsible for staffing and operating the Benjamin Cooper Tavern either on a full time (5 days a week including both weekend days) or part time (3 days a week including both weekend days) schedule, year-round. The organization would raise funds yearly for its restoration and operate the Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a museum and historic site. The Camden County Historical Society, as the lease holder, would provide office functions, a Visitor Center (if a full-time operation), subleases to other nonprofits organizations in four upstairs bedrooms, all museum exhibits, storage, temporary exhibits, regular tours and programming for adults and children, using paid or volunteer tour guides (docents).

These partnerships have been called Co-Stewardship Agreements or Public Private Partnerships.

Funds for operating the site from the government owner are essential, and we are recommending that the CCHS and the State or County create a partnership to support the yearly operating costs for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. In other chapters, we articulate the costs for two options for this property: as a full time, operation comprising of a Visitor Center, Museum, and Nonprofit Offices, and as a part time operation with a Museum and Nonprofit Offices.

Endowment recommendations

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern will need an endowment which will generate interest to support the operations of this site. It is common that 5% of the endowment's yearly earnings be set aside

for operations and management. Based on our initial budget, we expect that this site will need \$150,000 annually from endowment investments from a corpus of \$3 million dollars.

Chapter 2. What does it mean to be Visitor Ready for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern Museum?

Because it is currently vacant and not yet restored, the Benjamin Cooper Tavern was not included on any of the visitor ready lists of historic sites in *The New Jersey Revolutionary War Sites: Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment* report. While it is clear that the Benjamin Cooper Tavern has many stories to tell about the Revolutionary War, at the time the document was commissioned in 2019 there was little to report about the future of the site.

The New Jersey Revolutionary War Sites: Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment report, prepared for the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in 2020, makes it quite clear what they consider a “visitor ready” site. The authors identify seven components that characterize a site that is fully ready to welcome visitors. We include this information in this heritage tourism assessment because the development of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern should be planned and organized to meet these basic criteria that visitors want and expect at any historic site.

We discuss the seven Visitor Ready components below, and how the programming and staffing at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern should be developed so that it can be a highly valued visitor attraction upon opening.

Some of these items are related to the physical structure of the buildings and grounds, while other criteria deal with staffing and programming issues.

Visitor Ready Components for Buildings/Grounds: The new historic site needs emergency and pedestrian lighting, well maintained paths and roads, convenient parking, ADA compliant and well-maintained handicapped restrooms, wayfinding and directional signage, quality permanent exhibits, and overflow parking sites.

Other Visitor Ready Components Related to Staffing and Programming: Regular and published opening times year round, weekend hours, staff for emergency assistance, quality interpretation, changing exhibits, good curatorial practices, varied delivery methods for interpretation, guided/self-guided tours, programming for kids, special activities available to all, events tied to themes, people, and commemorative dates, recruitment, retention, and training for docents, relevant storytelling for all audiences, hospitality training for all front line staff, brochures/interpretation in various languages, understanding of the capacity that can be served in one day, hosting school groups on certain days, timed tickets, and managing large groups by dividing them into smaller groups to tour on site at the same time.

Should the Camden County Historical Society volunteers or staff be successful in gaining capital matching grants from the New Jersey Historic Trust program to rehabilitate this building, the CCHS will need to make a significant financial investment in the Benjamin Cooper

Tavern by providing 50/50 matching funds. These funds would pay for the rehabilitation, which the 2020 *Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* estimates will cost several hundred thousand dollars. This investment to restore the building and make it handicapped accessible is the initial step towards transforming this site into the important visitor destination that it could be. The site will need dedicated paid staff and creative programming to harness its potential to tell stories about the Revolutionary War era and make those stories relevant to today's visitors.

The rest of this chapter focuses on what would make the Benjamin Cooper Tavern visitor ready as a museum.

Being Visitor Ready at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

The Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment identifies seven components that are needed to be a fully visitor ready site.⁵ We provide commentary and recommendations for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern to become fully visitor ready below.

A. Operations

1. **Having a business license, permits, and insurance to operate legally.** While we expect that the State or the County as the owner of the property will hold general liability insurance on the building, the CCHS should also have its own liability insurance and Officers and Directors Insurance. The historical society's attorney can advise on licenses and permits needed for a visitor attraction open to the public.
2. **Schedule of opening hours.** We are recommending that the Benjamin Cooper Tavern be open and staffed five days a week throughout the year, including both weekend days (see below for specifics). This schedule will give the site the broadest possible opportunity to make the best of an "attraction" site once restored and permit further collaboration with other historic sites in the area to cross market to visitors.
3. **Contact telephone numbers and email for emergencies and when open.** The phone number needs to be one that will be answered at least once a day. Emails should be returned within 24 hours. A phone number at the CCHS for property related emergencies should be available to staff and to tenants using the building's second floor offices.
4. **Prominent on-site signage.** The Benjamin Cooper Tavern will need a variety of directional (wayfinding) and interpretive signage to help visitors who come by car to locate the site, and to direct them after they park and as they walk into the building. The trail will have its own wayfinding systems. The staff will have to work with the

⁵ Clarke, Caton Hintz, Hargrove International and Hunter Research, *The New Jersey Revolutionary War Sites: Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment*, April 21, 2020, 21-27.

City of Camden Public Works Department about creating appropriate directional signage to lead local travelers to the parking on site and to the main entrance if it is not wholly obvious from the parking location how to enter the building.

The staff will also need to work with the City of Camden's Public Works division to identify where directional signage is needed along the various streets and highways that visitors might take. All this directional signage needs to be planned and installed the year before the grand opening. The site will also need permanent interpretive signage. This signage can be created and installed during the construction phase of the project as part of the Trail project or the Camden County in the American Revolution signage project for which the CCHS is now preparing grant applications.

5. **Sufficient lighting for safety.** Lighting for the interior and exterior will be developed as part of the construction drawings for the rehabilitation of the property. Exterior lighting to showcase the exterior of the building and to light the path between the parking lot and the sidewalk that leads to the visitor entrance will be needed as part of any landscape plan.
6. **Emergency assistance.** The construction documents will identify any emergency lighting required by the building code. Staff will need to be available on site to aid anyone if there is any kind of emergency. All staff and volunteers should be trained each year to evacuate the building for any reason. At least one person who is regularly on site should be trained and certified in first aid, ideally all paid staff should have first aid certification.
7. **Well-maintained paths and roads.** The development of the landscaping plan will identify locations for bike and pedestrian paths, pedestrian walks, and handicapped visitor and staff parking lots. An agreement will be needed about who actually maintains the paths for visitors if the property is owned by the State or County, specifically in regard to sweeping and snow removal. The plowing of parking lots and roads should be left to the City of Camden Public Works staff in some form of agreement for services.

North Camden and Cramer Hill Waterfront Trails Project

Coopers Ferry Development Corporation is in the midst of a very ambitious trail program which would begin at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern called the North Camden and Cramer Hill Waterfront Trails Project. ⁶ This project would create a continuous, multi modal trail in both these neighborhoods to link the Camden Greenway Trail Network, already in place and in various planning stages, with the

⁶ Coopers Ferry Partnership, [CFP Camden Waterfront Trail Final Report AECOM Jan 2021.pdf \(dropbox.com\)](#)

much larger 33-mile Camden County Link.

This project is planning to install the following amenities at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern:

- Comfort Station including restrooms and water fountains
- Covered bike storage and bike repair stations
- Welcome plaza and seating
- Trail signage and wayfinding
- Gateway landscaping treatment⁷

All of these amenities will be needed at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, but they must be coordinated with the project architects and landscape designer to assure that there are no paths or alignments that create conflicts between cars, handicapped visitors, pedestrians visiting the historic site, and the pedestrians and bikers using the site throughout the day and evening.

If the CCHS wants to offer a coin operated soda or snack vending machine, we recommend these be available inside the Visitor Center rather than outside. While an inside location is only useful for trail uses from Wednesday through Sunday when the Visitor Center is open free, the machines are out of the weather, and monitored daily by Visitor Center staff. There is only a modest amount of money to be made from these vending machines, but they do provide a visitor amenity. The agreement with the vending machine owner will not permit the site to also sell water or other drinks on site. We do not recommend having any vending machines outdoors on the terrace as they are an eyesore for a newly restored historic site.

Some of the interpretive signage to be installed here is being made possible by the American Battlefield Preservation Program/Camden County Open Space funding. If these grants are successful, they will need to be coordinated with Coopers Ferry Partnership and the planning team for the restoration of the Tavern.

B. Open to the Public

1. **Regular schedule of days/hours open to the public.** A regular full-time schedule with opening hours from 10am to 5pm, Wednesday through Sunday, will permit the greatest flexibility for visitors at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The staff can arrive at 9am to set up for the day. The welcome sign at the property should list the open hours, including which holidays the site is closed. Every Monday and Tuesday, New Years, Christmas, and Thanksgiving are recommended as holidays to be closed. The open schedule should be promoted in all the literature: brochures, signs, website, social media, and in press releases.

⁷ [CFP Camden Waterfront Trail Final Report AECOM Jan 2021.pdf \(dropbox.com\)](#), 40.

2. **Open year-round.** The slow winter months can be used by staff for planning and installing temporary exhibits, and for program planning by staff and volunteers for the new year. This can also be the season for minor interior painting and repair. However, tours and programming for adults and school children should continue throughout the winter season, giving visitors a reason to come the site, tour the grounds, and learn more about the Revolutionary War, the Cooper family, and this tavern's long history.
3. **Open both weekend days.** We recommend that the site be open both weekend days and have staffing, both paid and volunteer, in place that can cover both days. The weekends are when visitors want to see historic sites, and programming should be available each weekend day during the traditional visitor season from April through October and perhaps in December.
4. **ADA Compliant.** *The Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* will identify how the site will meet the Americans with Disability Act requirements related to grading, sidewalks, ramps, parking, and handicapped restrooms. There are two steps down into the former tavern building, and these may not be handicapped accessible. If this is the case, then alternate interpretive activities (iPad, brochure, or reproductions of exhibits in readable form). While a handicapped individual will be able to visit the site as a Visitor Center, they will not be able to visit the second-floor nonprofit offices. We do not anticipate any interpretive activities on the second floor, so no alternate programming for this floor will be needed.
5. **Parking.** *The Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* will indicate where the handicapped parking, staff parking, and visitor parking spots will be located for this property. The historical society will need to work with the City of Camden to identify locations for overflow parking in the neighborhood if they anticipate hosting larger events. During the rehabilitation planning, there will be time to identify additional parking locations for staff and visitors on the site. These locations must be worked out with the City of Camden. Street parking is an option for many people, but the staff may have to work out a relationship with the nearby neighbors if events will take up street parking that neighbors use, especially on weekend days.
6. **Restrooms.** *The Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* will recommend handicapped accessible restrooms for the site if it is used as a Visitor Center, Museum, or Nonprofit offices. Any public restroom will need exceptional maintenance daily. Cleaning must be someone's job, and cleaning standards need to be in that person's job description. The condition of the restroom tells visitors how they will be treated throughout their time on site, so an immaculate restroom says that the site cares about its visitors. The restroom must be sparkling all day, every day. This is part of being a good host. If this means that the historical society must hire an outside

contractor who provides superb restroom cleaning service throughout the day, then it must be included in any annual operating budget for this site. The owner, either the State or the County, could provide such janitorial services as part of their responsibilities for the site, but the work must be hotel quality.

C. Staffing

1. **Staffing.** In subsequent chapters, we have identified the staffing that we believe is necessary for the two options we are suggesting: a full time, year-round Visitor Center/ Museum/Nonprofit Office option and a part time Museum/Nonprofit Offices option.

The Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment report states that the three items mentioned above are “the minimum criteria for visitor readiness at an historic site interested in hosting visitors. Certainly, the availability of a stellar gift shop, temporary exhibits, and café can enhance the time spent at a site or attract locals on a more frequent basis. However, visitor readiness should include more than just opening the doors, qualities beyond the basic criteria listed above”⁸

Below are more four areas that *The Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment* considers important for determining visitor readiness, especially for historic sites.

D. Exhibitions

1. **Quality exhibits.** *The Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* will identify locations for educational displays. The first floor of the tavern can be used as a small exhibition area to provide orientation and information about the house for those that want to “visit on their own” without taking a guided tour. This location can include a small video monitor or iPad to show any specific audio or video information.

The 1917 addition is also a possible location for temporary exhibits if the site is not used as a Visitor Center or multi-purpose room. Please see Chapters 3 and 4 for further information about full and part time uses for this room.

2. **Rotating exhibits with fresh content.** This original building first floor rooms can be the location for regular changing temporary exhibits, with new exhibits and openings held twice a year to bring new people into the building. These exhibits can build on the Crossroads of the American Revolution interpretive themes that make sense for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern.
3. **Interactive and immersive (post COVID) activities.** The Benjamin Cooper Tavern will distinguish itself by being a museum and trail head for the North Camden and

⁸ Clarke Caton Hintz, *The Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment*, 23.

Cramer Hill trail being planned by the Coopers Ferry Partnership. Well-conceived educational programming is essential for this site to bring visitors back more than once to see any static exhibit. We are recommending that some of the space be flexible, permitting the site to offer community-based meetings, especially if it is a part time operation that can use the large first floor room from the 1917 addition.

4. **Exhibit research content based on good history.** The American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey will need professionally developed exhibits in all of the four rooms on the first floor of the 1743 and other 18th century addition (tavern space). The CCHS staff will need to work with qualified exhibit designers to create this permanent display based on sound research.
5. **Relevant stories to engage all audiences.** The Benjamin Cooper Tavern can tell virtually all the stories that the Crossroads of the American Revolution has identified in its *Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment* report on pages 79 to 82.⁹
6. **Good curatorial practice to protect artifacts.** The historical society's collections management plan and practices for protecting, storing, and maintaining artifacts will govern how exhibits at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern will be mounted.

E. Programs

1. **Various delivery methods for programs.** Chapter 5 details the types of programming that we are recommending for the site when it is finally open to the public, and in the years while restoration is taking place. The staff will be building on work already accomplished during the three-year construction phase and expanding on programming for adults and children held once a month during the visitor season.
2. **Self-guided tours.** We are recommending that the site install two or more interpretive signs outside on the grounds during the construction period, either as part of the Travel Story audio tours/podcast or the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution in Camden County. In addition, the CCHA website should have a downloadable visitor brochure which is also available at the Museum. The event listing for the quarter should be printed and available on the website and in the Visitor Center and Museum. The website should have substantial information about the property. The site should review its programming annually to make updates and changes depending on visitor feedback, new research and staff, and volunteer capacity. This site will be one of the 39 Travel Story sites for the Camden County in the Revolutionary War interpretive sign project and have a three-minute narrative about its history

⁹ Clarke Caton Hintz, 79-82.

3. **Several types of guided tours.** We are recommending having trained staff, either volunteer or paid, provide several different themed tours for visitors on the weekends at regular times (on the hour, for example, from 11am to 3pm). Further information about guided tours appears in Chapter 5.
4. **Programming for children.** The site should offer regular special programs for children or family groups and advertise them widely. We anticipate that families will likely be a main visitor group to target, so careful attention needs to be paid to offering regular programming for them. Interpreters and reenactors hired for the grounds need to be skilled in offering children's programs. Further information about programming for children is in Chapter 5.
5. **Special activities for all ages.** Larger educational events can be held outside on the grounds or at Coopers Poynt Park nearby. The educational programming during the three years of construction can be hosted in the CCHS auditorium, After the grand opening, the grounds provide other opportunities for larger special events that may or may not be related to educational themes. Staff can collaborate with area schools and clubs to host events on the grounds as needed. Chapter 5 has more information about activities for all ages.
6. **Events tied to themes, people, and commemorative dates.** We have recommended that small events held in the tavern focus on themes related to the Revolutionary War and the role of Benjamin Cooper and his family in history. The site should also focus on slavery during the 18th century because it was the documented site of slave auctions. The Cooper Tavern also provides rich interpretive opportunities that need to be developed so that they can be implemented during the first year the house is open to the public. In Chapter 5, we recommended that patriotic holidays be programmed, such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veterans Day, focusing on patriotism or citizenship. These events can be expanded once the house is open to the public.

F. Tour Guides/Docents

1. **Is there a program to recruit and reward docents from the community?** We note that the entire educational program needs good oversight through staff leadership, whether that is a part time Site Administrator or a full time Executive Director. We recommend that this person serve as the chief interpreter and leader of the educational programming for the site. These chief staff members will work with docents and other staff to create high quality training and orientation for all interpreters, whether they are paid staff members, consultants, or docent volunteers.

Recruitment of interpreters, whether paid or volunteer, is an ongoing task. While the staff is gearing up for opening day, many interpreters will be needed to handle the crowds of people curious about the rehabilitated Benjamin Cooper Tavern in Camden. It would be wise to train more interpreters than can possibly be needed given the anticipation for the 250th Anniversary, even if the CCHS chooses to use this location as a trail head and part time museum/nonprofit office space. Consider offering at least quarterly training for new interpreters during the year before opening and use these new interpreters during the monthly educational events in advance of the opening. Further information about working with interpreters is in Chapter 5.

2. **Do docents/guides receive training at least annually? Is it mandatory?** Does it include information sharing as well as honing presentation skills? The initial interpreter training is likely to be longer than one day as the staff develops the capacity to train more than a handful of docents at a time. It is recommended by the Crossroads consultants that interpreters be trained annually. Yearly mandatory training should include new information for experienced guides that can be focused on new research, new interpretive techniques, or further familiarization with nearby sites. Hospitality training must also be updated yearly so that all interpreters know about new visitor service offerings nearby (places to eat, where to shop, locations of the nearest ATMs and gas stations, hotels in the area, etc.), and new visitor amenities nearby (parks, recreational offerings, historic sites, and other museums). Interpreters should be encouraged to take advantage of other educational offerings made available at conferences, through Crossroads or other educational venues in the state and region. Further information about docent training is in Chapter 5.
3. **Are tour guides encouraged to learn more about the community** (e.g., participate in local familiarization tours to other attractions, restaurants, etc.) to pass along this knowledge to visitors in the form of suggested places to eat, shop, tour, and stay? We spend more time on cross marketing in Chapter 5 and identify the likely sites in South Jersey and the surrounding counties with visitor attractions that interpret the Revolutionary War. This will be an important part of docent/interpreter orientation and training. Just as important is making a large effort to invite docents/interpreters/staff from adjacent sites to the Benjamin Cooper Tavern so they are familiar with our site and can make recommendations to visitors. This must be an annual effort in the spring, just as the visitor season begins.

Interpreters need to know where the nearest bank or gas station is, the best diner, and great local restaurants or shopping districts that offer a distinct experience for visitors. Maps of these visitor amenities can be prepared and handed out and might be an excellent sponsorship product. Further information about sponsorship options is in Chapter 5.

4. **Are materials and tours translated into different languages for international visitors, and available in Braille and for the hearing impaired?** We recommend that the website be translated into Spanish, and that the general visitor brochure be similarly translated. Take a clue from the other “attractor” sites to determine the languages they are translating their brochures into for the 250th Anniversary, and how they are marketing this to visitors.
5. **Do guides have a staff or board member to contact in case of emergency, conflict, or area of concern?** The historical society Board may want to create a liaison committee for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern related to educational programming to provide some oversight for the tour program. See more about this in Chapter 5. While concerns or conflicts should be raised to the on-site staff first, this committee could act as another group to take concerns.

If a separately constituted nonprofit corporation is formed to manage the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, it would be important to have some overlap in Board membership with the CCHS to prevent conflict over going to the same funding sources for similar projects.

G. Marketing to Capacity

1. **How many visitors can be hosted at one time without compromising the integrity of the site or the experience?** The fire marshal will ultimately determine how many visitors can be accommodated in the Benjamin Cooper Tavern at any one time, whether for seated events/lectures or general open houses/receptions. This information will be posted in the museum.

The integrity of a newly rehabilitated house does not get much attention, but during the year before opening staff should consider the real capacity of the house during events if people are permitted to mill about without a guide. Staff should consider what the visitor flow should be for these events and provide a “guide on demand” in each room with a cell phone for safety and interpretive purposes.

2. **Are school groups scheduled on certain days of the week, with families and adult groups encouraged to visit on other days?** The staff should identify when school groups are permitted on site, likely on Wednesday and Thursday (for a full-time operation) if the site is closed on Monday and Tuesday. For a part time operation, the staff might wish to limit school visits to only one day per week, ideally on Friday.

School programs should be developed for specific grade levels and meet the current New Jersey State core curriculum standards. Ideally, local teachers might be good summertime interpreters, while retired teachers can be used throughout the

year. Teachers might be recruited to work on the school program specifically as paid or volunteer guides. If school programming is limited to two days a week by appointment, the staff can smooth out school visitation throughout the year. If grants can be obtained for student transportation, then these programs can be offered during late fall, winter, and early spring months before the highly desirable May and June months for school visits.

3. **Can tours be rotated to different parts of the site to help reduce impact, or restrict access to certain areas during peak times of the year?** As the typical guided tour route through the house and grounds is developed in the year before opening, the staff will need to identify how to segment the tour so that the narrative can be logically told if visitors start the tour outside rather than inside or vice versa. An outdoor tour might also be worth developing so visitors can explore the site and its Revolutionary War connections. The interpreter might have to be equipped with an iPad with historic photos or a binder of photos to show lost buildings if this is the case.
4. **Are timed or ticketed admissions an option for peak visitation periods?** The historical society should have early discussions during the construction period about whether the site will be open free of charge, or if an admission fee will be charged for tours inside the house. We have included an admission fee of \$5.00 for adults and \$2.50 for children in our budgets for both a full and part time operation.

It might be that no tours, even hard hat tours to showcase restoration discoveries, of the building will be permitted on site while in construction due to insurance requirements.

Self-guided tours of the grounds using the downloaded brochure should be available for no charge.

Once restoration is complete, if it is decided that an admission fee is to be charged, then consider offering one free day a month (such as the first Sunday of every month) and make that information widely available, especially on the website.

Look at peer sites for advice on ticket prices for regular tours, especially for offering family rates. Once restoration is complete, special programs like lectures or concerts held inside the house can be ticketed using programs like Event Brite or other ticketing software. If the site becomes highly popular, the CCHS can decide to offer different ticket prices for “prime time” or high season tours, versus low or free tours during the winter. The year of the 250th Anniversary will likely produce the highest visitation, and there should be plans for visitors from Europe and Asia. Planning should begin by identifying who might offer foreign language tours on weekends, and by preparing similar foreign language brochures. Alternately,

podcasts of the tour in foreign languages could be available for free on the website so that visitors with smart phones can access them.

5. **How does the current infrastructure (parking, road access, entrance, restrooms, other visitor services) impact capacity?** We have already identified that the staff will need to work closely with the City of Camden to identify locations for overflow parking beyond the curb side spaces along the street, and near the handicapped accessible spaces in the parking area. Staff parking will also need to be identified and signed.
6. Once the site is open to the public, the handicapped accessible restroom(s) in the property will have to be cleaned regularly. This needs to be someone's job.

The next two chapters utilize this Visitor Ready Framework. Chapter 3 discusses the restoration period 2022-2024 and programming and staff needed. Chapter 5 gives the CCHS an understanding of what will be needed for a full time, staffed operation as a Visitor Center and Museum with nonprofit office spaces for lease. Chapter 5 details how the part time, three day a week Museum with nonprofit office spaces for lease could be managed and staffed.

Chapter 3. Recommendations for Planning for Interpretation, Staffing, and Operations During Restoration Period 2022-2024

During the restoration period over the next two years from 2022-2024, the Camden County Historical Society has the opportunity to build an audience for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern by starting programming about the heritage themes identified in the *Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* completed by Clarke Caton Hintz. Here, we offer additional information about organizational development, staffing, and promoting the site in these two years while the building is undergoing restoration. We also offer a preliminary budget for 2024, the year before the site opens to the public.

Organizational development before/during restoration, staffing during construction.

While the restoration of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is a long-sought goal for the Camden County Historical Society, it does represent the development of an entirely new historic site to open, operate, and manage. The historical society must determine how the current CCHS staff will be involved in early programming, and when staff strictly dedicated to the Cooper Tavern will be hired. We are recommending that a part time staff, consultant, or highly dedicated volunteer begin work in mid-2022 once construction or archeology work is started. We are also assuming that all the Benjamin Cooper Tavern staff or consultants will be working from the society's headquarters building.

Over the next three years from 2022 to 2024, when the restoration and rehabilitation occurs, the historical society needs to raise funds, identify and train volunteers, and substantially increase outreach efforts to build excitement for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern's eventual opening in 2025. They will also have to hire their first paid staff members or consultants, even if initially only part time staff as recommended below, to build an audience for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern before it opens.

This chapter lays out what needs to be accomplished by the historical society over the next three years to create a museum at the site, even if used only on a part time basis. The variety of tasks needed to organize a viable historic site and museum from scratch is a vast and uphill task. We have identified a handful of first steps that are critical for the historical society to take to position the Benjamin Cooper Tavern to be an important visitor attraction after restoration is complete and once the site is open to the public in 2025.

Paid staff during construction period 2022-2024

The following activities could be undertaken by one part time paid staff, a hired consultant, or a very highly dedicated volunteer in the years 2022 and 2023. We envision this initial programming job to grow in scope and responsibility from 2022 to 2024 to become a full-time paid Executive Director or the part time Site Administrator if a part time operation is chosen.

Here, we identify these jobs in two situations: first during 2022 to 2024 when construction is underway, and then in 2024, the year before the site opens to the public. We include a budget for 2024.

Staffing during construction 2022

During the first year of construction in 2022, a part time paid programming staff (consultant or highly dedicated volunteer) can begin work to conceive, plan, and provide programming once a month at the CCHS auditorium at its Parkside location. These educational programs will be presented by paid or volunteer interpreters/reenactors for various programs or by known consultants, lecturers, or other speakers. See Chapter 6 for a full discussion about interpretation and programming for these initial years, and topics for talks and presentations.

Startup outreach activities

Additionally, the staff will need to begin outreach activities specifically for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. We recommend developing a regular quarterly e-newsletter for the first two years (which can become a monthly newsletter in 2024), writing website content (on the CCHS website, until a separate website for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is needed), creating databases, creating social media accounts and posts about news on restoration, and implementing initial educational programming. This person works closely with the Executive Director of CCHS, who will be the primary grant writer for this site.

Tasks for 2023

During the years 2023 and 2024, this programming staff person will need to begin initial fundraising for startup operating costs for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, develop independent financial systems for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, and strategize with the CCHS Executive Director on raising funds from individuals, corporations, and other small grants to meet the 2024 operating year budget, when both staff will be working full time in preparation for opening in 2025. If a separately constituted nonprofit is formed, this would be the appropriate year to incorporate, create bylaws, apply for tax exempt status (IRS 1023 form), and form a Board and begin fundraising.

Install Wayfinding and Interpretive Signs, Travel Story APP

Applications are being prepared now (March 2021) for Camden County in the Revolutionary War interpretive and wayfinding signage and Travel Stories App that will include the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. These grant applications to the American Battlefield Preservation Program Fund and the Camden County Open Space, Historic Preservation and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund will pay for research, writing, development, and installation of interpretive signage and a kiosk (map) at 39 sites in the county, including the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The

programming staff should be involved in any meetings related to the interpretation to be included on any signage and installation.

Startup collaborations

The programming staff should also participate in any meetings with Crossroads of the American Revolution and other nearby Revolutionary War sites about their planning for any joint programming related to the 250th Anniversary. These early meetings can set the tone for long term cooperation and familiarity with each other's sites. Docents will need to be familiar with other Revolutionary War historic sites when they start training in late 2024 for the eventual opening of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern in June 2025, so they can make good visitor referrals to other places to visit. The programming staff will attend these initial meetings, and then eventually turn over this task to the events/social media staff when they begin work in 2024. Further information about collaborations and working with destination management organizations is in Chapter 6.

Initial programming

During the restoration period, we recommend that the CCHS begin to offer monthly programming about the Benjamin Cooper Tavern at the society's Parkside auditorium to build momentum about the restoration and eventual opening of this new historic site. Each month from April through October, starting in 2022, the CCHS can offer an in person public educational program about the site, its history, and the development of the museum themes. One of the main purposes of this effort is to begin gathering an audience and a mailing list. We hope that in offering regular educational programming about the Cooper Tavern, the CCHS can gather hundreds if not a thousand names over the construction period.

Location for educational programming during restoration period

Since it will be several years until the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is completely restored and open for visitors, the historical society can begin to present programming for adults and children at its newly renovated auditorium at the Parkside location. This site has ample parking for event attendees on the street. The site is handicapped accessible with a recent handicapped entrance to the building and an elevator to the second floor. The location has a stage, grand piano, and round and rectangular tables and chairs to fill the space. There is also an older catering kitchen at the rear of the auditorium. Men's and women's restrooms are available on this floor near the stairs.

The historical society has part time staff that manages events at the headquarters building, and these educational events can begin to develop an audience for the restoration of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The society's outreach staff can help manage these events that the programming staff arranges and books.

Promoting early events

These early events can be promoted in various ways by the programming staff: on the CCHS website, through the Camden County History Alliance monthly newsletter (with 2000 email addresses), through partnerships that can be developed with other Revolutionary War historic sites in South Jersey, and through Crossroads of the American Revolution NHA website and its monthly e-newsletter. The League of Historical Societies also offers a monthly newsletter. Not all of these educational events will bring scores of people. Some will have a small audience of 10, others 50. But through this kind of experimentation, the programming staff will learn what people in Camden and the surrounding community want to know about this site and can begin to offer more programming they want.

Years 2024 volunteer recruitment and retention during construction

Volunteers will be needed to help manage the museum, provide tours, and facilitate special events at the site for the opening in June 2025 and after. We recommend that volunteers begin to be recruited at least six months before the eventual opening, starting in late 2024.

We have learned over the years that volunteer recruitment needs to be someone's job. Ideally, a volunteer serving as the volunteer coordinator might be attracted to the job because they are highly involved in all activities of the organization at the start of museum operations. As a backup, the events/social media person might take on volunteer recruitment as one of their tasks.

Volunteer recruitment has changed so much in the last five years, and COVID 19 has created many online ways to help nonprofits. For the latest in volunteer news, tips, and trends, we recommend Energize! a nonprofit volunteer management website for the most up to date information about volunteers today.¹⁰ Energize is based in Philadelphia and was founded by Susan Ellis, who has worked in this arena for 30 years. The website includes hundreds of short articles available for free, books (various prices), training programs (various prices), and a free monthly e-newsletter with the latest information.

We have also learned that volunteers are more likely to be attracted to an opportunity if it has a limited scope such as "help us deliver X tour once a month for the next six months." Making tasks into bite size opportunities will help introduce volunteers to the site, staff, and other volunteers. If they have a good experience in training and delivering their tours and feel supported in their efforts, they are likely to volunteer again.

Volunteer job descriptions must emphasize if the work is part of a cohort, or if the work is to be done independently. Volunteers look for different learning experiences to use their talents for nonprofit organizations. They also want flexibility. Many organizations have migrated to Sign

¹⁰ [Energize: Volunteer Management Resources for Directors of Volunteers | \(energizeinc.com\)](https://energizeinc.com)

Up Genius or other online tools to schedule volunteers. Ultimately, the staff may need to train scores of volunteers to be able to slot the requisite number of volunteers when the site is open, either three or five days a week.

We supply as an appendix a sample volunteer job description and a checklist to ensure the descriptions are complete, and sample short volunteer job descriptions for likely tasks needed within the first year. Volunteer job descriptions should be posted on the website and be a regular feature on the e-newsletter. When a job has been filled by a volunteer, it is a nice gesture to announce their name (with a photo) in the newsletter to reinforce the organization's thanks for stepping up.

Staffing in 2024 while getting ready to open to the public in 2025

One paid staff person that we are calling the Executive Director or the Site Administrator (depending on whether a full or part time staff) will be needed to manage the opening of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern to the public. This person will plan and implement all programming, fundraising, outreach, and coordination with other sites for programming purposes. We envision that the initial part time staff or consultant (or highly motivated volunteer) originally hired in 2022 on a part time basis to begin programming and outreach would be interested to see their job grow into either the Executive Director or Site Administrator position.

2024 Full time Executive Director: programming, outreach, fundraising, coordination

This full-time paid position will conceive, plan, and provide programming at the CCHS auditorium and plan the docent program. The Executive Director will manage and grow all outreach, e-newsletters, website content, databases, social media development (until staff is hired as noted below), and implementation. They will begin recruitment for the volunteer corps, develop training materials, and train these volunteers. With the CCHS Executive Director, the Cooper Tavern ED will expand fundraising efforts, especially fundraising events, and seek gifts from individuals, corporations, sponsorships, and other small grants. This staff will participate in meetings with Crossroads and other nearby historic sites on joint programming related to the 250th Anniversary and participate in all joint programming activities as planned with partners. Once the events/social media staff is hired they will take on the work with collaborators.

2024 Part time events/social media/communication manager

This part time, paid person will join the staff as an event /social media/communications coordinator or a consultant to manage programming and volunteer recruitment. This person would be hired as a consultant (30 hours a week) in 2024 to help get ready for the opening in 2025.

Budget for 2024

This budget assumes an ongoing relationship between the historical society and either the State of NJ, Division of Parks and Forestry or Camden County for a yearly \$30,000 financial contribution towards the operating budget each year for this site.

The governmental owner (State or County) will be called up to provide utilities and grounds maintenance/snow removal throughout the year. In 2024, the final year of construction, there will be many meetings regarding planning for regular operations for the coming year and how to staff and implement their activities, in which the Executive Director will participate. The owner will also be responsible for ongoing operating costs including all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, ground's maintenance, snow removal, and minor repairs and paint. These items will be nailed down through an agreement.

In 2024, the historical society's Executive Director, in collaboration with the Benjamin Cooper Tavern Executive Director, will begin the full-time fundraising operation for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The Tavern Executive Director will plan the docent training program and begin to recruit and train volunteers. The social media/events person will take over all the duties for the website, newsletter, and social media accounts handled for the last two years by the Executive Director. The event staff will begin further outreach to partner organizations, and work with Visit South Jersey and other marketing partners to establish relationships for the opening of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a full time or part time year-round tourist attraction.

Preliminary Budget for 2024, preparation for opening year, still in construction, not open to the public –assuming this will be a full-time operation in 2025

Revenue

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Individual giving by board | 5,000 |
| Program revenue from educational events | 2,500 |
| Grants for projects | |
| GOS/NJHC | 15,000 |
| Camden County Cultural Heritage Comm | 5,000 |
| Cash contributions State or County | 30,000 |
| Endowment interest | 150,000 |
| Total Revenue | 207,500 |

Expenses

Staff and contractors

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Full time Executive Director | 50,000 |
| Part time event manager/social media/com no benefits | 25,000 |
| Payroll taxes 7.65% of total | 9,651 |
| Attorney | 5,000 |
| Liability and Offices and Directors insurance | 4,000 |
| Benefits for ED Stipend | 4,000 |
| Interns/contractors | 3,000 |
| Stipends for lecturers 8 @ \$500 | 4,000 |
| Bookkeeping/accountant/audit contractor | 10,000 |
| Total staff | 114,651 |

Operations

| | |
|--|---------------|
| All utilities paid by State or Camden County (Wi-Fi, alarm, pest management, trash pickup, janitorial as noted below | 0 |
| grounds maintenance/snow removal/minor repairs/paint | 0 |
| Interpretation startup costs | 5,000 |
| Marketing costs (Visit South Jersey Crossroads, others) | 10,000 |
| Postage/delivery | 750 |
| Dues and subscriptions | 1,000 |
| Staff development/travel | 1,250 |
| Office supplies | 750 |
| Computer/drop box/software upgrades | 1,000 |
| Newsletter expenses | 500 |
| Printing and copying | 1,500 |
| Website upgrades, hosting/domain name costs | 750 |
| Total | 22,500 |

Total Expenses
Surplus

137,151
70,349

Assumptions

- Offices on second floor are not yet rented, resulting in no rental income from event space this year.
- Property still in construction, but owner to provide all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, ground maintenance/snow removal/minor repairs/paint, and \$30,000 for general operations yearly.
- Program revenue source from ticketed educational programs at CCHS auditorium or Zoom events.
- Endowment interest @ 5% yearly from \$3 million in investments.
- General Operating Support grant secured from the New Jersey Historical Commission for the first year.
- Costs for museum displays/exhibits included in construction costs.
- Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission grant secured for the first year.
- All computers, cameras, printers, scanners, video equipment, and hardware purchased with construction phase funds.
- All office furniture is donated.
- Tables and chairs for Visitor Center space are purchased with construction phase funds.

Chapter 4. Recommendations for The Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a Full Time Visitor Center/Museum/Nonprofit Offices in 2025

2025 at the Benjamin Cooper House, full time operation open to the public

Imagine it is June of 2025, a year before the festivities begin in earnest for the nationwide 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War. The staff at the Camden County Historical Society, charged with bringing the once vacant Benjamin Cooper Tavern to life over the last four years, is ready to open the property with a big celebration. All the staff, Board members, and consultants are here with the restoration architects, landscape architects, exhibit designers, fundraisers, social media and special events staff who have been waiting for this special day.

During the last year, the staff including the full time Executive Director (who has on been on staff part time since 2023 bootstrapping the growth and development of this historic site), the part time events and social media coordinator (who has been working 30 hours a week since 2024), the three-part time Visitor Center staff (who were hired six months ago) have all been trained and are ready for a flood of visitors. Finally, there are dozens of docents who have been trained to provide tours of the site

In June of 2025, the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is open five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday from 10AM to 5PM. This site serves several functions. First, it is the site of the American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey. Second, it is a Visitor Center designed to lure travelers who want to know more about this site and the other historic, recreational, and shopping attractions throughout South Jersey. Third, it is a trail head for the North Camden and Cramer Hill Trail, and restroom facilities are open when the site is open to the public five days a week. Finally, to pay the bills, the CCHS has rehabilitated the four second floor bedrooms as offices for nonprofit organizations in the area. These nonprofits work in the building Monday through Friday and use the facilities for meetings or events during the two days the museum is closed to the public. The nominal rent charged per month (\$500) pays for part of the Executive Director's salary and provides onsite security throughout the day. The North Camden and Cramer Hill Trail has been open for a few months, and already bikers, Rutgers teams, and running clubs are using the trail regularly.

If larger events are held, like Revolutionary War battles, we work with the City to host them nearby at Coopers Poynt Park for 250th anniversary of skirmishes at the site from approximately October 1777 (2027) to April 1778 (2028).

On a beautiful Wednesday morning in June, the staff meets at 9am to review the schedule for the week and to make sure that the site is clean, fresh, and ready for visitors. At 10am the door opens, including the accessible restrooms used by countless visitors who ride the trails on their bikes or run for exercise. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, we schedule school tours here. We charge a small fee whether the class comes to us, or whether we go to them with a

travel trunk. Our tour guides are mostly former teachers, and they love the variety of topics that we can discuss at the site or during classroom visits all geared to the school curriculum.

By 11am some day trippers have arrived from Philadelphia, and they want information about the Camden Bike Trail. Our Visitor Center staff spends time with them to identify locations for lunch, a rest, and when they would want to begin their trek back to Camden in the afternoon to pick up their car. Other visitors have come further and want to see all the South Jersey Revolutionary War interpretive signs recently installed. They get a map and are told about the Travel Stories App they can use to bring these Revolutionary War sites to life through the podcast on their smart phones.

At 1pm, there is a guided tour about the Cooper Tavern as a slave auction site. We have 18 people on the tour, which is typical. We offer this tour every Wednesday and Saturday and get good attendance whenever it is offered. At 2pm, there is another tour that talks about the ferries along the shores of Camden in the 18th and into the 20th centuries. Finally, at 3pm we have a tour about the Cooper women associated with this historic site. A costumed guide talks about the Cooper Family during the Revolutionary War and the privations the family sustained because they were Loyalists. Staff meets again at 5:00pm when the site closes to prepare for tomorrow's tours and events and to make sure the site is ready for the coming weekend when the Camden County Cycle Club will be holding a rally on the grounds in the morning. We have gotten excellent publicity about the rally, and we expect several hundred people along with the Camden County Cycle Club staff who will run the event. They have booked food trucks and entertainers for the day. Our staff is selling water, and the restrooms will be open.

Volunteers as docents are critical to telling the variety of stories about this tavern, from its construction in 1734 through the 150 years of Cooper ownership and the family's roles as ferry operators. Other stories that docents can relate from the quality history we have uncovered are about the slave auctions held here in the 17th century when the ferries and tavern are a hub of transportation and commerce. The Cooper Tavern also played a part in the First and Second World War, when the place was outfitted as a ship building facility.

Today we had 66 visitors come into the Visitor Center (free), about 34 people took one of our guided tours (\$5.00 adults/\$2.50 kids, but free with museum admission), and our "guide on demand" stationed in the exhibit area noted that 45 people walked through the exhibit today or asked her questions after they paid \$5.00 adults/\$2.50 kids to enter the museum. The staff keeps good records about our visitation every day, which we report yearly to the New Jersey Historical Commission.

About the Museum

The American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey is located on the first floor of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, constructed c. 1734. The two rooms are beautifully restored, and the

exhibit designers have utilized the woodwork and other historic features to their best advantage. The permanent exhibit is located in these two rooms, and there are exhibit cases as well as wall displays throughout these rooms.

The permanent exhibit tells the story of the many generations of the Cooper Family that lived here and worked at the ferries starting in 1682.¹¹ Because the tavern and ferries were hubs of both transportation and commerce, the site hosted “innumerable public sales and activities including slave auctions.”¹² The ferry operation remained in the family until 1854.¹³

The main emphasis of the museum is the Revolutionary War as fought in South Jersey. The exhibit identifies all the locations of Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes in South Jersey on a map and in an exhibit. Travelers are encouraged to use the Travel Story App to go and see these sites throughout Camden County. The Cooper Family as Quakers were Loyalists. during the Revolution, so family members and the Cooper properties suffered during the conflict. Several Cooper sons were arrested, and the house was used by British Colonel Robert Abercrombie of the 37th Regiment as his headquarters in 1777.

Additional permanent exhibits can be found in the two smaller rooms in the tavern wing (c. 1770) located two steps down from the main floor. Here there are exhibits about the site after the property was sold from Cooper ownership in 1854 to become a ship building facility from the 1860s through the Second World War. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Mathis Company produced luxury yachts here and the tavern was its headquarters. During the First World War, the site was converted into war production where 15 subchasers, minesweepers, tugboats, and sea plane hulls were produced ¹⁴ During the Second World War, the Mathis Company produced minesweepers, subchasers and other small ships.

About the Visitor Center

The Visitor Center is located in the large one-story brick room added to the building by the Mathis Company in 1917. This large room is used as a Visitor Center and it has benches along the wall on three sides of the room where people can rest, read brochures, and catch their breath if they have been out on the trail. There is a counter at the west side, where two Visitor Center staff members provide information and advice to visitors when the site is open from 10am to 5pm, five days a week from Wednesday through Sunday. The staff also sells bottles of cold water from two small refrigerators under the desk for \$1.00 each. If preferred, the site could offer coin operated beverage machines inside the Visitor Center, these would bring in a nominal sum each year but would be a good visitor amenity.

¹¹ Greenberg, Gail. National Register Nomination Benjamin Cooper Tavern, 1980, page 1.

¹² Ibid., 1.

¹³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

Along the north and east walls are maps of the area, pointing out the other tourism, historic, recreational, and shopping opportunities in the area. This same map is available at the counter. Other panels on the walls describe a basic history of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The south wall has rack cards filled with information from South Jersey tourist destinations, as well as visitor information from all of the Crossroads of the American Revolution sites in the state.

On Mondays and Tuesdays when the site is closed to the public, this room is rented out for small events. It is unclear at present whether the site can hold eight or ten round tables, and if all of these can be stored, along with 80 chairs in the designated closet.

Handicapped access is up the ramp, on to the terrace for entrance directly into the Visitor Center. Another handicapped entrance is up a ramp through the main entrance. A single, all gender handicapped restroom is available on the outside of the building. If handicapped patrons want to use the inside toilets, they will continue along the eastern wall of the house to the door into the visitor center, where they enter into the 1917 addition/visitor center. A men's and women's handicapped accessible restrooms are available through an entrance foyer in the Visitor Center.

About the Rental of Second Floor Bedrooms to nonprofit organizations

The rental of the four bedrooms on the second floor as offices spaces to nonprofit organizations is a critical component to finance a portion of the operations of the Benjamin Cooper House.

We are anticipating that each of the four bedrooms on the second floor would be rehabilitated as modern offices with appropriate Wi-Fi connections electricity, and telephone service. These spaces vary in size from approximately 200 square feet and would be used as offices by area nonprofit corporations who would be willing to lease them in this location for a modest rent of \$500 a month. Having 100% occupancy of the four offices would generate at \$2,000 month. The total revenue of \$24,000 for the year could pay for part of the staffing costs.

Other rental income/event space

Because the site is open to the public only three days a week, the 1917 Mathis Company addition has been rehabilitated as an event space for rent. It has not been determined yet how many people can fit at round tables, or in seating for a lecture. This room is used for board meetings for the nonprofit organizations housed in the second-floor offices. Other organizations and individuals rent the facility for small parties, anniversaries, political events, and fundraisers. The chairs and tables are stored a closet.

The budget for 2025

Our budget for 2025, our first year open to the public, is \$301,000. We have done a good job gathering volunteers to help us, especially this season as we gear up for the big celebration on July 4, 2026. Half of the budget (\$150,000) comes from interest from our \$3 million dollar endowment. Another \$30,000 comes from the state or county who owns this property and provides trash pickup and all of the ground's maintenance, which we appreciate so much. The rest of our revenue comes from earned income from rentals of the four second floor offices (\$24,000 total), school fees, admission ticket sales, other rental income, and small gifts from our board rounding out the remaining \$66,000. We work closely with the CCHS staff on development activities since the CCHA is our parent organization.

Likely visitation

We have planned that we will have at least 5,000 paid visitors who tour the museum or the site during the first six months it is open during 2025. We will also have modest program revenue for the first six months. We know that the trails will bring 10,000 or more people past our door, some of whom will use the restrooms but may not wish to pay admission to visit the museum or take a guided tour.

Summary for 2025

Full time, 5 days a week option. The full-time staffing anticipated includes: one full time paid Executive Director, a 30 hour per week paid social media/event coordinator, and three part-time 24 hour per week paid Visitor Center personnel. The Executive Director is responsible for overall site operations, fundraising, contracts, site interpretation, collaborations, and relationship building. A 30 hour a week event manager/social media staff is responsible for all outreach to the public and schools and managing all the events at the site. There will be paid interpreters hired as consultants (1099 employees) and volunteers that also provide regular interpretation at the site.

Preliminary Budget for a Full time Visitor Center/Museum/Offices for Nonprofits, opening year (2025), open 5 days week

Revenue

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Office rental 4 @ \$500 X 12 | 24,000 |
| Other rental income | 7,500 |
| Museum admissions estimate 5000 x \$5, 2000 @ \$2.50 | 30,000 |
| Individual giving by board | 5,000 |
| Program income from educational events | 7,500 |
| Sponsorship | 5,000 |
| Educational event tickets | 2,500 |
| School programs revenue | 2,500 |
| Bus for school programs | 12,000 |
| Grants for projects | |
| GOS/NJHC | 15,000 |
| Other grant for busses | 5,000 |
| Camden County Cultural Heritage Comm | 5,000 |
| Cash contributions State or County | 30,000 |
| Endowment interest | 150,000 |
| Total Revenue | 301,000 |

Expenses

Staff and contractors

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Full time Executive Director | 50,000 |
| Part time event manager/social media/ no benefits | 25,000 |
| Part time Visitor Center staff 3 @ 24 hours @ \$15 no benefits | 56,160 |
| Payroll taxes 7.65% of total | 9,651 |
| Attorney | 5,000 |
| Benefits for ED Stipend | 4,000 |
| Interns/contractors | 3,000 |
| Contractors: educators, reenactors, guides | 25,000 |
| Bus costs (grant funded) | 12,000 |
| Bookkeeping/accountant/audit contractor | 10,000 |
| Restroom cleaning contractor | 12,000 |
| Total staff | 211,811 |

Operations

| | |
|--|-------|
| All utilities paid by State or Camden County (Wi-Fi, alarm, pest management, trash pickup, janitorial as noted below | 0 |
| grounds maintenance/snow removal/minor repairs/paint | 0 |
| Interpretation expenses | 5,000 |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Point of sale ticket cost | 5,000 |
| Liability and Offices and Directors insurance | 5,500 |
| Fundraising expenses | 5,000 |
| Temporary exhibits | 8,000 |
| Marketing costs (Visit South Jersey Crossroads, others) | 10,000 |
| Volunteer expenses/hospitality | 2,000 |
| Postage/delivery | 750 |
| Dues and subscriptions | 1,000 |
| Staff development/travel | 1,250 |
| Office supplies | 750 |
| Computer/drop box/software upgrades | 1,000 |
| Newsletter expenses | 500 |
| Printing and copying | 1,500 |
| Website upgrades, hosting/domain name costs | 750 |
| Total | 48,000 |
| | |
| Total Expenses | 259,811 |
| Surplus | \$41,189 |

Assumptions

- Four offices on second floor rented to nonprofit organizations @ \$500 month.
- Other income from facility rentals when not open to the public.
- Owner provides all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, ground maintenance/snow removal/minor repairs/paint, and \$30,000 for general operations yearly.
- Endowment interest @ 5% yearly from \$3 million in investments.
- Admission sales for half a year only.
- General Operating Support grant secured from the New Jersey Historical Commission.
- Grant for busses for school students (no source yet identified).
- Costs for museum displays/exhibits included in construction costs.
- Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission grant secured.
- All computers, cameras, printers, scanners, video equipment, and hardware purchased with construction phase funds.
- All office furniture is donated.
- Tables and chairs for Visitor Center space are purchased with construction phase funds.

Chapter 5. Recommendations for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a Part Time Museum/Office Rental

The CCHS may decide that raising \$3 million dollars to endow this historic site is unlikely, so they can opt for a part time visitor attraction, open three days a week for visitors on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays throughout the year.

This chapter describes how the Benjamin Cooper Tavern would operate if it were a part time visitor attraction. We describe when the site is open, who works here, the event rental space, and the variety of programs offered to visitors. Finally, we provide a first-year budget for 2025 with revenue and expenses at the end of the chapter with annotations and assumptions for a part time visitor operation.

2025 at the Benjamin Cooper House, part time operation open to the public

Again, it is June 2025, and the Benjamin Cooper Tavern restoration is finally complete. The American Museum of the Revolutionary War in South Jersey has been installed. This year is meant to be a test run for the facility, staff, and trail head before the main festivities for the nationwide 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War occur next year in 2026.

This opening year is important for the staff at the Camden County Historical Society, who have been charged with bringing the once vacant and derelict Benjamin Cooper Tavern to life over the last four years.

During the last year, the staff including a part time contractor serving as Site Administrator (who has on been on staff part time since 2023 bootstrapping the growth and development of this historic site) and the contracted Social Media/events person have been trained and are ready for a flood of visitors, and there are dozens of docents who are prepared to provide tours of the site.

In June of 2025, the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is open three days a week, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10am to 5pm. This site serves several functions. First, it is the site of the American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey. Second, it is the trail head for the North Camden and Cramer Hill Trail, and restroom facilities are open when the site is open to the public three days a week. Finally, to pay the bills, the CCHS has rehabilitated the four second floor bedrooms as offices for nonprofit organizations in the area. These nonprofits work in the building Monday through Friday and use the facilities for meetings or events during the four weekdays that the museum is closed to the public. The nominal rent charged per month (\$500) and the fees for event rentals held when the site is not open to the public pays for part of the Site Administrator's salary and provides onsite security throughout the week. The North Camden and Cramer Hill Trail has been open for a few months, and already bikers, Rutgers teams, and running clubs are using the trail regularly.

On a beautiful Friday morning, the staff meets at 9am to review the schedule for the weekend and to make sure that the site is clean, fresh, and ready for visitors. At 10am the doors open, including the accessible restrooms, used by countless visitors who ride the trails on their bikes or run for exercise. On Friday only, we schedule school tours here. We charge a small fee whether the class comes to us, or whether we go to them with a travel trunk. Our tour guides are mostly former teachers, and they love the variety of topics that we can discuss at the site or during classroom visits.

At 11am, there is a guided tour about the Cooper Tavern as a slave auction site. We have 18 people on the tour, which is typical. We offer this tour everyday Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and get good attendance whenever it is offered. At 2pm, there is another tour that discusses the ferries along the shores of Camden in the 18th and into the 20th centuries. Finally, at 3pm we have a tour about the Cooper women associated with this historic site. A costumed guide talks about the Cooper Family during the Revolutionary War and the privations the family sustained because they were Loyalists. Staff meets again at 5:00pm when the site closes to prepare for tomorrow's tours, and to make sure the site is ready for the coming weekend, when the Camden County Cycle Club will be holding a rally on the grounds in the morning. We have gotten excellent publicity about the rally, and we expect several hundred people along with the Camden County Cycle Club staff who will run the event. They have booked food trucks and entertainers for the day. Our staff is selling water and the restrooms will be open.

Our docents, who provide interpretation as a "guide on demand" in the museum space, report that there are many visitors who want to see all the South Jersey Revolutionary War interpretive signs recently installed. She gives them a map and tell them about the Travel Stories App they can use to bring these sites to life through the podcast on their smart phones.

Volunteers as docents are critical to telling the variety of stories about this tavern, from its construction in 1734 through the 150 years of Cooper ownership as a ferry operation. Other stories that docents can relate from the quality history we have uncovered are about the slave auctions held here in the 17th century when the ferries and tavern were hub of transportation and commerce. The Cooper Tavern also played a part in the First and Second World War, when the place was outfitted as a ship building facility.

Today, 34 people took one of our guided tours (\$5.00 adults/\$2.50 kids, free with museum admission), and our "guide on demand" stationed in the exhibit area noted that 15 people walked through the exhibit today or asked her questions after they paid \$5.00 adults/\$2.50 kids to enter the museum.

There are other wall panels and maps in the 1917 addition which is used as a public meeting space, mainly for rental by the nonprofits that have offices here, or by community groups looking for a handsome space for an event.

About the Museum

The part time operation assumes the same restoration and outfitting of the museum as for a full-time operation. The American Revolutionary War Museum of South Jersey is located on the

first floor of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. The two rooms are beautifully restored, and the exhibit designers have utilized the woodwork and other historic features to their best advantage. The permanent exhibit is located in these two rooms, and there are exhibit cases as well as wall displays throughout these rooms.

The permanent exhibit tells the story of the many generations of the Cooper Family that lived here and worked at the ferries starting in 1682.¹⁵ Because the tavern and ferries were hub of both transportation and commerce, the site hosted “innumerable public sales and activities including slave auctions.”¹⁶ The ferry operation remained in the family until 1854.¹⁷

The main emphasis of the museum is the Revolutionary War as fought in South Jersey. The exhibit identifies all the locations of Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes in South Jersey on a map and in an exhibit. Travelers are encouraged to use the Travel Story App to go and see these sites throughout Camden County. The Cooper Family as Quakers were Loyalists during the Revolution, so family members and the Cooper properties suffered during the conflict. Cooper sons were arrested, and the house was used by British Colonel Robert Abercrombie of the 37th Regiment. Additional permanent exhibits can be found on the two smaller rooms in the tavern wing (c. 1770) located two steps down from the main floor. Here there are exhibits about the site after the property was sold from Cooper ownership in 1854 to become a ship building facility from the 1860s through the Second World War. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Mathis Company produced luxury yachts here and the tavern was its headquarters. During the First World War, the site was converted into war production where 15 subchasers, minesweepers, tugboats, and sea plane hulls were produced ¹⁸ During the Second World War, the Mathis Company produced minesweepers, subchasers, and other small ships.

About the Rental of Second Floor Bedrooms to Nonprofit Organizations

The rentals of the second-floor bedrooms remain the same as the full-time operation. These rentals are a critical component to finance a portion of the operations of the Benjamin Cooper House.

We are anticipating that each of the four bedrooms on the second floor would be rehabilitated as modern offices with appropriate Wi-Fi connections, electricity, and telephone service. These spaces vary in size from approximately 200 square feet and would be used as offices by area nonprofit corporations who would be willing to lease them in this location for a modest rent of \$500 a month. Having 100% occupancy of the four offices would generate at \$2000 month. The total revenue of \$24,000 for the year could pay for part of the staffing costs.

Event space

The rental income for the event space is higher because there are more days to offer to clients.

¹⁵ Greenberg, Gail. National Register Nomination Benjamin Cooper Tavern, 1980, page 1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., 4.

The historic site is open to the public only three days a week, making the 1917 addition available for rentals four days a week. However, the site cannot rent the facility during the day on Saturday and Sunday because the site is open to the public, thus limiting event income. The event space flexible, but we do not know exactly how many people can fit at round tables or if the room is set up for a lecture. The room is used for board meetings for the nonprofit organizations housed on the second-floor offices. Other organizations and individuals rent the facility for small parties, anniversaries, political events, and fundraisers. The chairs and tables are stored in a closet. This is a very busy space, and the social media/events manager is responsible for marketing, cleaning, and managing activities there, along with a volunteer that takes on the days/evenings when the events person is not working.

The budget for 2025 part time operation

Our budget for our first year open to the public is about \$132,000. Our part time budget is anchored by an annual grant of \$30,000 that comes from the state or county who owns this property and provides trash pickup and all of the ground's maintenance, which we appreciate so much. The City of Camden provides an annual grant of \$20,000. The rest of our revenue comes from earned income from rentals of the four second floor offices (\$24,000 total), community rentals of our facilities, ticket sales, event/vendor fees, and small gifts from our board to round out the remaining \$ 44,000. We work closely with the CCHS staff on development activities since the CCHA is our parent organization.

Likely visitation

We have planned that we will have at least 3,000 visitors come to our site to tour the museum and pay admission during the first six months it is open. We know that the trails will bring 10,000 or more people past our door, and some will use the accessible restrooms.

Summary for 2025

Part time, three days a week option. The part time paid staffing anticipated includes: a part time Site Administrator and a part time paid social media/event coordinator. The Site Administrator is responsible for overall site operations, fundraising, contracts, site interpretation, collaborations, and relationship building. The social media/ event manager is responsible for all outreach to the public and schools and managing all the events at the site. There will be paid interpreters hired as consultants (1099 employees), and volunteers that also provide regular interpretation at the site.

**Preliminary Budget for Part time Museum/Offices for Nonprofits, opening year 2025
Open 3 days week**

Revenue

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Office rentals 4 @ \$500 | 24,000 |
| Event space | 10,000 |
| Admission to museum 2000 @ \$5.00, 1000 @ \$2.50 | 12,500 |
| Individual giving by board | 5,000 |
| Program income from educational events | 5,000 |
| Sponsorship | 5,000 |
| Educational event tickets | 3,000 |
| School programs | 2,500 |
| Grants for projects | |
| GOS/NJHC | 5,000 |
| Camden County Cultural Heritage Commission | 10,000 |
| City of Camden Contribution | 20,000 |
| Cash contributions County/City of Camden | 30,000 |
| Total Revenue | 132,000 |

Staff and contractors

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Part Time Site Administrator | 25,000 |
| Part time event manager/social media/com | 15,000 |
| Payroll taxes 7.65% of total | 3,060 |
| Attorney | 5,000 |
| Liability and Offices and Directors insurance | 4,000 |
| Interns/contractors | 3,000 |
| Contractors: educators, reenactors, guides | 10,000 |
| Bookkeeping/accountant/audit contractor | 5,000 |
| Total staff | 70,060 |

Operations

| | |
|---|--------|
| All utilities paid by State or Camden County (Wi-Fi, alarm pest management, trash pickup) | 0 |
| Ground's maintenance/snowplow/minor repairs/paint | 0 |
| Interpretation expenses | 2,500 |
| Point of sale tickets | 5,000 |
| Attorney | 5,000 |
| Liability and Offices and Directors insurance | 4000 |
| Fundraising expenses | 5,000 |
| Marketing costs (Visit South Jersey Crossroads, others) | 10,000 |
| Volunteer expenses/hospitality | 1,000 |
| Postage/delivery | 500 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Dues and subscriptions | 250 |
| Staff travel | 250 |
| Office supplies | 500 |
| Computer/drop box/software upgrades | 750 |
| Newsletter expenses | 500 |
| Printing and copying | 1,000 |
| Website upgrades, hosting/domain name costs | 500 |
| Total | 36,750 |
| Total Expenses | 106,810 |
| Surplus | \$25,190 |

Assumptions

- No endowment.
- Owner provides all utilities (electric, gas, water/sewer), Wi-Fi, security system, janitorial services throughout the day when the site is open, pest management, trash pickup, ground maintenance/snow removal/minor repairs/paint, and \$30,000 for general operations yearly.
- City of Camden contributes \$20,000 annually.
- Rental space is active 5 days, 7 evenings a week.
- Admission fees collected for half a year.
- General Operating Support grant secured from the New Jersey Historical Commission.
- Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission grant secured.
- All computers, cameras, printers, scanners, video equipment, and hardware purchased during construction phase funds.
- All office furniture is donated.
- Tables and chairs for house are purchased with construction phase funds.

Chapter 6. Recommendations on Interpretation and Programming for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern

There are a whole host of ways to interpret and program the Benjamin Cooper Tavern over the next five years as it undergoes restoration, and then when it is available as a full or part time museum. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses what interpretation is and its impact on the visitor. The second section recommends interpretation and programming for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern while it is under restoration 2022-2024, and as the site gets ready for its grand opening in 2025. The third section focuses on interpretation and programming for the initial year of operations as a full time (five days a week) museum in 2025. The fourth section discusses interpretation and programming for the initial year of operation if the site is a part time (three days a week) museum in 2025.

We begin the chapter by answering the question, what is interpretation.

1. What is interpretation?

Freeman Tilden, whose 1957 book *Interpreting Our Heritage* has been the bible for historic site interpreters for almost two generations, defines interpretation as “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.”¹⁹ In the first edition of his book published in 1957, Tilden laid out his six principles for quality interpretation of historic, natural, or archeological places. These serve as a reminder of the basic ideals for educating visitors about historic sites.

I. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

II. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.

III. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.

IV. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.

V. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.

¹⁹ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Chapel Hill NC; University of North Carolina Press, 1957.

VI. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.²⁰

Interpretation, at its essence, is the art of telling a good story. But being a skilled raconteur is not enough. “If you only list a few facts, you aren’t interpreting your historic site and the people who lived there – you’re just describing it. Interpretation, on the other hand, helps visitors connect with what they are experiencing. Interpretation does not just teach what something is, but what it means. That’s the essence of a good story.”²¹

Historic sites need to be interpreted so that “visitors can have satisfying experiences. These experiences can be emotional, physical, intellectual, or inspirational. A person’s response and connection to the heritage resource is often the most important element in the long-term protection of the resource. Creating a positive, memorable response in visitors will translate to a positive response to preservation and history.”²²

The New Jersey Historic Trust provides guidance about what historic site interpretation needs to be:

- Accessible and understandable
- Grounded in historical facts (authentic)
- Connect people to place
- Focused on protection and preservation
- Provides visitors with information and education, and
- Coordinated with other heritage tourism programs.

For the purposes of this Assessment of Heritage Tourism Potential for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, our recommendations follow the NJ Historic Trust’s guidance about historic site interpretation.

The recently completed *New Jersey Revolutionary War Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment* also discusses how interpretation has broadened since Freeman Tilden’s time. The National Association of Interpreters, a professional organization for interpreters, defines interpretation as “a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.”²³

²² New Jersey Historic Trust, Historic Site Interpretation and Education, <https://www.state.nj.us/dca/njht/applguid/Site%20Interpretation%20with%20illustrations.pdf>

²³ National Association for Interpretation, “Mission, Vision, and Core Values,” n.d., accessed March 2020, https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/About/About_NAI/What_We_Believe/nai/_About/Mission_Vision_and_Core_Values.aspx?hkey=ef5896dc-53e4-4dbb-929e-96d45bdb1cc1.

The NAI explains the importance of inclusion and diversity of interpreters and interpretation, stating that “[I]nterpreters are the keepers, tellers, and facilitators of stories for our natural and cultural resources. As such, interpreters hold tremendous responsibility to really understand the stories that are told and to richly represent all people, all backgrounds, and all perspectives.”²⁴ This is a critical responsibility for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern interpreters, as it begins its efforts to explain how a Revolutionary War era Benjamin Cooper Tavern, once used as a location for the sale of enslaved people, has relevance to people in the 21st century.

Interpretation and Programming During Restoration Period 2022-2024

Programming about the Cooper Tavern at the CCHS auditorium and at the historic site

Below are examples of the types of educational events and lectures that can be hosted about the Benjamin Cooper Tavern during the anticipated three-year construction period. These themes can be developed further into tours at the site or used again as lectures on themes for programs once the site is open to the public.

Speakers for the educational events that we identify below can come from many varied backgrounds: the architects, archeologists, and craftspeople working on the restoration of the property; reenactors that portray a specific person giving a talk in the third person; authors of recent Revolutionary War related books; staff or other historians with special research knowledge; college and university lecturers with research interests in Camden history; and local historians and craftspeople teaching 18th century trades and crafts.

The New Jersey Commission on the Humanities maintains a list of speakers on New Jersey history topics. Other Revolutionary War sites may also suggest high quality speakers based on their experience. The monthly newsletter of the Camden County History Alliance also contains promotional flyers for events hosted by partner organizations which might be a source for speakers. These newsletters are archived on the CCHA website. The staff of the Crossroads of the American Revolution also offers a newsletter with partner organization programming which can be used for speaker identification.

Interpretation themes/topics

About the Cooper Family

- The life of Benjamin Cooper and his family
- Cooper family as Loyalists during the Revolutionary War
- Cooper family ferry business, evolution over time
- The Cooper Family women

²⁴ Ibid.

About Slavery

- Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a slave auction site
- The 17th and 18th century slave trade along the Delaware River
- History of slavery in New Jersey
- Revolutionary equality and America's ideals: yesterday, today, and tomorrow
- Free and Enslaved in old Gloucester County: day to day life of African Americans in 18th Century South Jersey
- Other slave auction sites in Camden County
- Permanent memorials to the enslaved at Cooper Tavern
- Annual memorial concerts or commemorations held at the porch of the Cooper Tavern

The Revolutionary War

- The Benjamin Cooper Tavern as Colonial Abercrombie's headquarters during 1777
- Everyday life for residents during the Revolutionary War in South Jersey
- Revolutionary War Battles and Skirmishes in Camden City, and nearby
- Demonstration by a reenactor of the life of a soldier during the Revolutionary War

About the restoration and history of the site

- Illustrated lecture about the history of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern
- Old Stone Jug era at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern
- The Mathis Company history and shipyard use of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern
- Lectures and demonstrations by restoration craftspeople about roofing, mortar analysis, paint analysis, or other restoration activities from these contractors
- Lectures from archeologists about finds for their work at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern
- Hardhat tour inside the building with the restoration architect (if permitted) to see craftsmen at work
- Hardhat tours of the archeological finds with the archeologist (if permitted) to see on site work
- Public archeology work for adults and kids on site (if permitted)

Book talks and other options

- Author talks about recent books related to the Revolutionary War, or other interpretive themes related to the property
- Lectures for Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), and Historic Preservation Month (May)
- Small scale period music events, chamber music concerts featuring songs of the Revolutionary War period
- Hands on workshops, craft lessons, or demonstrations for adults or kids led by a costumed Colonial craftsperson such as quilting, crochet, leatherwork, or tinsmith
- University lecturers on books or specific research topics related to interpretive themes
- Book club meetings about topics related to the Revolutionary War

We are certain that talented staff, consultants, or volunteers will easily fill the monthly calendar of events at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern during the construction period. This preliminary list can be used as prompts for tours and other events as the site prepares for opening day in 2025.

Programming for schools during construction

During the construction period, a handful of the adult activities noted above could be reworked for school programs at the CCHS auditorium if desired. Qualified educators would have to develop these programs, ideally geared for the grades when students are learning New Jersey history. We recommend that all school programs be geared to the current New Jersey school curriculum.

Bus Costs

There will be a cost for busses to bring students to the CCHS auditorium during the construction years, and when a school program is working at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern itself. Bus costs are a major obstacle and will need to be subsidized through grants or other fundraising. We recommend speaking with other nearby historic sites to learn how they are paying for busses for school trips and their funders.

Virtual School Programs

An alternative to bringing students to the site is to create videos for virtual learning programs. During the pandemic, some NJ historic sites have done an excellent job pivoting from having students come to their sites to offering well-conceived lessons based on the current NJ state history curriculum learning standards. One of the best examples can be found at the Old Barracks, which has created an entirely virtual school program, called Connecting to the Revolution. You can view this at [Virtual Field Trips - OLD BARRACKS MUSEUM](#). The Old Barracks charges a similar fee to an actual school visit and provides all pre- and post-visit materials. The Old Barracks offers programs for grades 5, 8, and 12.

Developing virtual school programs requires staff or consultants that are comfortable with both the technology of video shooting and editing and have the educational expertise to develop engaging programs for students that are worth the cost for the school district.

Finally, the site can develop “travel trunks” to take to schools for visits in the classroom. These visits should be geared to specific grades and curriculums, so teachers see an advantage for permitting teaching time to be devoted to such outside programming. The school should be charged a modest fee for the program which should include pre and post visit information for teachers and students.

Creating a docent training program

One of the major activities of the Executive Director is to create a docent training program and offer regular guided tours at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. We have already developed a list of potential tour topics above, and this list can be augmented as further research is collected about the Benjamin Cooper Tavern during restoration. The paid staff will be trained to provide tours, as will volunteer docent guides.

Great Tours!

Starting a tour guide program will require inspired leadership from the full time paid Executive Director or the part time Site Administrator. One person needs to be the leader of the effort, preferably someone who is trained as an adult educator. The Executive Director would need to create the tour program and an accompanying curriculum. We recommend using *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites* as a starting point for developing a curriculum and training process for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern.²⁵

This book describes how a local historic site can gather primary and secondary sources for interpreters to use to frame their own tour narratives that cover basic information that each tour needs to impart to visitors. It identifies how to train and coach interpreters (paid or volunteer) to deliver their information in a way that invites discussion and encourages questions from visitors, making a high-quality educational experience.

Training interpreters to talk about slavery

We have been gathering information about teaching interpreters to talk about slavery to visitors and can recommend two outstanding books which should be read by Benjamin Cooper Tavern staff and interpreters in advance of establishing interpretive programs about slavery at the site. They will help set the tone and guide the interpreters themselves who may wrestle with their own feelings regarding slavery so they can provide an insightful and nuanced tour for visitors.

Julia Rose's book *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2015) talks about "how" to train history workers (docents, paid interpreters, and volunteers) to deliver stories about slavery's "oppression, tragedy, and suffering" so visitors can understand, empathize, and not reject the difficult history supplied by the guide as wrong, irrelevant, or not believable, all common reactions as described by the author.

This book is the outgrowth of the author's work at the Magnolia Mound Plantation (MMP) outside Baton Rouge, LA from 1999 to 2015. She describes her efforts to use the historic research she amassed on the lives of the many enslaved workers at the plantation and in the house to

²⁵ Levy, Barbara Abramoff, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, and Susan Porter Schreiber. *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites*. Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2001, 22.

create more a robust and representational interpretation of the Big House (the historic house museum) tour offered there by volunteer and paid interpreters.

Another book we found equally useful for preparing interpreters to discuss slavery was Kristin L. Gallas, and James DeWolf Perry, eds. *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield/AASLH, 2015).

This book of eight chapters bills itself as a "how-to manual" for historic sites wishing to expand or embark on teaching about slavery. Chapters at the front of the book focus on the need for enthusiastic institutional support to change any current interpretive narrative to add slavery in interpretation. One chapter offers six components of a comprehensive and conscientious interpretation of slavery, another chapter talks about narrative storytelling and provides guidance on teaching interpreters about how to talk about slavery. Throughout the book, there are brief discussions about historic sites that have integrated slavery into their interpretive narrative which are instructive as case studies.

Hospitality training

In their *Site and Visitor Readiness Assessment*, the Crossroads consultants have also emphasized the importance of Hospitality Training for any front-line staff member dealing with the public. Hospitality training would include understanding where the nearest visitor amenities are including gas stations, ATMs, restaurants, cafes, and coffee shops, other historic attractions, downtowns and malls, and recreational options like parks, splash parks, and pools, along with trails, parks, and nature centers. It is important to be familiar with these offerings because visitors will ask. Especially important is to know what visitors can expect to see at other historic sites. The best way to learn is by visiting these places as a group for a familiarization tour to get a feel for these places so the Visitor Center personnel can provide good, current information.

Hospitality training also discusses how to greet guests, and how to ask for patience when it is busy and be a good host. The Benjamin Cooper Tavern staff and volunteers should participate in any hospitality training offered by Crossroads, destination management organizations and seek out other opportunities for front line staff to learn about visitor needs and wants.

Interpretation and Programming as a Full time Visitor Center/Museum/Nonprofit office space

Interpretive leadership

This important historic site deserves to have dedicated interpretive staff, preferably paid part-time or on a contract basis, so that the site can reach its true potential as a visitor attraction and add to the already rich tapestry of Colonial and Revolutionary War era historic properties located in Camden County and South Jersey. We suggest a full time Executive Director with demonstrated skills as the leader of the interpretive effort during the year of preparations

before opening if the site is open full time as a museum and visitor center. It is also likely that the tour guides will be volunteer docents who need to be trained and coached by the Executive Director.

The Executive Director's role as the interpretive coordinator should include the development of the entire interpretive program for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, including:

Educational activities before opening:

- create a website, purchase domain names, establish a social media presence, and create print and online brochures (working with the events/social media staff)
- create the school program
- coordinate with CCHS staff on installation of interpretive signs and kiosks
- coordinate with Coopers Ferry Development Corporation on location of trail head, interpretive kiosk, and visitor amenities for pedestrians and bikers using the trail
- plan and implement public events each year (April through October)
- coordinate with other historic site partners to offer joint programming opportunities and tourism partners (destination management organizations) as required

Additional educational activities once the site is open:

- develop and recruit the paid or volunteer docent (tour guide) corps
- create a docent training program
- identify interpretive themes and work with docents to implement both general and special theme tours
- determine welcome protocol for visitors
- manage the nonprofit office tenants on the second floor, and use of the large spaces for retail functions if a part time operation
- if a full-time operation, manage the Visitor Center staff and coordination with tourism partners

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern site will only be as interesting as the interpretive programming and events that convey the site's meaning to the visitor. The opening of the site is a major accomplishment for CCHS. The new park enables the CCHS to tell unique and interesting stories about the Revolutionary War period, slavery, everyday life in Colonial America, ferries on the Delaware for over 300 years, and the ship building industry in Camden. Interpretive events, tours and programs need to be held both weekend days during the visitor season April through October. The staff can offer fewer programs during the winter and early spring, but we recommend at least once a week activities at the site during low visitor season.

With a strong interpretive program, the new site can bring these stories to life for residents, school children, and visitors. We encourage proponents of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern to

ensure that the full and complete story of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern is told using a variety of interpretive methods as mentioned in this report.

Recommended interpretive methods

Need for both guided AND self-guided tours

For the historical society to maximize the heritage tourism potential of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, there must be a mix of in-person guided and self-guided interpretive opportunities for visitors. Recent studies about visitors to historic sites note that 45% of visitors prefer to visit historic sites with a traditional guide, while 55% want to visit “on their own,” using brochures, podcasts, cell phone tours, audio guides, stationary guides (called “guides on demand”), signage, and/or websites to learn about an historic place.²⁶

Below we list the interpretive methods we believe are most suitable for the initial development of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, and recommended first steps.

Live interpretive options

The following interpretive options permit visitors to learn about the Benjamin Cooper Tavern through a live trained (paid or volunteer) interpreter stationed in a particular location called a “Guide on Demand. “ The job of the guide will be to tell the story of the historic site. Guides may be in modern street dress or in appropriate costumes.

We recommend training interpreters for two specific kinds of jobs:

- 1) as a tour guide for regular public tours; and
- 2) as a “guide on demand” to be stationed in one location in the Benjamin Cooper Tavern, or outside on the grounds, to provide brief interpretative remarks about that space/location, if/when approached by a visitor. We further discuss Guide on Demand below.

Guided tours

A 2010 article based on national research of audiences who visit historic sites noted that their research indicated that 55%, more than half of visitors to historic sites, dislike guided tours and prefer to visit “on their own” and at their pace. This group consists mainly of younger people in the Gen X, Gen Y, and Millennial generations. They could be singles, couples, or parents, and programming must be developed to meet their need for a self-guided experience. We discuss options for self-guided interpretation later in this chapter.

²⁶ Reach Museum Advisors, Interpretation Preferences: How 40,000 museumgoers prefer to experience museums, May 19, 2010, http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2010/05/interpretationpreferences-how-40000-museumgoers-prefer-to-experience-museums.html

Costumed interpreters: First person interpreters

First person tour guides provide different experiences for visitors as a living history, educational experience. Appropriately costumed tour guides who present their narrative in the first-person, meaning they are an actor impersonating a famous person in the past, can be an exciting alternative to third-person tours presented by a guide who dresses in modern clothes and narrates tours in today's language.

A first-person interpreter creates an "historic bubble" where they try to reenact a past time for the visitor using props, the location, and their acting skills. First-person interpretation, as defined by Stacy Roth, is an "interactive dramatization or roleplaying...an effective, albeit controversial, method used to bring history to life at museums, historic sites, and other public venues."¹²⁷

Costumed guides are the stuff of legend in many children's lives. Most Philadelphians can recall their youth when they heard an actor portraying Betsy Ross or Benjamin Franklin talking about their lives and significant achievements. Costumed guides are helpful for both children and adults. There are reenactors who make a living portraying famous men and women in the past for tour groups. There are great opportunities to incorporate high-quality, first-person costumed interpretation at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern utilizing the rich source materials about Benjamin Cooper, his family, and Revolutionary War leaders.

Staff will need to cull information from the archeological discoveries and other original sources to compile a baseline of material for use by reenactors and docents to plan their tours. Care must be taken when presenting costumed reenactors to avoid "anachronisms" modern intrusions such as watches, shoes/sneakers, visible tattoos, etc. that would spoil the intended historical impression of the reenactor's presentation of the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. For more information about undertaking first-person interpretation, we recommend Stacy R. Roth's book, *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation*, to learn more about the pitfalls and opportunities surrounding presenting historical information in the first person to visitor.²⁸

Third person interpretation

Third-person tour guides are a common way to interpret historic sites in modern day dress. Guides can prepare tours based on historic themes, or a narrative from the life of Benjamin Cooper and his family. Additional tours about the slave trade in the 17th century at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern are obvious for this site. Good interpretation, even when guides are in modern dress, can be highly interesting and insightful for adults, children, and family groups. We

²⁷ Roth, Stacy R. *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation*, Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

recommend using *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites*, for any docent training program.²⁹

Guide on demand

A “guide on demand” provides visitors with additional information beyond a written brochure and adds to their enjoyment of an historic site, while permitting them to learn at their own speed by talking to the guide for as long (or as short) as they wish. These docents provide security if stationed inside a room or at a large event and interpret the room/area as needed.

If large crowds are expected at an event and guided tours become difficult to manage, we suggest designating specific locations inside the Benjamin Cooper Tavern and outside on the grounds for a “guide on demand.” The function of a guide on demand is to present information to a visitor as they approach the guide, presumably for information.

The docent does not offer remarks or a “canned” recitation unless approached by a visitor, thus offering the visitor a self-guided experience. The guide would have remarks about the location in which they are stationed and be available to offer additional information based on the visitor’s questions. They do not launch into their “talk” and monopolize a visitor for half an hour, as an example. Rather, they are there to answer questions and provide guidance to the visitor about all the things going on at the site that day so they can maximize their visit.

How long of a tour?

Interpreters must tailor tours to their audience based on the time that visitors have available. In an outdoor setting, a tour of 30 to 40 minutes would be ideal. Time constraints can be real impediments to creating a quality tour, and families with small children might opt for a shorter tour. Well-trained docents can adjust on the spot to cut a tour short or continue answering questions if there are interested visitors.

The short, basic tour should be the basis for the “guide on demand” commentary. Interested docents can prepare longer or more specialized tours based on the interpretive themes for this location, or the docent’s specific interests or skills. Special tours can be offered seasonally, based on visitor interest. Longer tours should be scheduled at least a month in advance. All tickets should be offered on Eventbrite or other ticketing platform.

Self-guided interpretation options

²⁹ Levy, Barbara Abramoff, Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, and Susan Porter Schreiber. *Great Tours! Thematic Tours and Guide Training for Historic Sites*. Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2001, 22.

The following interpretive options permit visitors to learn about the site “on their own” without a guide by using wayfinding/directional and interpretive signage, websites, brochures, and other means discussed below.

Update Wikipedia page

An early project can be to update the Wikipedia page for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. [Benjamin Cooper House - Wikipedia](#). The site has links to the National Register Nomination and the HABS drawings, but new reports like the Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study (of which this report is part) should be posted to that website.

Downloadable visitor brochure

A gifted writer (paid or volunteer) should prepare a handsome brochure about the Benjamin Cooper Tavern as a self-guided tour. Tourists planning to visit should be encouraged to download this self-guided tour brochure prior to their visit. The substance of the brochure can come from the overview section of this report, the *Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study*, or reports from other consultants. We suggest a traditional informational brochure, in an 8.5” x 11” format size, folded into three panels to fit inside a number 10 envelope. We do not encourage a legal-size brochure because most people do not have legal sized paper to use in their home-based printer. Type size should be no smaller than 11 point. This brochure should be nicely designed and in color so visitors can print the brochure out. The brochure should also look great in black and white as most people still have black and white printers at home. The designer will take that into account.

The brochure should contain current and historic photos with captions, a map of the site in the 18th century, and text that gives the history and significance of the property. This brochure should be written for a lay audience with no prior knowledge of the site. The brochure should have basic visitor information: name of site, the GPS address, phone number, email address, website, admission charge (if any), and open hours/days.

The PDF version of the brochure should be posted on any website/Facebook/Wikipedia page about the property. The staff can print the brochure as needed with a laser printer on quality paper for events or tours. Visitors to the site should be encouraged to print it out before they arrive at the site. All the information needed to create this brochure is available from the *Preservation Plan and Feasibility Study* and could be assembled quickly.

Revolutionary War in Camden County Interpretive Signs and Story Maps App

The CCHS is working on an application to the American Battlefield Preservation Program and to the Camden County Open Space Program for funding to create 39 interpretive signs about the battle and skirmish locations in the county during the Revolutionary War. The Benjamin Cooper Tavern will have one of the outdoor kiosks with maps of nearby Revolutionary War

sites, as well as maps and brochures. The Story Maps will provide a 3-minute audio narrative from an App about this site and the 39 others on the heritage trail to be created to connect all the interpretive maps throughout the county. Both the interpretive sign and the kiosk/map will be excellent educational opportunities for those using the trails and the Cooper Tavern as the trail head.

Website for Benjamin Cooper Tavern

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern can have pages on the Camden County Historical Society Website as an interim solution. But soon after the Executive Director/Site Administrator begins, there will be a need to purchase domain names (please go ahead and buy ALL of these now: benjamincoopertavern.org, net, info, com and us. Buy all to prevent a copycat from purchasing one and creating a website that will confuse visitors) and create its own web site. The website does not have to be fancy and can be done using Wix, WordPress, or other simple website platform. The purpose of the website is to create online presence, create an online archive of all the professional reports about the site, brief histories, and an archive for press releases and media stories about the opening and programming. It must list all the events and activities in one place and have links to any Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, You Tube, or other social media platforms used. The downloadable brochure should be hosted here as a PDF form. This web site can also collect email addresses for the e-newsletter.

Recommendations on cross marketing with nearby Revolutionary War era historic sites

During the three years of construction, the staff will have to identify the most likely partners for cross marketing and network with those sites by inviting their staff to see the progress being made at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern and share the plans for programming once the site is open. These relationships need to be built during these early years, so that the Benjamin Cooper Tavern and its programming is known by interpreters at other sites who can make recommendations to their visitors about additional interesting places to see. The staff and volunteers at the Benjamin Cooper Tavern must also know about programming offerings at other sites to make quality visitor referrals as well.

In the year before the grand opening, these collaborative relationships with other historic sites need to be further developed. Perhaps in advance of the grand opening, staff and interpreters from nearby historic sites need to be invited to the Benjamin Cooper Tavern to get a “sneak peek” of the site and the programming options to be available upon opening. Maybe a small reception or happy hour, perhaps several times around the opening date, will be needed to get fellow site interpreters to come and learn about the site so they can become “familiar” and make quality visitor referrals.

Collaborative Marketing

If the Camden County Revolutionary War sites decide to offer a passport or other collaborative

marketing program, the Benjamin Cooper Tavern should be an active partner. Work with The Indian King Tavern to understand their goals for the 250th Anniversary and discuss how a joint marketing program would work best. Start these conversations in 2023.

The Crossroads of the American Revolution NHA has only begun to consider collaborative programming, and it might make sense for the staff to become more involved with Crossroads beyond just being a Heritage Partner (member). Board or committee membership might make sense during the construction years to assure that the Crossroads staff understands the large investment being made by CCHS and its plans to make this a highly valuable visitor attraction.

Joint ticketing

If the CCHS will be opening a full time five day a week operation in 2025, it might be worth discussing joint ticketing operations with the Adventure Aquarium and the Battleship New Jersey. Both of these are the main tourism drivers in the City, and they might be willing to work with the newly opened Benjamin Cooper Tavern throughout the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War. Discussions should begin in 2023 as plans for the eventual opening in 2025 are firmed up.

Working with the Destination Management Organizations

The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation does not cross market to New Jersey in any substantial way. The Adventure Aquarium and the Battleship New Jersey appear on the maps on its web site and those handed out to visitors. Battleship New Jersey has a longer and more robust entry on visitphilly.com web site than does the Adventure Aquarium, which is barely two sentences. We assume that each site pays a yearly fee for their listing. The rate card for 2021 for advertising opportunities is here [visitphilly-2021-media-kit-rate-card-web.pdf](#). It is very expensive.

The Cooper Tavern will need to join the Visit South Jersey.org (South Jersey Tourism Corporation) and become an active partner with them to assure that the membership paid each year results in visitors to the site. Membership for visitsouthjersey.com is \$250 yearly. Their advertising guide has not been updated since 2018 but you can see the price list here [2018-Visitors-Guide-Rate-Sheet-Updated.pdf \(dropbox.com\)](#). A quarter page ad is \$1050. Other online ads for their weekly newsletter are cheaper but these need to be run consistently to get noticed, the ads are priced \$250 and up with certain minimum commitments.

Likewise, the staff would be wise to team with other Revolutionary War sites, to purchase a page in the statewide VisitNJ.org visitor guide. The Barracks purchased the entire page 3 in the visitnj.org 2021 Travel Guide. Tuckerton Seaport purchased a half page, these two are the only historic sites that have made these investments this year. Covid 19 has had a devastating impact on tourism, so this is not a good year to use as an example. Here is the visitnj.org advertising rate card. [NJ Rate Card.pdf \(visitnj.org\)](#), also very expensive. You must plan well in advance, as

the 2021 guide closed for ads on October 2, 2020.

Staff will also need to make sure that its brochures are available at the Independence Visitor Center, at the National Constitution Center and the Museum of the American Revolution all in Philadelphia. It is likely that these visitor brochure racks are managed and maintained by a third party, who is paid to make sure the racks are full at all times. The CCHS will have to pay to get brochures into these racks. The staff should make inquiries to each organization where racks are present during 2024 about costs and build this cost into the budget and assure that enough brochures are printed and delivered consistently for these three locations. The staff will also have to identify which company manages the brochure racks at the Turnpike rest stops. Visit South Jersey also has a list of visitor centers in their region, and they can provide advice about how to work with each for cross marketing purposes.

Interpretation and Programming as a Part Time Museum/Nonprofit office space

For a part time (three open days a week) historic site, the major ambitions described above are cut by 40% but the site will still need to be marketed to visitors as a tourist attraction. Below, find our recommendations about interpretive services if the site is opened on a part time basis.

Recommended interpretive methods for a part time operation

Guided tours

For a part time operation, the Site Administrator will still need to provide regular tours throughout the day when the site is open to the public, as well as offering two or more "guides on demand" in the museum spaces to interact with visitors. One guide should remain in the exhibit area, answering questions, while the other docents could take questions and serve the "visitor center" by providing brochures about other sites in the region that visitors might want to see and collecting admissions.

A part time museum operation will need all the same interpretive components as a full-time operation. Note our recommendations in Chapter 4 for a full-time operation.

Conclusion

The Benjamin Cooper Tavern has so much potential as an important visitor attraction for the residents of the City and County of Camden. The site can tell compelling stories about the American Revolutionary War, slavery, and everyday life of the Colonial era in New Jersey.

As the Camden County Historical Society plans its grant applications for restoration, the historical society must determine whether it can afford a full time or part time operation. Much depends on whether the society is successful in making its case to the State or County for ownership of the site. Other funding sources must be tapped for an endowment, which if \$3

million can be raised, will permit the historic site to be open and to operate as a full-time museum and visitor center.

We wish the historical society the best of luck in the years ahead as this important historic site is rehabilitated and begins to tell fascinating stories about its past.

Chapter 7: Credits

Donna Ann Harris wrote this Assessment of the Heritage Tourism Potential for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern in Hamilton Township, NJ. Helen Gassmann, a consultant with Heritage Consulting Inc., edited the document.

Donna Ann Harris is the principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., a Philadelphia-based consulting firm that works nationwide in several practice areas: downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation, heritage tourism, program evaluation, and nonprofit organizational development.

Prior to starting her consulting firm sixteen years ago, Ms. Harris was state coordinator for the Illinois Main Street program for two years and the manager of the Illinois suburban Main Street program for four years. During her tenure, Ms. Harris served 56 Illinois Main Street communities, led a staff of 12, and managed a budget of over a million dollars. Before her Main Street career, Ms. Harris spent 15 years as an executive director of three startups and two mature preservation organizations, each with its own organizational and fundraising challenges.

AltaMira Press published her book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* in 2007. This book has been a best seller for the publisher since its publication. A second edition of this book was published by Rowman and Littlefield Publishers/AASLH in November 2020. In the past fifteen years, Ms. Harris has spoken at more than 50 national, regional, and statewide conferences about historic house museums and alternative uses and stewardship responsibilities. Ms. Harris has published articles about reuse of historic house museums in *History News*, the quarterly magazine of the American Association for State and Local History and *Forum Journal*, the quarterly journal of the National for Historic Preservation.

Preparing heritage tourism assessments and audience research studies has been a major focus of Ms. Harris' practice for the last ten years.

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Appendix 1.

1. Sample Volunteer job descriptions
2. Volunteer job descriptions check off form

1. Sample Job Descriptions

Coordinator for volunteer corps

A current teacher or retired adult educator is needed to manage and create a new volunteer corps for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern. This program will identify and train adults to provide tour guide services. The coordinator will create a curriculum and training program as suggested in the *Great Tours!* book mentioned here.³⁰ An ideal number of volunteer docents for the first year of this effort would be eight (8) to start. These volunteer docents would wear street clothes and would not be costumed interpreters or reenactors. These docents would provide guided tours as needed for the regular tour schedule or for other groups of visitors.

We anticipate that designing the curriculum and sourcing materials for docents to read would take several months. Preparing a short training program, say four to six-hours long, would take an additional month. Working with volunteer guides as they prepare their presentations and training them on its delivery would take another few month. The coordinator would also take charge of scheduling these docents for tours of the property on a selected weekend day each month of the visitor season once the site opens to the public. The coordinator does not need to be present at the tours but needs to make sure that there is at least one guide available as needed. The coordinator will also schedule docents to work during large events when the public visits the site. The supervisor for this project should be a CCHS Board member. Contact the Board President and include contact information to learn more about this opportunity.

Writer/editor of general brochure

A skilled writer and editor are needed to create one or more history brochures based on the information contained in the National Register Nomination, the Preservation Plan, and other narratives from construction drawings. This project will take about a month or more and involves reading the National Register Nomination and the recently completed Preservation Plan and writing copy and captions for the brochure(s). The writer/editor will have to identify historic and current photos to illustrate these brochures and obtain the rights to them if they are owned by others. The writer/editor should identify how many brochures are needed and the topics to be covered. This volunteer will work with a graphic designer (also a volunteer to be recruited) to produce the general brochure series for visitors. The supervisor for this project should be a CCHS Board or staff member. Contact the volunteer coordinator and include all contact information to learn more about this important position with our organization.

³⁰ Great Tours!

Coordinator reciprocal tourism links

A volunteer is needed to help coordinate with other area Revolutionary War historic sites in the general vicinity to establish reciprocal web links with their historic sites/tourism entities including the updated web links to new tourism materials for the Benjamin Cooper Tavern website. This work will involve contacting the sites listed above to seek their help in creating an appropriate web link to the Benjamin Cooper Tavern website from their website. This work might take a few months. The supervisor for this work should be the staff person that manages the Benjamin Cooper Tavern website. Contact the volunteer coordinator and list all contact information to learn more about this opportunity.



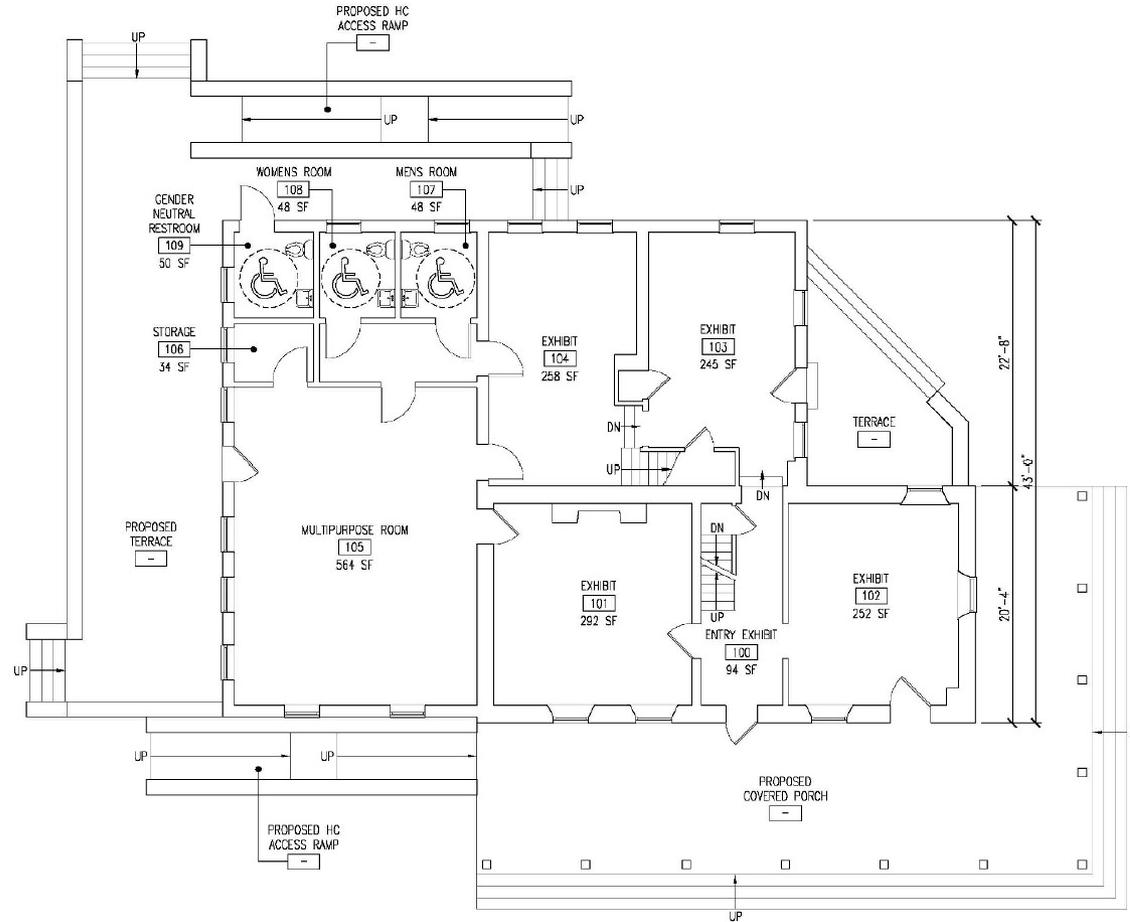
Heritage
Consulting Inc.

The Best Volunteer Job Descriptions CHECKLIST

1. Mission of the organization—Tell the potential volunteer what the organization does.
2. Job title –make it real and specific—“Volunteer Web Designer” or “Fall Clean Up—10 people needed.”
3. What you want the volunteer to do, in detail—tell them if this is a task that has a limited time commitment or a long-term assignment (you will have more luck filling short term assignments). Break down large tasks (like a gala event) into small bits—distribute 100 posters, rather than manage the whole PR effort. This should be a general description, not how to do the task (the volunteer will do it “their way” regardless).
4. Benefits to the volunteer to do the task—help the organization, meet new people, learn a new skill, use their skills for community betterment, meet school requirements, etc.
5. How many hours will it take—your best estimate for the specific task. If the assignment is long term like a committee chair, tell them how many times a month the committee meets, for how long, how many times a month, also include any time for preparing for the meetings. If tending to the flower garden is a weekly task, make sure you include this.
6. Can this project be done with others or as a group? Family projects that can be done in a day might be worth considering. Also, groups of friends or clubs could also be a potential source of volunteers (think wholesale recruitment). Be open to non-traditional options to getting work done such as co-chairs or small groups of friends who take responsibility for projects. Can this work be done by a student (specify ages that are appropriate) or an unpaid intern?
7. How the volunteer will get reimbursed for any money they spend on this task—be specific if you need receipts and how soon they must be submitted—“within two weeks of submission.”
8. Location constraints—say if the task must be done in the office during office work hours, or any other location. Be specific if there are constraints or if the task “can be done on your schedule.”

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9. Any equipment that is needed and if the organization will provide. Also note if the task requires specific software programs or access to internet, or specific platforms (MAC vs. PC).
 10. Supervisor—list the Supervisor’s name, title, phone (work and home), cell phone number, email address. Include a note if this person is staff or another volunteer.
 11. How the volunteer should track their time—what forms to use, how often to submit the form and to whom the time sheet should go.
 12. Any training your organization will provide for the volunteer to do this task. Will you send them to train and pay for it? Will someone coach them to do the job? Do they have to attend any orientation before doing the job? Is there any training needed? If not, say so.
 13. How the volunteer will be recognized for their service (remember volunteers should thanked three times, three different ways (in person, in writing and in front of their peers).— Describe how their service will be noted, such as in the newsletter, at an event, by the supervisor, annual volunteer appreciation dinner, with a tee shirt, etc.
 14. Deadline for completion of task or how often the person must speak to the supervisor to check on progress.
 15. Date the job description was posted.

Proposed Uses: Exhibit, Office, Meetings/ Events, Welcome

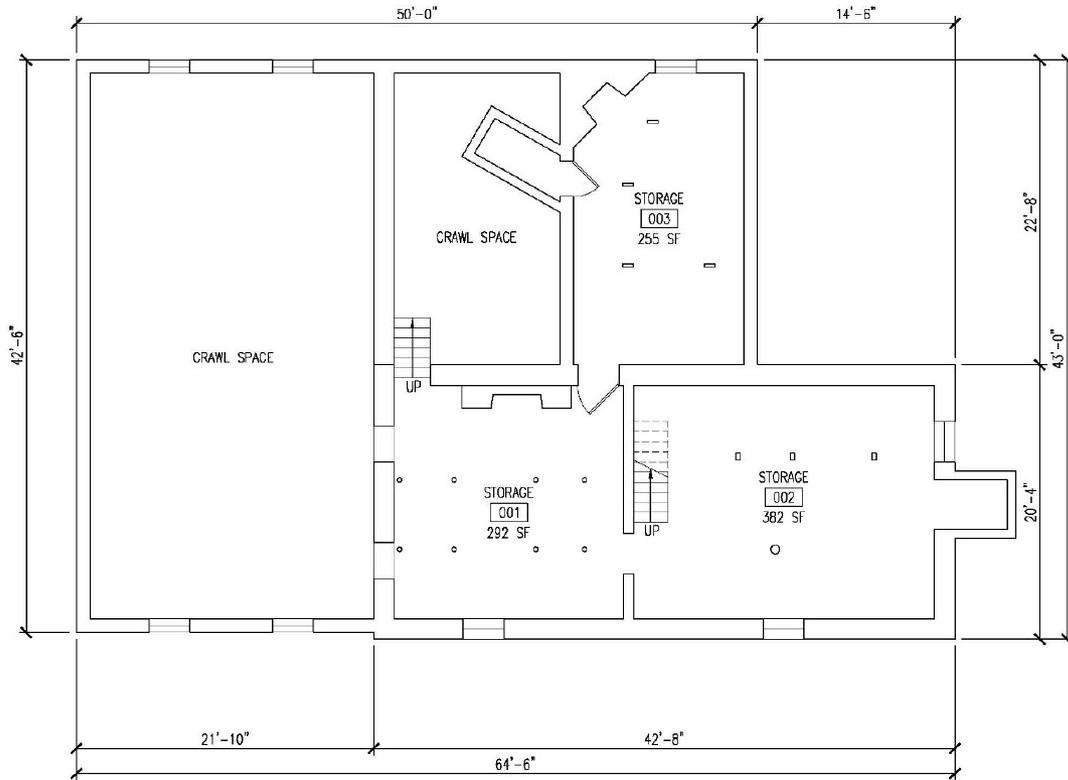


Option 1

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

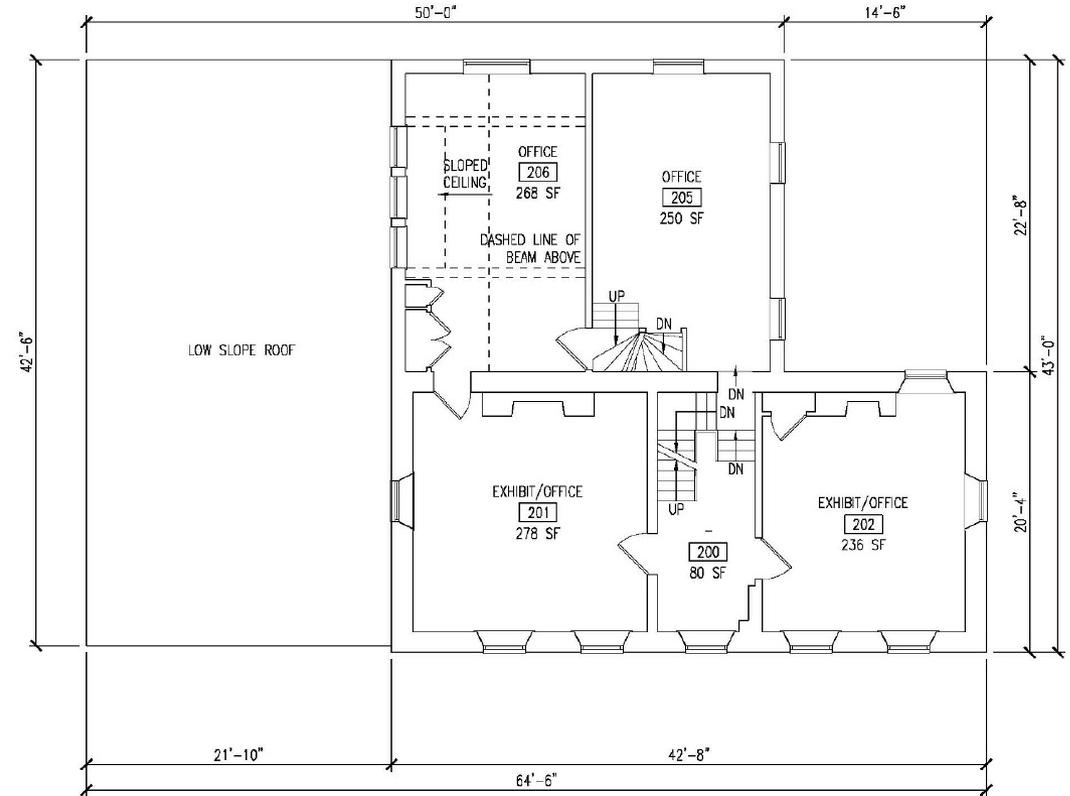
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Proposed Uses: Exhibit, Office, Meetings/ Events, Welcome



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

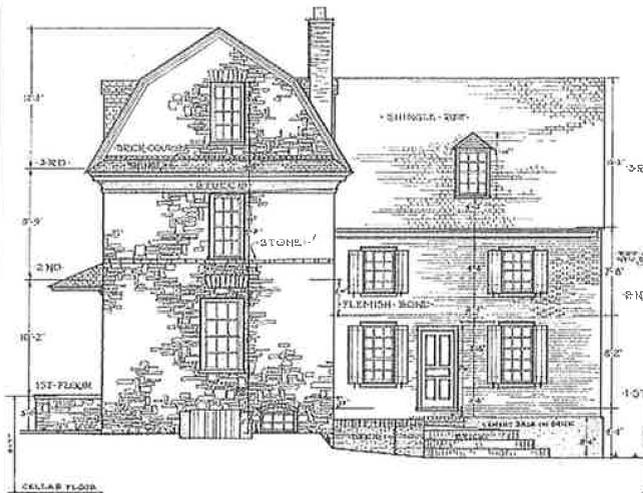
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SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Option 1



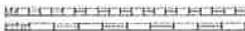
• WEST ELEVATION •



• NORTH ELEVATION •

EDWIN MARSH DEL.

3/16" = 1' = 1/8" = 1/16"



WORKS - FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION
OFFICIAL - PROJECT - N° 65-418

UNION BUREAU OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL BUREAU OF SURVEY, DIVISION OF PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

NAME OF STRUCTURE

THE BENJAMIN COOPER HOUSE,
ERIE AND POINT STS. CAMDEN - NEW JERSEY



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HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
NO. 4 OF 5 SHEETS

UNION BUREAU OF SURVEY