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Rebirth of the House Museum: Commemorating Reconstruction at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home

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REBIRTH OF THE HOUSE MUSEUM: COMMEMORATING RECONSTRUCTION AT
THE WOODROW WILSON FAMILY HOME

by

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DEDICATION

To my father, Gary. He loved history and film and instilled in me a passion for both. He knew nothing of public history's definitions or theories yet was and will always be the first public historian in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If my father was a muse, my mother provided the foundation, work ethic, and confidence required to complete this dissertation. My husband Robert endured and earned his honorary degree beside me. Occasionally, he asked me to come down from the ivory tower to rejoin the world. Lennon, the best dog in the world, and I could not dissertate forever. My friends outside of academia also reminded me to enjoy the people and passions I have outside of history, but Libby, Felicia, and Julie provided regular support in the last year. I would like to thank my comrades in the history department: Candace Cunningham, Kate Crosby, Robert Greene, Caitlin Mans, Kate McFadden, James Risk and Brian Robinson. However, I would not have survived the last year of writing and the market without Jennifer “Bingo” Gunter, Rochelle Outlaw, and Erin Holmes. I am especially grateful to my committee and for the mentorship provided by Allison Marsh. And of course, no historian succeeds without the aid provided by archivists. The staff of the South Carolinian Library, including Graham Duncan and Nathan Saunders, and Libby Shortt, formerly of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum (WWPLM), proved no exception. I would like to thank the public historians and docents who shared their time and skills with me at Wilson homes across the South: the WWPLM, the boyhood home in Augusta, and S Street. This research would not have been possible without funding from the Institute for Southern Studies and Institute for African American Research at USC. Most importantly, I am forever grateful that the Woodrow

Wilson Family Home (WWFH) docents, who turned an exhibit into an experience, disclosed their stories to me. Any criticism they may perceive in this work reflects on my shortcomings as their trainer. Similar to the visitors and docents of the WWFH, I, too, was taught a Dunning School interpretation by my favorite high school teacher, who also happened to worship Woodrow Wilson. As such, I must recognize the WWFH interpretative and exhibit teams and Historic Columbia's visionary leader Robin Waites for giving me and the docents the opportunity to correct our miseducation and complicate the history of "great men."

ABSTRACT

Rebirth of a House Museum traces the transformation of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH) in Columbia, South Carolina from an eighty year-old presidential shrine to the nation's first museum of Reconstruction. A semi-guided house tour with limited objects and grounded in a specific time and place modernized an outdated historic house museum (HHM). The house became the primary artifact, supported by a panel exhibit and five original Wilson family objects. Critical to the exhibit's success were the docents, who also steer this manuscript via their oral histories and fill a void in public history literature. Like Reconstruction, the reinterpretation was both revolutionary but less radical than its potential. Nonetheless, the project will assist sites seeking guidance in training and inclusivity, tackling difficult or controversial interpretative transitions, and unraveling white supremacy.

The challenges of the WWFH's interpretation transformed the training process used by Historic Columbia, the organization that administers the home. The docents who excelled were women, those who worked in education, and those holding advanced degrees. Mandatory language and cultural sensitivity training was the first exposure for many white volunteer docents to concepts such as "white privilege" and coded language. Some docents ultimately used their tours to combat their own biases and Lost Cause indoctrination. Visitor evaluations reveal that the majority of guests also were eager to learn about Reconstruction.

HHMs limit or exclude narratives pertaining to non-elite whites and have great difficulty discussing white supremacy. The WWFH demonstrates how historiography, census records, architecture, image analysis, and docent training can illuminate the lives of unknown domestic workers. Docents were also successful in interpreting racialized and political terrorism and, for some, questioning their own privilege as white docents discussing violence. However, the museum did not prepare docents or use the exhibit to address the sexual terror and exploitation of women during Reconstruction. The site also struggled to deal with Wilson's white supremacy. The WWFH confronted Wilson's stance on segregation and his screening of *The Birth of a Nation* in the White House, which other Wilson homes rarely addressed. However, docents were reluctant to frame Wilson as a racist. Yet in the wake of student protests at Princeton challenging his memory, Historic Columbia generated new conversations with docents about his white supremacy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------------------|--|
| APVA..... | Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities |
| CCMM..... | Centro Cultural y Museum de la Memoria |
| DAR..... | Daughters of the American Revolution |
| HHM..... | Historic House Museum |
| <i>JAH</i> | <i>Journal of American History</i> |
| KKK..... | Ku Klux Klan |
| LGBTQ..... | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer |
| MVLA..... | Mount Vernon Ladies' Association |
| NAACP..... | National Association for the Advancement of Colored People |
| NMAAHC..... | National Museum of African American History and Culture |
| NPS..... | National Park Service |
| PWWH..... | President Woodrow Wilson House |
| SCV..... | Sons of Confederate Veterans |
| SNYC..... | Southern Negro Youth Congress |
| SPLC..... | Southern Poverty Law Center |
| THC..... | Tennessee Historical Commission |
| UDC..... | United Daughters of the Confederacy |
| WHC..... | Weeksville Heritage Center |
| WPA..... | Works Progress Administration |
| WWBH..... | Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home |
| WWFH..... | Woodrow Wilson Family Home |

WWPLM..... Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum

WWPLM..... Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On a crisp Saturday morning, the fifteenth of February 2014, dozens of people gathered between a magnolia tree and the front steps of a blue Italianate Victorian era house. The crowd awaited entry into the childhood home of Woodrow Wilson, which had been closed to the public for nine years. The last barrier in the reinterpretation and rehabilitation of the eighty-year old historic house museum (HHM) was the ribbon cutting staged on the home's porch. From its inception as a presidential house, the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH) and the tour visitors took there explored the teenage years of the twenty-eighth president of the United States. But somewhat ironically, with one slice of a yellow ribbon that President's Day, the HHM severed its ties to the presidential shrine mentality. Armed with a revolutionary reinterpretation, the WWFH officially opened in Columbia, South Carolina as the first museum of Reconstruction in the nation. The new interpretation overthrew the traditional HHM narrative of elite white men in an attempt to fill the enormous gap between academic and public knowledge of Reconstruction. Historic Columbia, the organization that administers the home, reimagined the outdated HHM model of docent-guided tours heavily dependent on period rooms and installed a twenty-first century exhibit reliant on panels and a minimalist approach to displaying artifacts. The organization launched an innovative semi-guided tour led by vetted docents trained to interpret the biracial space the Wilsons and their employees occupied in an effort to explore the biracial democracy

created by Reconstruction. In the process of blending the two seemingly unconnected subjects of the post-Civil War world and a teenager named Tommy who would become president, the museum created complex and at times contested conversations about freedom, citizenship, terror, systemic racism, hero worship, and memory in South Carolina, the South, and the nation.

1.1 THE WOODROW WILSON FAMILY HOME’S ORIGINS AS PRESIDENTIAL SHRINE

The HHM movement began in the mid-nineteenth century with efforts to preserve sites affiliated with America’s first president. By the end of the Reconstruction era, three of the first five HHMs were associated with George Washington. The first was the Independence Day opening of Hasbrouck House, his headquarters in Newburgh, NY, in 1850, but his headquarters at Valley Forge was saved in 1876. The most significant, Mount Vernon, was preserved in 1860. By the 1890s, two homes were rescued a year. The movement only grew with the rise of the car until HHMs numbered over 400 by 1933, stretching from the east coast to the first cabins of the West. The growth of HHMs also reflected a patriotic spirit and a greater mission of Americanization.¹ In 1933, Laurence Coleman acknowledged the shrine origins of the HHM movement. The homes “chosen to survive” were those “where celebrity is born, where fame makes its home, where art or science labors in erstwhile obscurity, where important incidents occur, where death visits the great.”² It was at this time during the Great Depression that Wilson’s

¹ Laurence Vail Coleman, *Historic House Museums. With a Directory* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1973), 18; Patricia West, *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), 4, 43; Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants’ Lives at Historic House Museums* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 15–16.

² Coleman, *Historic House Museums*, 17.

home in Columbia and the manse he was born in in Staunton, Virginia were saved. His last home on S Street in Washington, D.C. and the manse he occupied in Augusta, Georgia before moving to Columbia were preserved decades later.

Historic house museums in the twenty-first century face numerous challenges. They are too numerous, and often as birthplaces and homes of elites shrouded in outdated interpretations of the past, they must demand diversity and relevancy if they are to remain solvent.³ In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the WWFH sought to make a former presidential shrine relevant again. The site reinvented the image of the ideal American in the HHM and illuminated the patriotism of black Americans working toward political, economic and social equality when Wilson was a teenager living in Reconstruction-era Columbia. This continues a process underway at the nation's most prestigious presidential homes and reputable southern institutions. By adopting the interpretative style of social historians, these HHMs now present more inclusive narratives in an attempt to remain pertinent and intellectually honest. New interpretations of slavery at Mount Vernon and Monticello, most notably Mulberry Row, and an abundance of tours available on the immigrant experience in New York's Lower East Side Tenement Museum reflect some of these more successful attempts.⁴

The WWFH could never entirely shed its presidential ties and shrine origins. Rather than overlook the museum's institutional history, docents incorporate the

³ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 14–15.

⁴ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 19; "Slavery," *George Washington's Mount Vernon*, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/>; "Plantation & Slavery," *Thomas Jefferson's Monticello*, accessed March 5, 2017, <https://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/>; "Guided Tours of the Tenement Museum," *Tenement Museum*, accessed March 6, 2017, <https://tenement.org/tours.php>; Christy S. Coleman, "African American Museums in the Twenty-First Century," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 155.

museum's beginnings using the neighborhood's architecture. Docents and visitors pass Township Auditorium on their way from the gift shop to the home. In August 1928, the American Legion Richland Post No. 6 and its Auxiliary negotiated a deal to purchase Tommy's house to halt its "immediate demolition" as part of the construction of Township Auditorium on the former Wilson property.⁵ Although originally the home was to be relocated, by October the Legion and Auxiliary changed its position, resolving to preserve the home where it stood.⁶ Approximately 115 organizations across the state emerged by late 1928 as enthusiastic champions of the cause. However, white women's organizations led the charge, drafting over sixty percent of the resolutions. The most popular theme in the resolutions was preserving the home as a shrine. Eleven clubs, including the state American Legion and three chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, adopted this shrine rhetoric.⁷ The Auxiliary led the charge to pass a bill in the state legislature to preserve the Wilson home on its original site. Passed in early March of 1929, the bill appropriated \$35,000 to purchase the property and pay for repairs

⁵ Jesse T. Reese, "Agreement between J.M. VanMetre and American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary" (Columbia, S.C., August 25, 1928), Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, Records, 25 Aug. 1928-4 Dec. 1928 and c. 1928, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Hereinafter cited as WWBH, Records and SCL, USC; Jesse T. Reese, "Agreement between J.M. VanMetre and American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary" (Columbia, S.C., August 25, 1928), WWBH, Records, 25 Aug. 1928-4 Dec. 1928 and c. 1928, SCL, USC; Quote from Mary R. Forbes to American Legion Auxiliary Unit Presidents, "To the Units of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of South Carolina," January 17, 1929, WWBH, Records, 8 Jan. 1929-31 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC..

⁶ Reese, "Agreement between J.M. VanMetre and American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary;" American Legion Auxiliary Richland Post No. 6, "Resolution" (Columbia, S.C., September 28, 1928), WWBH, Records, 25 Aug. 1928-4 Dec. 1928 and c. 1928, SCL, USC; "Woodrow Wilson Home Bedroom" 1956, 13 backside, WWBH, Records, 1952-29 December 1956 and 1956, SCL, USC; American Legion Columbia Post No. 6, "Resolution" (Columbia, S.C., October 4, 1928), WWBH, Records, 25 Aug. 1928-4 Dec. 1928 and c. 1928, SCL, USC; M.S. Whaley, "Auditorium Trustees Meeting Announcement" (Columbia, S.C., October 6, 1928), WWBH, Records, 25 Aug. 1928-4 Dec. 1928 and c. 1928, SCL, USC.

⁷ "Full Text of Resolutions Adopted By 95 Various Organizations in South Carolina As to the Proposal That the Woodrow Wilson Home in Columbia Be Preserved" October 1928, 1-22, Woodrow Wilson Memorial MS vol. bd., 1928, SCL, USC; "Similar Resolutions Have Been Passed by the Following Organizations since the Preceding Ones Were Made Up" 1928, Woodrow Wilson Memorial 2 MSS, 1928 and 16 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC.

and renovations, with half to be raised by the public.⁸ On June 20, 1929 the state became owner of the home, and the South Carolina Historical Commission took over control.⁹ The home opened in 1933 to the public and for the next eighty years functioned as a presidential shrine. Although the 2014 reinterpretation would shed this shrine origin, Historic Columbia believed it important to include the museum's origins and combine it with the Wilsons' local movements and the evolution of Tommy's neighborhood as "a teaching tool."¹⁰

1.2 A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE TOUR

While the movement through the WFFH appears traditional, the format and the design of the tour creates an original HHM experience. The appendix includes the final version of the docent script, revised from its February 2014 version that following June. The tour begins with the walk from the Robert Mills Museum Shop and an introduction on the front porch. There docents disclose upfront the tour's unconventional design and the interpretation's focus on Reconstruction, the period following the Civil War and ending in South Carolina in 1876, through the eyes of Tommy Wilson. The dual narrative

⁸ Forbes to American Legion Auxiliary Unit Presidents, "To the Units of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of South Carolina"; "Summary of Provisions of the Act to Preserve the Woodrow Wilson Home in Columbia As a Memorial and Shrine" January 17, 1929, WWBH, Records, 8 Jan. 1929-31 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC; "S. 52 A Bill to Provide for the Purchase of the Premises and Buildings Thereon Situate at the Corner of Hampton and Henderson Streets in the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Being the Boyhood Home of the Late President Woodrow Wilson" January 16, 1929, 1-2, WWBH, Records, 8 Jan. 1929-31 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC; "A Bill to Provide for the Purchase of the Premises and Buildings Thereon Situate at the Corner of Hampton and Henderson Streets in the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Being the Boyhood Home of the Late President Woodrow Wilson" (draft, January 16, 1929), 2-3, WWBH, Records, 8 Jan. 1929-31 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC; "S. 52 A Bill," 1; "Help Save the Woodrow Wilson Home" March 1929, WWBH, Records, 14 Mar. 1929-13 April 1929, SCL, USC; Halsey, "Trust to Be Accepted at July Meeting"; "Legion Men and Women at Woodrow Wilson Home," *Record*, March 8, 1929, WWBH, Records, 4 Feb. 1929-13 Mar. 1929, SCL, USC.

⁹ "Minutes of the Woodrow Wilson Home Purchase Fund Committee, 6 March-11 May" 1929, 8-9, WWBH, Records, 4 Feb. 1929-13 Mar. 1929, SCL, USC; Ashley Halsey, "Trust to Be Accepted at July Meeting," April 24, 1932, Woodrow Wilson Memorial 14 MPs, 1929-1969, SCL, USC.

¹⁰ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Routledge, 2015), 45.

of Reconstruction and the Wilson family thematically links the room exhibits; however, each room also has its own topic relative to Reconstruction or the Wilsons, but usually both. Transition and introductory room statements establish these subthemes and direct visitors to additional information available on panels and through artifacts. Engagement points with the docent, generally built around an open-ended, thematic question, continue conversations surrounding these topics.

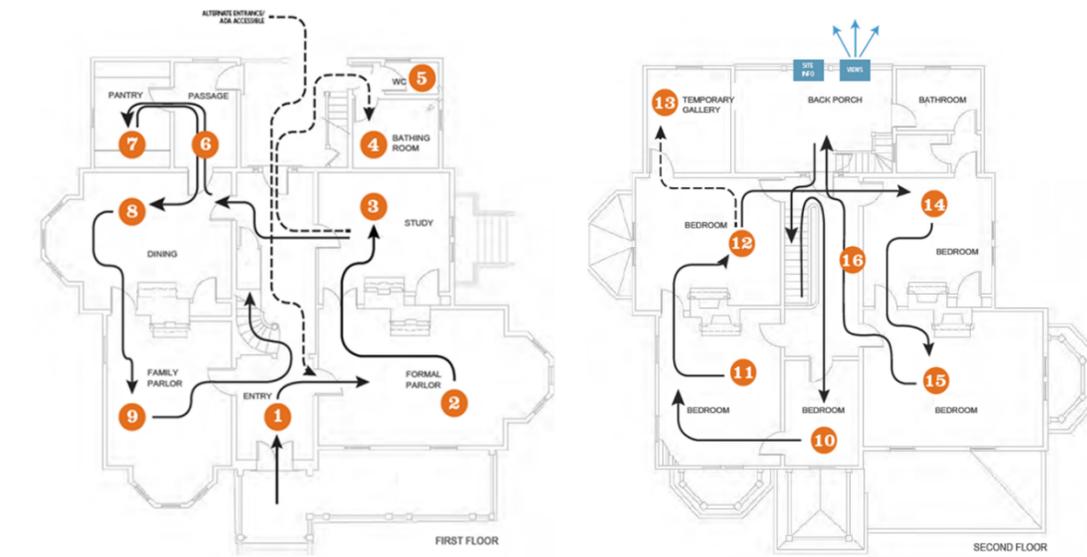


Figure 1.1 Woodrow Wilson Family Home Adult Tour Script Floor Plan¹¹

The first half of the tour centers on the bottom floor, launching from the Entrance Hall where visitors are acquainted officially with the home’s occupants. A panel’s images introduce Tommy, who sat for a portrait when he lived in Columbia, and his parents Joseph and Janet Wilson; however, docents verbally present Tommy’s older sisters Annie and Marion and little brother Josie and announce the presence of domestic workers.¹² The

¹¹ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home Adult Tour Script” (Historic Columbia, June 13, 2014), 3, 17.

¹² “The Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014); Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft” (Historic

Southeast Formal Parlor orients the visitor to Reconstruction on the local, state, and to a lesser degree national level. For example, one panel features Tommy's representative W.B. Nash, a former slave turned businessman and nine year senator for Richland county.¹³ The Study not only treats the Wilson and Woodrow families' ties to the Southern Presbyterian Church but also traces the proliferation of black churches. The Pantry and Passage, or Butler's Pantry, open conversations about domestic labor and local merchants, subjects which often trickle into the adjoining Dining Room as a transition to Family Life, both for the Wilsons and Columbians at large. The final space, the Southwest Family Parlor, explores the Reconstruction Amendments ending slavery, providing citizenship, and granting suffrage to black men. However, citizenship takes center stage via a short exhibit film about the Fourteenth Amendment, segregation and contemporary issues of citizenship.

The second half of the tour takes place in the private spaces of the home in the bedrooms located on the second floor. Visitors stop first in Tommy's Bedroom, which highlights his passion for baseball and British politics as well as his education, a topic expanded in the Northwest Bedroom 12. Its theme "The Promise of Reconstruction" unveils the origins of an integrated public education system in South Carolina. The Southwest Bedroom 11 sandwiched in between presents two aspects of the "Politics of Reconstruction," municipal services and the introduction of a temporary two party system in the South. The latter depicts Republicans and Democrats of the era, which look vastly different to visitors than the parties they recognize today. The final two bedrooms on the

Columbia, January 31, 2014), 4; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 02 06 14 Working Draft" (Historic Columbia, February 6, 2014), 4; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Second Training Version" (Historic Columbia, April 2014), 4.

¹³ "State Government," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

east side navigate the traumatic resolution to Reconstruction in South Carolina. These spaces discuss political terrorism at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan and Red Shirts as well as the complex and often incorrect ways Woodrow Wilson, but especially, Reconstruction have been remembered. The tour concludes with exploration of the back porch before returning to the first floor for self-guided touring of rooms 4 and 5, the bathing room and water closet. By opening access to these last two rooms, the WWFH made spaces formally “out of bounds” public.¹⁴ For brevity and thematic structure, this manuscript focuses primarily on the neighborhood, pantries, dining room, and the last two guided interpretative spaces, bedrooms fourteen and fifteen.

1.3 SITUATING THE WWFH IN MUSEUM LITERATURE

The reinterpretation of the WWFH revolutionizes the conventional model of the HHM and presidential shrine. The WWFH’s development is but one approach to modernizing these traditional, ideological spaces that have been shaped over the last century and half. The exhibit takes advantages of twenty-first century theories of visitor identity and visitation patterns to reimagine the ways in which docents and visitors exchange information. But in illuminating the voices of the docents over staff and visitors, this dissertation provides valuable insight into the ways this revolutionary process has succeeded and at times failed on the front lines of the museum.

In 1933, Laurence Coleman labeled HHMs as a “new kind” of agency, “agencies of instruction and inspiration.”¹⁵ More recently, Tony Bennett, author of *Birth of the Museum*, took this one step further when he traced the origins of the modern museum, primarily through a Foucauldian lens. The museum was but another heterotopia

¹⁴ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 121.

¹⁵ Coleman, *Historic House Museums*, 20.

“inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power” and producing normative culture both rationally and scientifically that at times could be contested and inverted. Combining semiotics and Marxist theories of power, the incorporation/resistance paradigm maintains that the dominant culture still encodes hegemonic messages for its audience; however, others outside the dominant culture are left to their own negotiated or oppositional interpretations.¹⁶ Less formal festivals, fairs and exhibitions represented the march of progress and were perfected through regulation into similar but more civilized spaces such as amusement parks, public parks, libraries, theaters, department stores, and museums. In ordering the chaos of collections through classification and display, the museum played a game of show and tell with its objects to convey these dominant cultural messages and manage the social behavior and conduct of its visitors with the same surveilling gaze as other public spheres. *The Birth of a Nation*, which was screened by Wilson in one of his most notorious actions as president, was part of the culture produced for this larger bourgeois public sphere and designed to civilize the masses by modeling and performing white middle class values.¹⁷

The theoretical framework used by Bennett demonstrates the ways in which museum audience theory has evolved much as media and cultural studies have. The literature moved away from the idea that messages are distributed in a one-way process and that an interpretation’s success solely rests on whether visitors received this message. Messages were conveyed by “herding” the visitor with other strangers in a guided tour that monitored and timed their linear movement and learning. But visitors now construct

¹⁶ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 1, 6, quote 61; Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, “Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences: Power, Activity, Responsibility,” *Visitor Studies* 13, no. 2 (July 2010): 131, 133.

¹⁷ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 2, 4, 7, 10, 19, 25, 28, 33, 48, quote 6.

the meaning in their museum visits.¹⁸ The WWFH's semi-guided tour makes this process easier by disrupting the one-way system of a guide talking for the duration of the tour. Visitors can probe topics of interest to them via questions or conversations or select material to explore through their movements.

However, the tour still relies on lingering aspects of managing social behavior from the modern museum's birth. Historic Columbia reorganized and reclassified Wilson artifacts to make "visible and present" a subject once "invisible and absent," Reconstruction.¹⁹ Jean King reminded public historians of the dangers in interpreting history that has political and cultural implications for many visitors. In the example of South Carolina's Confederate flag debate, she argued "one person's 'social betterment' . . . is another person's social disaster."²⁰ It is not that museums must be neutral or shy away from presenting less than shining or contested history in the name of objectivity. They should be expected to articulate the same cultural and social tensions expressed in everyday life because these institutions are inherently political and do function at their best while exploring this dissonance. However, it is important to state why such an interpretation is valuable and avoid a "fraudulent" experience for the visitor expecting a different interpretation.²¹

¹⁸ Stylianou-Lambert, "Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences," 131; Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 55, 59; Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2010), ii.

¹⁹ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 35.

²⁰ Jean A. King, "Taking What Action for Change? Dare Evaluation Build a New Social Order?," *Visitor Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2016): 5, quote 6.

²¹ King, "Taking What Action for Change?," 6; Hilde Hein, "Assuming Responsibility: Lessons from Aesthetics," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 5–6; Timothy W. Luke, "The Museum: Where Civilizations Clash or Clash Civilizes?," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 22–24.

The WWFH joins other museums dealing with controversial material where visitors and scholar-experts may debate the evidence or work in opposition to one another. But these relationships between museum professionals and visitors are vital, especially in the case of the WWFH, because the controversial interpretations operate in communities related to the events and people. When an interpretation challenges local mythology, tension should be expected. The WWFH addressed this friction directly and asked visitors about it with an evaluation question on sensitive and controversial material. Fortunately, dissent was minimal, but it could have gone differently. The content that curators and historians find important or are drawn to may not necessarily be the information visitors want to learn, which can be disastrous for an interpretation and neglectful of the public's desires. A well-known example of "expectation distortion," or when an exhibit contradicts visitor memory and knowledge, was the controversy over the Smithsonian's Enola Gay exhibition. The original exhibit, filled with complexity and difficult questions about the atomic bomb, was scrapped. But the WWFH proves exceptional because the public fails to realize that the myths of Reconstruction need correcting. They do not know they want this information until after they receive it, as evaluation data for the WWFH has shown.²²

An important turn in public history literature toward the visitor coincided with the transition of cultural institutions into the leisure and tourism industry. With more emphasis on the visitor, museums explored more diverse narratives and embraced interactive and multimedia exhibits. Some embraced social advocacy.²³ Yet even as

²² Jacob A. Benfield et al., "An 'Honest Visionary' and 'Dishonest Scallywag': Blending Fact, Opinion, and Interest into a Front-End Evaluation," *Visitor Studies* 11, no. 1 (March 2008): 56–57, 70.

²³ Lee Davidson and Pamela Sibley, "Audiences at the 'New' Museum: Visitor Commitment, Diversity and Leisure at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa," *Visitor Studies* 14, no. 2 (July 2011): 177.

education will always be part of the museum experience, museum going is above all a leisure experience and attending a museum, like other leisure activities, affirms identity.²⁴

John Falk, the leading scholar in visitor identity, and his small “i” identity-related visitor marked a contextual turn in visitor studies away from a focus on the length of visits. Falk’s identities are the Explorer, Experience Seeker, Professional/Hobbyist, the Recharger, who looks for a therapeutic or rejuvenating experience, and the Facilitator, who encourages learning. Critics have called his identities “reductionist” because they exclude other factors and wants that comprise the choice a visitor makes to attend or skip a trip to a museum. His “short term” identities from a “behaviorist market research framework” neglected the “long term” Identities that he rightly argued did not absolutely define visitors’ leisure choices.²⁵ The importance of Falk’s identities in understanding visitor motivations did not render demographic factors such as gender, sexuality, age, race and ethnicity, education level, ability/disability, and the complexity of socioeconomic status useless. Identity is complex, thus assessing how visitors and non-visitors think about cultural institutions requires complex approaches. A new “contextual turn” should also open up research on non-visitors, which needs more scholarly attention as museums start to attract this previously ignored group. Scholarship shows and public historians know that adult museum visitors are generally younger, white professionals, often wealthier and more educated than the general population. Families are numerous

²⁴ John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009), 50–51, 80.

²⁵ Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 64; Stylianou-Lambert, “Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences,” 135; Emily Dawson and Eric Jensen, “Towards A Contextual Turn in Visitor Studies: Evaluating Visitor Segmentation and Identity-Related Motivations,” *Visitor Studies* 14, no. 2 (July 2011): 128–29, 131, 136–37.

but minorities, those with disabilities and non-English speakers are rare.²⁶ In the case of black museums, at least twenty percent of their visitors are non-black while mainstream museums rarely reach above ten percent for black visitors. Art museums have received the harshest criticism about accessibility. The gallery and the ability to interpret its collection is seen as elite-only.²⁷

Issues of accessibility and the museum are complicated. From a Foucauldian perspective of knowledge and regulation, public museums should have audiences that match the diversity in these institutions' collecting, conservation and exhibit practices. This diversity, though, is meant to promote social betterment through the hegemonic messages rather than being inclusive for inclusivity's sake.²⁸ In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon postulated that the *audience-centered* institution should be as relevant, useful and accessible as a shopping mall or train station. Now atmospherics, or manipulating the environment to affect people's behavior in consumer or leisure spaces, has been reimagined for the museum, since it is a leisure space that people enter voluntarily either for a purpose or to peruse casually. Outside, the architectural style, setting and signage affect behavior. Interior variables consider color schemes, lighting, and the comfort of the space as well as the décor of individual exhibits, case displays, images, interpretative signage, and object and interactive labels. Spaces of commercial

²⁶ Helen Coxall, "'Open Minds: Inclusive Practice,'" in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 139–40; Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 29; Dawson and Jensen, "Towards A Contextual Turn," 128, 132–34, 137–38, 159; Stylianou-Lambert, "Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences," 134–35; Davidson and Sibley, "Audiences at the 'New' Museum," 178.

²⁷ Coleman, "African American Museums," 157; Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 10–11.

²⁸ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, quote 7, 8–9.

consumption like ticketing and food, crowding, and interactions with staff and visitors are also factors.²⁹

But no amount of theory can compensate for the divide between mainstream institutions and sites developed for underserved communities. Power and knowledge have shaped American museums, creating struggles for their establishment within the black community. The recent opening of the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture hopefully marks a significant change. Exhibits pertaining to African Americans before the social movements of the 1960s were relegated to mainstream white museums with an anthropological or natural history focus or the two dozen or so museums operating at historically black colleges and universities. Along with small, grassroots ones, a handful of independent, non-profit black museums sprung up in cities with strong connections to the Great Migration of black Americans out of the South. The museums that survived at the end of the twentieth century often reluctantly reduced their power by forming collaborations with mainstream ones, universities and institutions. In other cases, black museums were forced to secure revenue and professionalize outside of their primary audience and community. Cultural tourism helped inspire a surge of "safe icon" museums in the 1990s devoted to important figures like Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King Jr., but black women, such as Nannie Burroughs who were vital to women's and Civil Rights activism, remain largely overlooked. In the late twentieth century, the National Park Service sought more inclusive narratives, particularly around the Underground Railroad and Civil Rights movements, as did mainstream museums. Institutions have begun to explore segregation,

²⁹ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, ii; Regan Forrest, "Museum Atmospherics: The Role of the Exhibition Environment in the Visitor Experience," *Visitor Studies* 16, no. 2 (July 2013): 202–3, 205–6.

but less well-known and more “revolutionary” subjects like Marcus and Amy Jacques Garvey and Nat Turner remain nearly untouchable.³⁰

The WWFH cannot escape its origins in white mainstream museum making, but it does seek to rectify the absence of positive exhibits on the black experience these spaces shunned. Reconstruction, although temporary and imperfect, was revolutionary in its aspirations for black citizens and so radical that Republicans from that era have been saddled with that description for 150 years. The WWFH may not interpret Garvey but the four Rollin’s sisters, socially and politically powerful women of color, guide the interpretation of the “Women’s Rights” panel in the Informal Parlor. Charlotte chaired South Carolina’s women’s rights convention in Columbia in December 1870 and created the state branch of the American Woman Suffrage Association. The sisters, who hailed from Charleston, maintained a home in Columbia where they entertained black and white guests. Frances, pictured on the panel, married Beaufort legislator and lawyer William Whipper and wrote Martin Delany’s biography under a male pseudonym.³¹

Today the WWFH strives for inclusive practice. By illuminating the misunderstood period of Reconstruction, the WWFH performs a service for the community and with community partners. As part of interpreting its small collection relevant to the Wilson home, Historic Columbia collaborated most extensively with the University of South Carolina’s education and history programs. The last exhibit film the *Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction* required working across the disciplines of history and media studies in order to contextualize a film central to the dual narrative of Reconstruction and Wilson, *Birth of a Nation*. Lastly, in its training, Historic

³⁰ Coleman, “African American Museums,” 151–56.

³¹ “Women’s Rights,” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

Columbia required docents partake in language and cultural sensitivity training in an attempt to make “diversity awareness” mainstream within the organization.³² The WWFH at once moves away from the over-produced Old South plantation and tells an interracial story of the past. The nostalgia driven heritage industry in the South emphasized the beauty of the home and its objects, which displaced the interracial history, including that of slavery and the social relations between diverse people.³³ The nostalgia industry also ensured the interracial narrative of Reconstruction would remain a taboo subject. The WWFH corrects Lost Cause interpretations of Reconstruction, built on the false narrative that the Civil War was fought bravely over states’ rights rather than slavery and that Reconstruction was a disastrous punishment for white southerners. This reinterpretation is possible because the celebration of political and domestic terrorism is no longer socially acceptable. Just as they did in the first modern museums, visitors continue to regulate and monitor one another, making challenges rooted in Lost Cause rhetoric harder to espouse among visitors who no longer find these views mainstream. Visitors not only perform their identity in response to the institutions’ visual signs or messages but this identity can evolve based on the reception of this performance. Other visitors can reject a Lost Cause performance. And a visit, which is never static, can evolve for guests based on what they learn and encounter.³⁴

If anything, the WWFH exemplifies the idea in visitor studies that the visitor and the museum are one and the same, balancing negotiations between both of their

³² Coxall, ““Open Minds: Inclusive Practice,”” 139.

³³ Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 42–43.

³⁴ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 8, 47, 55; Stylianou-Lambert, “Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences,” 135–36; Dawson and Jensen, “Towards A Contextual Turn,” 128.

perspectives.³⁵ While Historic Columbia has selected a dominant scholarly message about Reconstruction, both docent and visitor communicate and receive messages, negotiate their identity, and create and modify memory. In essence, the WWFH tour seeks to resolve some of the most common complaints about museums. By adopting an original theme and reinterpretation, the WWFH demonstrates that museums can change. The tour not only includes multiple views, at least one of which hopefully every visitor can identify with, but also trains them to challenge authoritative voices, even that of the museum.³⁶ The visitor's choice to move between panels, artifacts, and interactives at their discretion democratizes the tour experience. These movements made possible by the semi-guided tour, the conversational nature of the tour's design, and open-ended questions create original individualized tours for every visitor. In this way, the WWFH remains unfinished as new meanings always are being constructed by the visitor based on their individual life experiences and ideologies. The visitor transforms into a self-made docent.³⁷

This dissertation addresses the challenges and successes of the WWFH's reinterpretation as the script of the new tour evolved and the museum opened its doors in February 2014. But the most important and crucial component here are docent experiences, which remain underrepresented in public history literature. The focus on WWFH docents fills a void in the literature driven by audience and identity. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, public history and museum practitioners began asking important

³⁵ Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 35; Eric Jensen, Emily Dawson, and John H. Falk, "Dialogue and Synthesis: Developing Consensus in Visitor Research Methodology," *Visitor Studies* 14, no. 2 (July 2011): 160.

³⁶ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, iii; Hein, "Assuming Responsibility: Lessons from Aesthetics," 4.

³⁷ Stylianou-Lambert, "Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences," 136–38, 140–41.

questions about the limited training docents received after being placed on the front lines and motivations inspiring them to volunteer at museums.³⁸ But the articles or books that incorporated docents often concentrated on the visitor experience during a tour rather than giving these interpreters their own voice.³⁹ Susan Crane found docents rejected a 1993 “counter-tour” at San Francisco’s Haas-Lillienthal House entitled “An Invisible Life: A View into the World of a 120-Year-Old Man.” The docents felt undermined because of the museum’s effort to create a fictional life with artifacts and docent-told stories that created a false “historical presence.” Similar to the volunteer docents at Historic Columbia and their views about the WWFH, some docents participated. Others refused.⁴⁰ Scholarship on the training process places the perspective of the trainers or full-time staff at the center. Akin to the WWFH’s experience, the 2001 reopening of the Campbell House tour in Spokane, Washington moved away from a décor and object based tour to one with larger themes of class, gender and labor. A new script incorporated Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory that stressed critical thinking through music, physical activity, speaking, and both interpersonal and intrapersonal practices. Some docents struggled with breaking character during vignettes placed within the tour, giving visitors wrong information, and the complexity of the script and thematic material. Efforts to make *The Genomic Revolution* exhibit a guided tour provided a model for

³⁸ Charles Bleick, “A Volunteer in Art Education: The Art Museum Docent,” *Art Education* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 1980): 19–20; Lois Swan Jones, “Volunteer-Guides and Classroom Teachers in School-Visitation Programs in European and North American Art Museums,” *Studies in Art Education* 18, no. 3 (January 1, 1977): 32, 35–35. In an interview with ten art museum docents, these interpreters revealed they joined the museum to contribute to their community, become involved with museum programs and other like-minded docents, and expand their mental capabilities.

³⁹ Eileen H. Tamura, “Ethnic Museums in Hawai’i: Exhibits, Interpreters, and Reenactments,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28, no. 3 (April 1, 2009): 69–71, 73.

⁴⁰ Susan A. Crane, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 50–51.

training undergraduate students, who had an existing framework of knowledge, as paid docent interns.⁴¹ In 2009, *The Museum Educator's Manual* appeared as a how-to handbook for museums to adopt the “team approach” of volunteer management. A step-by-step guide to implementing successfully the three Rs of recruitment, recognition, and retention of docents, the book serves as a solid training manual but gives no perspectives of docents.⁴² In the second decade of the twenty-first century, paid and volunteer staff-mediated learning remained “poorly understood.”⁴³ As such, this dissertation includes the voices of ten volunteers and six weekend staff paid docents who completed short surveys, eleven of whom went on to participate in oral histories.

1.4 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

If Reconstruction upended black legal, political and religious inequality, the WWFH overturned traditional assumptions about the HHM, namely the need for a fully-guided tour, period room furniture vignettes, and original artifacts. The chapter “The Rebirth of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home” details how the WWFH contested the outdated structure of HHMs. The small amount of Wilson and Reconstruction related material culture available forced the interpretative staff to redefine the role of furniture and collections in HHMs. If anything, the WWFH represents material culture philosophy coming full circle. Where museums were first designed to “focus on the rare and

⁴¹ Janice Williams Rutherford and Steven E. Shay, “Peopling the Age of Elegance: Reinterpreting Spokane’s Campbell House--A Collaboration,” *The Public Historian* 26, no. 3 (August 1, 2004): 32–33, 35–36, 40, 42, 45–46; Robert E. Pyatt, Tracie Rosser, and Kelly Powell, “Undergraduates as Science Museum Docents: Training Students to Be the Teachers Using Peer Led Team Learning,” *The American Biology Teacher* 71, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 16.

⁴² Anna Johnson et al., *The Museum Educator's Manual: Educators Share Successful Techniques*, American Association for State and Local History Book Series (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2009), 2–3, 16, 20.

⁴³ Scott A. Pattison and Lynn D. Dierking, “Staff-Mediated Learning in Museums: A Social Interaction Perspective,” *Visitor Studies* 16, no. 2 (July 2013): 118.

exceptional” via objects, the WWFH uses minimal objects once again to place the emphasis on the rare and exceptional. Yet in this case, the rare and exceptional is presenting an accurate depiction of Reconstruction.⁴⁴ This move away from an object-centered approach places the WWFH within the larger trends of this methodology’s decline in favor of a people-centered approach to interpreting objects.⁴⁵ The Wilson home itself became the primary artifact, allowing for an interpretation focused on a specific place and period in time, Reconstruction-era Columbia. Most rooms contain a small number of objects owned by the Wilsons or related to the Reconstruction era. Additionally, the home incorporates two digital interactives, Camille Drie’s 1872 map of downtown Columbia in the formal parlor and a family tree in the dining room. The informal parlor and final bedroom of the house contain exhibit films discussing the complex issues of constitutional changes, citizenship, and historical memory. Four supplementary videos on the home’s rehabilitation from 2005 through 2013 appear in the bathing room concluding the tour.

By creating a panel-driven Reconstruction exhibit, Historic Columbia resolved issues with only possessing five original Wilson family artifacts and the need for period room vignettes. Each exhibit room contains at least one exhibit panel. Weekend staff docent Halie Brazier “loved” the panels because, as a “very visual person,” they provided images for her to use on the tour and served as a quick-reference guide for names or details. She explained, “I love being able to see an image and either have the audience explain it or tell me what they see or say what’s different about it than what we would

⁴⁴ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 2.

⁴⁵ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 2; Coxall, ““Open Minds: Inclusive Practice,”” 140.

normally see today.”⁴⁶ However, the text panel heavy exhibit combined with the difficulty of the subject matter and traditional expectations of a guided-tour resulted in the decision to maintain the use of docents to interpret the twenty-first century museum with a semi-guided tour. Questions remain whether the semi-guided tour is the most effective way to experience the WWFH; however, the success of Louisiana’s Old State Capitol Museum suggests that using a structure as artifact and the “rich meaning” of its history as exhibit alongside multi-media and flexible guided approaches are successful tenets of a twenty-first century museum philosophy. The Capitol Museum is the only museum in the world devoted exclusively to Louisiana politics just as the WWFH is the only museum devoted to Reconstruction, and both come at their subjects first and foremost through the building.⁴⁷

The next chapter “A New Way of Thinking: Docent Training and Learning about the Lost Cause” assesses the way in which museum administrators and docents changed their thinking to create a revolutionary HHM. Just as Reconstruction ushered in public education in the South, the WWFH reinvented Historic Columbia’s docent education and training process. Not only did the organization offer a variety of required workshops covering history, public history practices, and racial and cultural sensitivity, but it also evaluated and thoroughly vetted each docent to conduct tours. The majority of Historic Columbia’s volunteers did not complete the training process. Many docents immediately rejected the new home and training, often because they held a negative understanding of Reconstruction or attachment to the previous Wilson interpretation. A few docents grew

⁴⁶ Halie Brazier, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016.

⁴⁷ J. Daniel D’Oney, “Louisiana’s Old State Capitol Museum: Castle on the Mississippi,” in *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 78–79; Quote from Coleman, *Historic House Museums*, 17.

resentful of the Reconstruction-heavy script and evaluation demands or challenged the interpretation by minimizing Reconstruction in their tours. The docents who excelled were women, educators, and advanced degree holders. Over time, some docents embraced the changes once they saw the museum's success or interpretation evolve based on feedback from docents. Docents came into the process with their own Lost Cause indoctrination but used the training and their tours to combat these preconceived notions. Remarkably, docents simultaneously reconstructed their memory of Reconstruction and taught visitors how to do the same. However, the long-term problems with docents that struggled with the unique tour style and complex material or opposed the Reconstruction interpretation fuels a debate about whether HHMs should rely on volunteer docents at all.

The chapter "Aren't I a Citizen: Interpreting Violence" places the WWFH within the context of HHMs, especially southern ones, and their tradition of limiting or excluding narratives of non-elite whites. The WWFH incorporated historiography, census records, architecture, image analysis, and docent training to give unknown domestic workers and black female educators depicted in the butler's pantry, dining room, and the education bedroom "agency." But in the effort to illuminate the lives of working class domestics, some docents and visitors succumbed to the *Downton Abbey* effect, which blinded them to the unique racial circumstances that affected workers lives beyond their economic and social status. No docent overtly objected to the mandatory language and cultural sensitivity training. In fact, paid weekend staff, often with public history backgrounds and education, welcomed it. However, some volunteers believed the session unnecessary while others received their first exposure to concepts such as "white privilege" and coded and inclusive language. The WWFH eclipses other Wilson homes

that either use *annihilation* or *relative incorporation* to discuss black experiences, either eliminating these narratives all together or including them intermittently; however, as a radical HHM the WWFH fell short because the interpretation neglected scholarly knowledge on the violence and sexual exploitation women of color experienced during Reconstruction. Nor did the training adequately prepare docents to discuss this unsettling but necessary history.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, script revisions, docent evaluations, and docent oral histories show that docents were at their most comfortable and successful overturning archaic memories through their interpretation of political and domestic terrorism. For some, discussing white violence against black citizens made them acutely aware of white privilege and their family and community ties to violence.

Docents and the interpretative team struggled to craft a narrative in the final exhibit bedroom that adequately dealt with Woodrow Wilson's white supremacy. This crusade to improve the most difficult interpretative space in the WWFH comprises the chapter "Writing History with Lightning: Interpreting Memory and White Supremacy." The team and docents continuously revised numerous introductions and conclusions for the space in an effort to convey the complexity of Wilson's legacy and deconstruct Reconstruction memory nationally and in South Carolina. This included docents having some exposure to the historiography of Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson's place within it. The interpretation confronted Wilson's stance on segregation and his viewing of D.W. Griffith's 1915 racist blockbuster *The Birth of Nation (Birth)*, topics other Wilson homes rarely addressed; but, lynching and white terror against black citizens are themes that connect the overthrow of Reconstruction, *Birth* and the epidemic of lynching

⁴⁸ Jennifer Eichstedt, "Museums and (In)Justice," in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2006), 127–29, 131.

during Wilson's presidency. Yet, lynching was deemed too controversial and graphic for the tour. Additionally, docents were reluctant to frame Wilson as a racist along the lines of fellow politicians in South Carolina such as Benjamin Tillman or "Cotton Ed" Smith. Again, the WWFH never quite crossed the threshold of radicalism, in this case speaking truthfully about white supremacy as it is understood in academia. Even though much improved, some aspects of the WWFH interpretation illustrated the powerful, even if frequently covert, hold white supremacy still maintains on institutions and interpretations. However, in the wake of the Charleston massacre in the summer of 2015 that left nine people slain at the hands of a white supremacist and nationwide student protests on college campuses addressing overt and institutional racism, Wilson's memory and white supremacy came under attack. These events allowed Historic Columbia to address the issue of Wilson's relationship with white supremacy minimized by the original reinterpretation. Workshops with docents generated new conversations within the institution outside of public view, which continued between docent and visitor in the public space of the WWFH.

The final core chapter "Engaging Reconstruction as a Civil Rights Movement for Twenty-First Century Visitors" treats visitor reception using evaluation data and docent interviews. The exceptional quality of the docents and the exhibit resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors. The vast majority ranked the tour as excellent, and nearly all were engaged. Many visitors were exposed to Reconstruction in depth for the first time and corrected their previous understanding of the period. A quarter of visitors walked away from the tour having a greater appreciation for people different from themselves and having their beliefs or thoughts challenged or changed.

The exceptions included some Millennials as well as a few Lost Cause promoters and visitors expressing LGBTQ bias. The chapter and museum demonstrate Americans are ready and open to consuming Reconstruction history at heritage sites on the 150th anniversary of Reconstruction's implementation.

The WWFH demanded relevancy as it eschewed its presidential shrine origins and the political, social and partial truths that style of interpretation avoided. Rather than be trapped in a cliché dollhouse-style interpretation with voyeuristic vignettes that serve as a “repetitive time stamp” set to the average afternoon typically depicted in HHMs, the WWFH answered the call for these sites to be “turned upside down and inside out” for the sake of survival.⁴⁹ When the deteriorating home closed in 2005, the WWFH was guilty of all these charges. But with the WWFH's reopening, Historic Columbia produced an exhibit and tour that when combined with the voices of public historians, docents and visitors serve as a guide to revolutionize the obsolete house museum. The process of this transformation from presidential shrine to Reconstruction museum simultaneously demonstrates the unique challenges of correcting alternative memory and the boundaries of discussing violence and oppression perpetuated against black citizens by white Americans. The difficulty was not only in initiating conversations with the public but in promoting honest dialogues and best practices within the institution itself.

One docent “really wanted to be a part” of the WWFH, “in some way” as it transformed into the nation's first museum of Reconstruction. Since college, the docent felt both North and South knew “very little” about this period of American history. The native South Carolinian recognized southerners espoused an interpretation that did not

⁴⁹ The authors lay out five critiques of house museums. The new approach of the WWFH challenges three of these. Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 40–41, 142.

accurately reflect the project of Reconstruction. Knowing the subject's importance made the docent "really kind of excited." This excitement and enthusiasm has yet to recede because located "in Columbia, South Carolina and the state that was the first to secede from the Union" is the "first museum dedicated to Reconstruction, which I think is wonderful."⁵⁰ Although the first museum of Reconstruction, it is also part of a growing movement to commemorate Reconstruction in the state. In his final days in office, President Barack Obama, with a stroke of his pen and the authority of the Antiquities Act, designated four properties, including buildings associated with Reconstruction's first freedmen's school Penn Center and a site where enslaved people listened as they were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, part of a federal Reconstruction monument in Beaufort County. The Mitchelville Preservation Project on nearby Hilton Head Island is in its infancy but is working to commemorate the first self-governed freedmen's community, which was destroyed in the hurricane of 1893. The WWFH and South Carolina currently lead the initiative to memorialize Reconstruction. All of these state and federal projects will learn from one another, and in turn will be able to show the South and the nation the value of commemorating Reconstruction.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016. The author conducted an interview with one docent who wished to remain anonymous. That oral history will be cited as Docent Doe.

⁵¹ Jennifer Schuessler, "Taking Another Look at the Reconstruction Era," *New York Times*, August 24, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/25/arts/park-service-project-would-address-the-reconstruction-era.html?ref=arts>; Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, "The Perfect Spot for a Reckoning with Reconstruction," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 2016, sec. Opinions, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-perfect-spot-for-a-reckoning-with-reconstruction/2016/10/07/b884c1c0-7f60-11e6-9070-5c4905bf40dc_story.html?utm_term=.fcac7e29844c; Emma Dumain, "Just Under the Wire, Obama Establishes National Monument to Reconstruction Era in Beaufort County," *Post and Courier*, January 12, 2017, http://www.postandcourier.com/news/just-under-the-wire-obama-establishes-national-monument-to-reconstruction/article_cb26b062-d91b-11e6-bf8b-7fd195453416.html; Page Putnam Miller and Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Postscript to 'Reconstructing Memory,'" *Muster from the Journal of the Civil War Era*, March 7, 2017, <http://journalofthecivilwarera.org/2017/03/postscript-reconstructing-memory/>.

CHAPTER 2

THE REBIRTH OF THE WOODROW WILSON FAMILY HOME: RETHINKING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WWFH FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As part of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH) shedding its shrine origins, Historic Columbia toppled traditional assumptions about historic house museums (HHMs). The new interpretation specifically challenged the need for a fully-guided tour, period room furniture vignettes, and a large number of original artifacts. Historic Columbia reimaged the way in which objects and the docent could be used to interpret the home. The organization was able to do this because the reinterpretation emphasized the importance of time, space and place. Docents entered the debate on the relevance of objects and argued rooms with imaginary moments frozen in time did not necessarily produce a good tour. Not only did docents embrace an interpretation with fewer objects, the majority of visitors welcomed a new HHM experience. But the question remained whether an experimental semi-guided tour was the most effective way to transport visitors into Tommy Wilson's world, crafted through his childhood home and the panels and objects displayed there.

2.1 WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE PRESIDENT

From the beginning of the new tour, time and place are critical components. Visitors purchased their tour ticket in the Robert Mills Museum Shop, Historic Columbia's gift shop located in a reconstructed flanker of the Robert Mills home. Both

bear the name of the famous architect who designed the residence, but in the nineteenth century, the structures on these grounds were better known as the Presbyterian Church's Columbia Theological Seminary. The one-block journey to the WWFH commenced from this sacred space.¹ Both the preservation and rehabilitation of the premier artifact, the home, and Joseph Wilson's appointment to the seminary allowed the visitor to think immediately about the importance of time and place, in this case a middle-class home constructed at the height of Reconstruction in Columbia and centered in a Presbyterian world.² Although the South was upended through Civil War and Reconstruction, Tommy's world retained some sense of normalcy through the ever-present Presbyterianism that rooted his childhood and bonded his community together. The future president's most notable biographer Arthur Link argued the only ideology that defined Wilson more than his southernness was his Presbyterianism.³ From the onset of the tour, docents immersed visitors in Tommy's Presbyterian world. His father spent a decade at First Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia before moving the family to Columbia. Once in the capital, the Wilson family built their first home, just a block from the seminary. Visitors walked in Tommy's shoes by "taking a path similar" to the future president and his father.⁴

¹ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen's Revision" (Historic Columbia, December 10, 2013), 1; Sarah Blackwell, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour - SAB Edits per 12.11.13 Meeting" (Historic Columbia, December 11, 2013), 1.

² Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 1; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 1.

³ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), 2-3.

⁴ Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 3; Robin Waites, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen's Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes" (Historic Columbia, December 20, 2013), 1; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen's Dec 30 Revision" (Historic Columbia, December 30, 2013), 1; Robin Waites, John Sherrer, and Jennifer Taylor, "WWFH Adult Tour Summer Revision Marking Changes RW JMS Comments" (Historic Columbia, June 3, 2014), 1.

Rather than docents telling guests about the Wilsons and Reconstruction, the tour invites guests to “imagine for a moment” the world of Columbia during Reconstruction.⁵ This enables visitors to “conjure” this world and negotiate their place within it.⁶ Docents pushed both visitors and the interpretative team to consider the importance of the space within this world. Weekend staff docent Jennifer Gunter asked visitors to “imagine” the dirt roads, construction, horses and buggies as they retraced Tommy’s path in the 1870s. For volunteer Jean Morgan this was not a stretch. “Realistic” people like herself preferred emersion in the “real environment.”⁷ But volunteer docent Pam Redfield pushed the team to emphasize space in ways they had not in early versions of the script. She suggested introducing Annie, Tommy’s sister, through a charming neighborhood anecdote. While their home was being constructed, the Wilsons spent their first months in Columbia living in a rented house near the seminary and across the street from Annie’s future husband. Redfield’s experience as a guide taught her “visitors love these fun facts.” Because of her suggestion, the tour clarified the spatial relationships of the neighborhood and Tommy’s world, linking the seminary, the rental of the Campbell-Bryce House and the Wilson’s new home together.⁸ Rather than present an “abstract” space visitors walked through, docents illuminated the “social and cultural construct” of Tommy’s neighborhood during Reconstruction.⁹

⁵ Robin Waites, “WWFH - Tour Review First Floor DC,” January 21, 2014, Historic Columbia Collection.

⁶ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 85.

⁷ Jennifer Gunter, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 27, 2016; Jean Morgan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 25, 2016.

⁸ Pamela Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t] for Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” January 10, 2014; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home Adult Tour Script” (Historic Columbia, January 2, 2014), 6; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 1; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 1.

⁹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 116.

Docents and staff wanted the tour to be forthcoming about the focus on Reconstruction through the eyes of Tommy Wilson and the tour's unconventional design. Visitors had some inclination from a newspaper article they read, the advertisement they saw, or the synopsis they heard in the gift shop that this HHM tour would be different.¹⁰ When the script was revised in the summer of 2014, Tommy as a lens to a time and place became a centerpiece of the introduction and months of tour experience solidified the precise language needed to convey this theme:¹¹

Today we will explore the teenage years of Woodrow Wilson and his family's experience in this city during Reconstruction. Thus, the Wilson family becomes the lens through which we see this place and time. By the end of the tour, you should have a greater understanding of the complexities of both Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson.¹²

Consultant Annie Wright argued the statement gave visitors “a schema that new info can fit into.” This dual narrative grounded the tour and offered visitors the opportunity to consider how Reconstruction shaped the future president and how Wilson shaped the memory of the period.¹³ The layering of Reconstruction over Wilson moved beyond the traditional narrative of one or two people “at the most significant time of their lives” that rendered marginalized groups “silent.” By using Tommy the teenager, not the president, more natural and inclusive narratives emerged.¹⁴

Most docents took great care to craft and present their explanation of the dual narrative and tour format upfront. Gunter emphasized the WWFH is “a museum inside of a house and not a house museum.” She used that as a stepping stone to then talk about the

¹⁰ Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 1.

¹¹ Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 1; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 1; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 4; Taylor, “Tour 02 06 14,” 4.

¹² Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 2.

¹³ Annie Wright, email message to Robin Waites, “Feedback on the WWFH Tour,” March 18, 2014.

¹⁴ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 103, quote 138.

primary artifact's construction and rehabilitation.¹⁵ Thus, with regards to the “identity crisis” plaguing HHMs as to whether they are houses or museums, the WWFH answers they are both.¹⁶ Docent Doe, wanting visitors to understand the tour's purpose at the beginning, told them “we are here to talk about and interpret this time in American history, this time in Southern history, particularly this time in Columbia, seeing it through the eyes of a family who lived here in the middle of this time period, a family who happened to have a son who became a president of the United States.”¹⁷ These efforts by docents helped avoid the Bait and Switch on visitors, who otherwise may have felt “duped,” alienated, or suspicious of the museum.¹⁸ Weekend staffer Halie Brazier stressed the focus on the president's teenage years, the “world around him,” and minimal material culture. She “wanted to be frank and upfront” for the majority of guests who came for Woodrow Wilson and received a lesson in Reconstruction. She informed visitors, “There are plenty of other historic houses that do that.”¹⁹

As Brazier suggested, the existence and competition from three other Woodrow Wilson HHMs inspired the new interpretation of the WWFH. And while those sites incorporate the time and place of Wilson's presence, the president drives the narratives. Wilson HHMs that originally opened as shrines anchor his identity in the South and serve as a road map tracing his father Joseph Wilson's career in the Southern Presbyterian Church. The local community saved both the Columbia and Staunton, Virginia homes at roughly the same time in the 1930s; yet, the manse where Wilson was born and spent the

¹⁵ Gunter, interview.

¹⁶ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 130.

¹⁷ Docent Doe, interview.

¹⁸ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 44, 89.

¹⁹ Brazier, interview.

least amount of time, which is now part of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum (WWPLM), possesses the strongest claim to him. He and his second wife professed themselves Virginians, and Edith actively supported the preservation of the Staunton manse through large financial and artifact donations and fundraising.²⁰ From its inception, the tour celebrated the president's birth and Presbyterian roots. It now confronts slavery, although the interpretation says less about the Wilson family's new relationship with the institution. Edith bequeathed her S Street home to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, but not until her death in 1961, giving her plenty of time to devote to Staunton. Staunton would celebrate her husband's birth and roots. Edith would

²⁰ Laurence Vail Coleman, *Historic House Museums. With a Directory* (Detroit, MI: Gale Research Company, 1973), 157; Wilson's Virginian birthright entitled him to the presidency occupied by seven Virginians including "founding fathers." He cemented this status by attending law school at the University of Virginia. He returned to Staunton on numerous occasions to visit his sisters and cousins attending Augusta Female Seminary (Mary Baldwin College) and his beloved Aunt Marion, the same aunt who lived in Augusta, Georgia during the war and Reconstruction. Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, 1:1, 3 see footnote 11; Erick Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: Family Ties and Southern Perspectives* (Augusta, GA: Historic Augusta, 2006), 12–13; Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, vol. 1, Youth 1856-1890 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co, 1927), 26; Andrew Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: Putnam, 2013), 30; Katherine L. Brown, *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum Staunton, Virginia* (Staunton, Virginia: The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library Foundation, 2009), 20; William Bayard Hale, *Woodrow Wilson: The Story of His Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1912), 7–22; More than 100 letters written by Edith Wilson to the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation (WWBF), the precursor to the WWPLM that owned and administered the site since 1939, demonstrate Edith supplied most of the furniture and artifacts, encouraged donations from her peers and family members, and made a \$100,000 endowment possible. Wilson to Smith, October 8, 1931; Edith Bolling Wilson to D.L. Groner, June 30, 1938, EBWP, Folder 13, 1938, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to D.L. Groner, June 18, 1938, EBWP, Folder 13, 1938, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, November 28, 1938, EBWP, Folder 13, 1938, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, August 12, 1940, EBWP, Folder 15, 1940, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, January 29, 1941, EBWP, Folder 16, 1941, WWPL; John Randolph Bolling to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, November 7, 1940, EBWP, Folder 15, 1940, WWPL; John Randolph Bolling to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, November 15, 1940, EBWP, Folder 15, 1940, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. Cordell Hull, April 7, 1941, EBWP, Folder 16, 1941, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, April 23, 1943, EBWP, Folder 18, 1943, WWPL; Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, July 25, 1944, EBWP, Folder 19, 1944, WWPL; Wilson to Smith, January 3, 1961; Dale D. Drain to The Woodrow Wilson Birthplace Foundation, "Estate of Edith Bolling Wilson, Deceased," December 7, 1962, EBWP, Folder 37, Miscellaneous, WWPL; United States District Court for the District of Columbia, "Estate of Edith Bolling Wilson, Deceased, Receipt of the Legatee," n.d., EBWP, Folder 37, Miscellaneous, WWPL; Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 21.

commemorate his presidency and their final years at S Street in what became the President Woodrow Wilson Home.

The Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home (WWBH) in Augusta, Georgia was the last museum created, opening on September 29, 2001. A study determined interpreting Wilson's life as a Southerner during the Civil War and Reconstruction would fill a noticeable gap in the Wilson historiography. Thus, Historic Augusta embarked on a revolutionary interpretative philosophy, also inspired by Executive Director Erick Montgomery's well-researched book illuminating Wilson's time in the South and Augusta.²¹ Despite this invaluable resource, the manse tour omits several insightful observations about Tommy's Reconstruction experience in favor of submerging guests in Civil War era Georgia. The war looms in four-year old Tommy's first memory of Abraham Lincoln's election, the "conversational setting" of the parlor, and the lives of the family. Their neighboring church transformed into a hospital to treat Union and Confederate soldiers, perhaps providing Tommy's sisters with volunteer opportunities. Joseph traveled with the Confederacy.²² Tommy had positive post-war experiences according to Montgomery's book and the tour, even though Reconstruction is never named by the docent conducting the tour. He grew up with his cousin trying to convert the mean old Yankee soldiers into Presbyterians. A series of four laminated pictures drawn by Tommy, several of which are replicated in the WWFH, depict a happy

²¹ Dr. Lee Ann Caldwell of Augusta State University, along with Anne S. Floyd, a historic preservation planner, and Montgomery developed the interpretation for the home. Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 148–52. Montgomery relied heavily on a 1994 report by Historic Augusta and research focused on Wilson's parents and childhood communities. Montgomery also retraced Wilson's time in Atlanta with a failed law firm, his relationship with future wife Ellen in Georgia, and Wilson's return to Augusta in 1911.

²² Wilson shared this story in a 1909 speech on Abraham Lincoln. Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 2, 44; Stephanie Herzberg, "Tour of Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home" (guided tour, Augusta, GA, May 28, 2015); Cynthia Polhill, "Tour of Woodrow Wilson Birthplace" (guided tour, Staunton, Virginia, June 18, 2015).

childhood: a hot air balloon liftoff he witnessed, his Light Foot Base Ball Club team that gave him his first taste of baseball and leadership, and trains moving troops and goods. Tommy began his formal education in 1866 with a Confederate veteran, whom he would later host at the White House. Economic rebuilding produced enjoyable encounters for Tommy. He resumed manufacturing field trips with his father just as they had done during the war and played on the tracks built for the first horse-drawn streetcars.²³ Wilson HHMs in Augusta, Staunton and Columbia speak to a specific time and place in Tommy Wilson's development and through a southern and Presbyterian lens. However, the 2014 exhibit and tour installed in the WWFH employs these themes in order to discuss the misunderstood period of Reconstruction.

In addition to the docent's narrative, an introductory panel in the entry hallway buttressed the importance of the time and place of Wilson's move during the period of Reconstruction when "the entire community was working out the meanings of freedom in a post-slavery society." Completed in fall of 1871, the home was built "at the height of post-Civil War Reconstruction." But what did this mean for Tommy? The panel asked visitors to "walk through this house" and "think about how Tommy Wilson's experiences in Columbia may have shaped his ideas as the future 28th president of the United States."²⁴ Some docents used the dual narrative to ignite a conversation about the rhetorical question. Volunteer Kathy Hogan, seeking conversation over assumption, asked her tour in the entry hall: "If you were fourteen years old and living in this house

²³ Stephanie Herzberg, "Tour of Boyhood Home"; Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 55–59, 67, 69, 80; Hale, *The Story of His Life*, 36, 38–39; Florence Fleming Corley, *Confederate City, Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1960), 97.

²⁴ "Woodrow Wilson Family Home, Panel."

and in this time and place how might it have impacted you?”²⁵ For her, the home was “unique in that it tells the story of a time and place,” specifically Reconstruction, a subject no other museum had been solely devoted to and which many people “want to sweep . . . right under the rug.” Everyone should know about the time period because “you cannot understand civil rights, you cannot understand current African American relations with Black Lives Matter, you cannot understand any of that . . . if you don’t understand what preceded it.”²⁶ Docents, the interpretative team and script revisions demonstrated the debate and ambiguity surrounding Reconstruction’s influence on Wilson. This manifested itself most prominently in the final space of the tour, which is discussed in chapter four on the difficulties the interpretation and docents had in addressing white supremacy during Wilson’s administration.

2.2 OBJECTING TO OBJECTS

When the Wilson home became the museum’s primary artifact, it permitted an interpretation focused on a specific place and time period. Historic Columbia chose to leave the house exposed, displaying its rehabilitation rather than an overwhelming number of objects that distract from the restored faux graining, the reproduced gas lighting system, and exposed paint layers and wall-paper. This corresponds to recent trends to treat the museum building as an object and one that can be more significant than those housed inside.²⁷ By creating a panel-driven exhibit on Reconstruction in the capital city, Historic Columbia resolved issues related to only possessing the home and five original Wilson family artifacts and needing period room vignettes. This strategy enabled

²⁵ Kathy Hogan, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

²⁶ Kathy Hogan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 16, 2016.

²⁷ Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 11.

the WWFH to weave the history of black Americans during Reconstruction into a minor story about the teenage years of Wilson.

Museums possess a long history as repositories for objects and *object-based epistemology* where object meaning is generated through their systematic collection, classification and arrangement. This can create an “unnatural order” that sterilizes any quirkiness or personality of the objects and the world in which they operated. Thus, “intimate spaces” become staged and limit interaction. This ordering makes less sense as education replaces collecting as the primary function of a museum. This “cult of the object” and ordering privileges “object comprehension” over how people lived in these environments. To reverse this and delve more deeply into the complexity of domestic spaces, sites must transcend beyond the objects.²⁸

While objects remain central to some institutions, others are reducing or eliminating objects, often in favor of interactives, audio and visual components. The drawbacks are that the remaining objects have to work harder to do the “telling” and provide less opportunities for alternative narratives.²⁹ However, in the case of the WWFH, removing the clutter and choosing objects that only had a connection to the Wilson family and Reconstruction emptied the space to make room for alternative narratives. The removal of objects produced a similar effect as that at the Mikhail Bulgakov House when it painted its non-original artifacts white to make original artifacts stand out.³⁰ In volunteer Jean Morgan’s eyes, historic preservation is different now than forty years ago. She is pleased with the trend back to the authenticity of the space and

²⁸ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 35, 45130–31, 134; Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 7, 21–23, 26, 175.

²⁹ Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 20, quote 23.

³⁰ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 36.

material culture. The WWFH's objects are "authentic to that house, to that space, to that family." Tour and Program Coordinator Heather Bacon-Rogers concurred that reproductions and objects with no relationship to the house were "meaningless" in advancing the story.³¹ However, Morgan misunderstood how this authenticity came to be. While correct that four Wilson HHMs limit available resources, she thought Historic Columbia's interpretative choice was a response to coming "kinda . . . late to the game." She told audiences "What you are going to see is real but we just don't have as much of it."³² Because the WWFH was the first house preserved and open to the public, the local American Legion Auxiliary procured four of the five objects currently on display during the museum's early years in the 1930s: the bed in which Wilson was born, a family bureau, and his mother's *Bible* and silk quilt.³³ Gunter told a similar narrative as Morgan on the porch, pointing out the WWFH "is one of three Wilson childhood homes." However, she framed it as a question, "What do you do when you are one of three?" This contextualized the museum inside of a house interpretation for audiences as "a new route" with a "house as an artifact."³⁴

To compensate for a reduction in objects and complement the panels, Historic Columbia incorporated digital interactives in the home. The organization digitized an 1872 Birds' Eye Map of Columbia drawn by Camille Drie and placed the station in the formal parlor. It is the home's most successful interactive. The script included specific instructions, demonstrations, and engagement questions because the interpretative team

³¹ Heather Bacon-Rogers, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 4, 2016.

³² Morgan, interview.

³³ Ruth Cappelmann, "Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home" n.d., 1-2, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, Records, 28 September 1961-16 November 1969 and n.d., SCL, USC.

³⁴ Gunter, interview.

expected high-levels of interaction. Guests continued to temporally and spatially explore Columbia and Wilson's community by zooming in and out on locations or searching by building name or subject.³⁵

Docent oral histories clearly established that visitors were drawn to the map, physically engaging with the theme of space and time, but the level of popularity varied. Docents frequently expressed that visitors liked the map and used it to learn more about Columbia landmarks.³⁶ For Morgan, the map is "a very physical representation" of Tommy's "world," the spaces he occupied and walked to at a specific moment in time before the conveniences of modern transportation.³⁷ Bacon-Rogers agreed that guests are "able to triangulate" where Tommy lived and might have been. The twenty-first century connection to the past allowed visitors "to pretend" they are using their "iPad at home" and exploring "something old with something new." She speculated that all visitors, "every last one of them," engage with the map because "everybody has come from somewhere in the city," their hotel, their house, the zoo. They "are able to map how they got there and how different things looked."³⁸ Three other docents confirmed this, noting guests wanted to position popular sites and places they had visited such as the State House, the University of South Carolina, or Elmwood Cemetery in relationship to the home and see their differences.³⁹ For other docents, the map became "a learning tool" to direct visitors to other "great places," especially First Presbyterian Church where

³⁵ Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 2; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 2; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 3; Taylor, "WWFH Script," June 13, 2014, 6.

³⁶ Hogan, interview; Cyndy Storm, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 4, 2016; John Clark, Second Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 11, 2016; Bernadette Scott, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

³⁷ Docent Doe, interview; Morgan, interview; Storm, interview; Hogan, "Docent Survey."

³⁸ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

³⁹ Hogan, "Docent Survey"; Morgan, interview; Storm, interview.

Tommy's parents are buried. Then the visitors took it upon themselves to place their modern experiences in Columbia digitally in the 1872 version or to find other interests.⁴⁰

Bacon-Rogers called the map "one of the best tools we've ever come with" and "very special."⁴¹

Several docents argued the map was a hit or miss. They questioned how much learning or engagement was taking place as visitors pressed buttons, especially children.⁴² While Doe witnessed more interest in the panels than the map, Bacon-Rogers thought the panel heavy exhibit benefited from technological breaks. She speculated docents' experiencing ambivalence toward the map was an anomaly stemming from them not demonstrating the map properly, if at all, and moving to another room, discouraging play. Docents needed to be at ease using the tablet-like tool to help visitors feel comfortable. She adamantly declared, "When I say 100% of people look at that map I mean 100%."⁴³ Docent interviews suggest docent demonstration and encouraging exploration was at fault. Hogan agreed demoing the tool to visitors was critical. And, one of the two docents who claimed that only locals showed interest in the map admitted not spending much time with visitors and the tool. Another docent attributed lukewarm interaction to a lack of children, who are more likely to play with interactives than adults, and the smaller groups more attached to the docent.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The quotes come from Storm, interview; However, Morgan and Hogan reinforced much of Storm's claims. Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁴¹ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁴² Docent Doe, interview; Brazier, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Gunter, interview.

⁴³ Docent Doe, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁴⁴ Hogan, interview; Pris Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016; Holly Westcott, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 26, 2016; Clark, Second Interview; Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* (AltaMira Press, 1996), 38.

The lack of objects posed few problems for docents, although it was a concern before opening. Two docents on weekend staff worried about a lack of material culture in the home. Bacon-Rogers was apprehensive visitors would complain, which to some degree came to fruition. Leading tours on the weekend at the busiest time, she laughed as she revealed, “The no furniture, we hear a lot about.” But like volunteer Kathy Hogan, Bacon-Rogers found people appreciated that the objects the WWFH did display were “genuine articles” and family pieces chosen “in a more deliberate way.” Weekend staff docent Erin Holmes’ “first concern” was how the absence of objects would affect the architectural and material culture interpretation, one of her areas of expertise as a graduate student. She blended architecture “extensively” throughout her tour with the required talking points, thus illuminating the primary artifact. For her, this resulted in “a much stronger framework and more touchstones for the visitors to connect to when they didn’t have an object in front of them.”⁴⁵ Two docents never had any concerns about the number of objects. One had no previous exhibit to compare the new interpretation to unlike senior docents who gave old material culture heavy tours before the 2005 closure. Brazier saw a “museum not a period house” and “a very different kind of tour” that gave Historic Columbia “a different kind of museum in their repertoire.” The organization’s Hampton Preston mansion “was chocked full of objects,” she argued, but people “couldn’t even get close to a vast majority of things so those aren’t necessarily effective.” She personally found the images and the information on the text panels “more akin to her style of learning.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Heather Bacon-Rogers, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Quotes from Bacon-Rogers, interview; Hogan, interview; Erin Holmes, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

⁴⁶ Docent Doe, interview; Brazier, interview.

No longer bound by the weight of rooms inundated with material culture, docents chose to ignore some material culture and privilege other objects to strengthen and advance their narrative. If an object seemed out of place or forced, docents bypassed it. For one docent it was the birth bed in the bedroom devoted to Reconstruction and Wilson memory, for another exhibit items in the formal parlor. One example given was the rocking chair, which seemed to be an attempt to place a Wilson family object in the parlor.⁴⁷ While some objects could be easily skipped, two areas, the study and bedroom detailing the fall of Reconstruction, possessed social objects capable of initiating conversation or connecting strangers. The study, filled with the majority of family objects, is the most popular object-based engagement point because the *personal* objects are items familiar to most museum goers. In addition to the family pew from the Wilson's church and Jessie's *Bible* set and quilt, the first edition copy of *Origins of the Species*, not a Wilson artifact, is also popular.⁴⁸ Weekend staff docent Casey Lee said visitors were drawn to the Red Shirt, worn by paramilitary forces committed to returning power to the Democratic Party in 1876, because of its "connection" to the larger narrative in the house. Some visitors may have more interest in the family pieces replicated in traditional HHMs, like the bed, and ask more questions about Wilson; however, other visitors are drawn to Reconstruction and objects not normally seen in HHMs, such as an 1876 fraudulent tissue ballot or Red Shirt. As will be demonstrated in chapter three, the Red Shirt and tissue

⁴⁷ Casey Lee, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 27, 2016; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁴⁸ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 127–28, 130; Gunter, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

ballot are examples of *provocative* social objects because of their connection to violence and fraud.⁴⁹

A minimalist approach to incorporating reproductions also compensate for the absence of period or authentic material culture but do not work well for every docent. Bacon-Rogers thought the reproduction clothing in Tommy's room was "fantastic" because people can "hold them and handle them and understand the type of clothing he was wearing." It worked because there was a "direct connection."⁵⁰ Gunter disagreed, noting while cute and hands-on the clothing distracted from bigger concepts that children are fully capable of grasping if not overshadowed by dress-up and picture taking. This philosophy extended to the reproduction stereoscopes in the education bedroom. The question for her was "why are we having fun?" The lasting legacy of public education and the integration of the University of South Carolina were far more important themes. Thus she waited for guests to finish looking at images before she spoke about this critical topic.⁵¹

Several docents expressed the WWFH changed the way they thought about HHMs needing objects and period rooms, leading the guides to favor interpretation that moved away from objects. Three docents called the WWFH their favorite of the four houses administered by Historic Columbia because of its Reconstruction theme and move away from furniture. Volunteer Cyndy Storm chose to specialize in the WWFH because she preferred talking about home within the context of Reconstruction in Columbia over "telling a family story" and pointing out "old furniture." For Gunter, Reconstruction was

⁴⁹ Lee, interview; Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 131.

⁵⁰ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁵¹ Gunter, interview.

far more interesting than, “Look at these rich people, what they had.” Volunteer John Clark said “the best thing” about the house “is ‘it is not the same old same old.’ It’s not another house with all this stuff.” Perhaps Bacon-Rogers summarized her changed philosophy on HHMs best: “Just a pretty house museum doesn’t do it for me anymore.”⁵²

Visitor reactions suggest objects are still expected by some but less critical to a HHM’s success than traditionalists want to acknowledge. In her everyday conversations outside of volunteering, Storm has had to warn furniture-driven, prospective guests about what they will find inside the WWFH.⁵³ But for the majority of docents, particularly volunteers who work during the week, they received no complaints from guests about the lack of objects.⁵⁴ One factor was that docents and gift shop staff told visitors upfront about the limited number of objects. When docents explained on the front porch that guests would not see rooms “crammed full of furniture that you look at from a distance,” visitors nodded in agreement or out of politeness because they have generally been informed by the gift shop manager before purchasing tickets.⁵⁵ Weekend staff protocol required telling visitors the “blanket statement” that Wilson was not a furnished, traditional house museum. Rather it was a “museum in a house, not a house museum.”⁵⁶ Visitors were thus prepared to show interest in the artifacts to which they are exposed. Of 556 respondents on the visitor survey, when asked what information they found most

⁵² First quote Storm, interview; Second quote Cyndy Storm, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Gunter, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁵³ Storm, interview.

⁵⁴ Westcott, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Stickney, interview; Gunter, interview.

⁵⁵ Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁵⁶ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

interesting, 20.68% replied the artifacts. This was third behind what the tour guide told them at 45.5% and the panels at 23.38%.⁵⁷

No amount of preparation or well-conducted tour can persuade some visitors to abandon their preconceived notions about object-filled HHMs. Clark heard few comments but, as a docent tapped for interpretative team meetings, knew objections manifested themselves more in the visitor evaluations solicited by docents at the end of the tour. Despite the positive response to artifacts on the survey, disappointment at a lack of objects was the number one criticism of the home written in the comments section. From opening through January 2015, eighteen comments, or just over five percent of the 337 total comments, referenced objects, furniture or artifacts. However, six of those, or thirty-three percent, were positive statements. Artifacts were “loved,” “captivating,” or “interesting and helpful.” One evaluator “appreciated how the home was not over crowded with random [sic] artifacts.” Although fourteen comments called for more objects, their absence did not distract visitors from enjoying the tour. They appreciated that original artifacts were hard to come by and the focus on Reconstruction. For two respondents the films played in the home helped compensate as did the “great” guide for one visitor. Although it was “a bit spartan” or “bare” in some visitors’ eyes, four visitors wanting more material culture still called the museum “wonderfully done,” “well worth the visit!,” “so fantastic,” and “overall a very enjoyable experience!”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ I evaluated the visitor evaluation data for 2014. Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home Trends” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, January 12, 2015); “WWFH Visitor Evaluation 2014 Summary” (Survey Monkey, January 8, 2015), 5, Historic Columbia.

⁵⁸ “Copy of Wilson Survey Monkey Download Feb 2014-Jan 2015” (Survey Monkey, February 2015), Historic Columbia.

Docent experiences reinforced visitor comments. A visitor may not enter a museum wanting a non-traditional HHM experience, but they often left satisfied. When visitors expressed displeasure or made comments, docents often converted guests into fans of a new kind of HHM experience or visitors went on to continue and enjoy the tour.⁵⁹ One weekend, Bacon-Rogers led a group that had not been told the blanket statement. “They came to see a pretty house. Plain and simple,” she recalled. The first thing they asked was ““where is the furniture?”” But by the time she entered the pantry and dining room, they began “to finally forget about the furniture, completely” and “were fully engaged in the material.”⁶⁰ They ultimately “enjoyed the unconventional house tour” once they explored and understood “the pieces that were chosen were meaningful and directly related to the family.” The experience inspired them “to want to find other such houses and museums.”⁶¹ What Heather’s story indicated, and another volunteer confirmed, visitors forget about the furniture once immersed in the tour.⁶²

Whether giving tours during the week to smaller audiences or to larger groups on the weekend, docents found the objects mattered less when visitors got something unexpected. Clark’s “general perception” was that visitors left the WWFH “very happy with what they’ve seen there, as enthusiastically happy” and more so than other tours he gave of HHMs. Visitors got “something they did not expect,” new information. That was “what we do here . . . a high proportion of it is new to almost everybody who goes here.” Bacon-Rogers acknowledged the tour would not please everyone but “nine times out of ten we’ve given them such a different experience that they are thrilled with what we’ve

⁵⁹ Docent Doe, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

⁶⁰ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁶¹ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Bacon-Rogers, “Docent Survey.”

⁶² Stickney, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

done.”⁶³ They are “transported” to a different type of museum where uncomfortable topics can be teased out without the weight of a “bunch of junk.” She saw visitors purchase tickets for the tour thinking the home was “not special” and expecting another furnished home. But then the tour overturned these assumptions. She continued:

... they realize we are special. We’re covering a topic that a lot of people don’t want to talk about. That they never thought that they would come to a museum just to talk about something that was going to make them uncomfortable. But I think we’re making people uncomfortable in a way that’s making an impact.⁶⁴

The curatorial choices made for WWFH placed it within new institutional trends where collections were secondary to a mission and sites sought greater political relevancy. Like other historical museums courting “different publics” or presenting one historical event, the WWFH was designed to carve a space for the black experience of Reconstruction. It turned the “great men living in great houses” tradition on its head by using rather than enshrining Wilson to depict the white supremacist response to freedom.⁶⁵ The WWFH’s commitment to a Reconstruction narrative thrust the HHM into a “second golden age” for museums, where moral compasses, inclusive narratives, and ideas rendered objects secondary. With a less structured tour providing physical access, particularly to objects previously forbidden, visitors did not feel as forced to focus on the objects but rather can use them to support “inquiry and narrative analysis.”⁶⁶

2.3 DEATH OF THE DOCENT?

The difficulty of Reconstruction as subject matter, the text panel heavy exhibit, and traditional expectations of a guided-tour for house museums resulted in the decision

⁶³ Clark, Second Interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁶⁴ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁶⁵ Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, quotes 40-41, 56-57.

⁶⁶ Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 5, 46-47, 50, 94.

to maintain the use of docents to interpret the twenty-first century museum with a semi-guided tour. The script temporarily toyed with three scenarios, one for a single-docent tour, another with a transition guide, and a final option for unaccompanied visitors. However, the team privileged a single-docent tour for “consistency” and so that tours could be constructed based on visitor interest ascertained in the walk-over.⁶⁷ Ultimately the semi-guided tour worked well but posed a unique set of problems because of ingrained tour etiquette for visitors, tour size and docent availability. This left some docents wondering whether a self-guided tour should be offered.

At the beginning of the tour, WWFH docents explained and modeled the house’s signature “semi-guided” tour, a new tour experience where panels and interactives were coupled with a few well-chosen artifacts. The semi-guided tour injected guests spatially and temporally into “the teenage years of Woodrow Wilson and his family’s experience in Columbia as the capital was rebuilt and attempted to negotiate the difficult terrain of citizenship and free labor following the end of the Civil War.”⁶⁸ Many in the HHM business remain committed to outdated tour design and structure despite the data that suggests traditional tours are no longer the preferred form.⁶⁹ But WWFH docents encouraged guests to “move ahead or linger behind” and violate the traditional norms of visitor etiquette by disengaging the docent and engaging with the exhibit individually.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 2; Waites, “Tour Review First Floor.”

⁶⁸ Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 2; Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 2.

⁶⁹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 12; According to Olsen, only forty-five percent of participants in a 2010 Connecticut Cultural Consumers study liked guided tours. Because of visitor and non-visitor feedback, the Charles Lindbergh Historic Site moved away from lecture-style tours in favor of a conversational tour. Cindy Olsen, “Are Guided Tours at Historic Houses Dead?,” American Association for State and Local History, *Views from the Porch*, (December 19, 2014), <http://blogs.aaslh.org/are-guided-tours-at-historic-houses-dead/>.

⁷⁰ Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 1; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 1; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 1; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 4; Quote from Taylor, “WWFH Script,” June 13, 2014, 5. However, these instructions appeared in the earliest drafts of the script.

This experimental model replaced “the traditional passive operation model” of guided tours that offered guests a chance to peek inside “rooms in frozen tableaux” but barred entry or close inspection. The free movement of the WWFH tour created a “decentralized experience” that provided a variety of activities and means with which visitors could determine meaning for themselves.⁷¹ Guests could watch videos, explore an interactive map and family tree, dress-up at a clothing station, and hold laminated art and recipes.

An example of personalized meaning making was using the primary artifact of the house to allow guests to think about the Wilsons as first-time homeowners. The interpretative team felt this was a milestone for many modern-day Americans. Docents easily demonstrated the home as a “showplace” for the family by speaking to the preservation and how it expressed the family’s growing socio-economic status.⁷² By connecting with visitors’ experience buying their first home or their aspiration to do so, the WWFH engaged in *poetic preservation*, creating a moment where “the real-life, quirky, and emotional experiences from the House’s past” united with the feelings visitors might have in their own homes.⁷³

In addition to the required transition, room and engagement statements, a key component of the semi-guided tour was the *pull-back*. Docents typically talk non-stop for thirty minutes to an hour on traditional tours. To not speak and let visitors explore, or pulling back, was a skill that had to be developed and improved upon by all those conducting tours. Chapter two will probe further into the pull-back technique and its challenges for both the docent and visitor.

⁷¹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 12–14, 26, 45, 115, 117.

⁷² Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 4; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” June 13, 2014, 4.

⁷³ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 35.

One of the most effective pull-back tools developed naturally in the formal parlor. Docents pushed play on a sound artifact, an early twentieth-century rendition of a song performed in Columbia during Reconstruction entitled “Kathleen Mavourneen.” Playing it created interpretative “mood music” and gave guests permission to delve deeper into the map or move toward panels and artifacts. The music physically allowed the docent to step aside, wait for questions or engage visitors one-on-one. This musical maneuver incorporated consultant Daniella Cook’s suggestion that docents give “verbal cues” encouraging visitors to explore on their own.⁷⁴ Several other docents found this a technique successful in encouraging self-exploration. Storm’s visitors got “a kick out of” listening to the music after she joked, “Well if you were partying at the time, then you would have listened to this music.”⁷⁵ Gunter wished there was more music.⁷⁵ The song not only encouraged visitors to play and explore but it also aurally demonstrated the music most HHM docents only describe. Sound’s role in shaping the cognitive and emotional experiences of museum visitors is less studied that it should be given the rise in multimedia exhibits, but sound can be used to reinforce an exhibit’s message as well as visitor mood, pace and memory recall. Researchers conducted a study in 2010-2011 of two types of music incorporated into an interpretive space at the Laiho Memorial Museum, which honors the “father” of modern Taiwanese literature. They discovered period music, even with lyrics that threatened to overload visitors with information, rather than light instrumental music from the modern era akin to that played in consumer spaces was more effective. Similar to consumers, most visitors found the light music relaxed them or made them comfortable, slowed their pace and deepened their desire to

⁷⁴ Taylor, “WWFH Script,” June 13, 2014, 6; Waites, “Tour Review First Floor.”

⁷⁵ Storm, interview; Gunter, interview.

explore the exhibit. But some of them thought the music should be from the historical era or promote the exhibit themes if not be music Laiho enjoyed or sounds he would have heard during his life. Even when they did not understand the lyrics, and some wanted the lyrics displayed for meaning, visitors that heard a contemporary piece of music from Laiho's generation felt like they were "stepping back in time" or felt nostalgia or connection to the era. The primary issue was listener fatigue generated from hearing the song repeatedly during an extended stay in the space. Thus, the use of Kathleen Mavourneen produced results similar to both styles of music studied in the Laiho museum. Visitors received encouragement to explore via the historical ambiance of the music but had to physically push the button again to hear the song repeated.⁷⁶

Playing the song clearly reinforced the new behavior docents were attempting to teach visitors but inventive options like this were not always available in every space. The rooms that sparked the most natural exploration were early stops on the tour, the spacious formal parlor with its map and the pantries.⁷⁷ But the "unwritten and unquestioned code of conduct" in HHMs that dictates conformity rendered some visitors immobile. Previous museum experiences for these visitors reinforced these rules: Do not move. Do not speak. Do not touch. Respect these above-average, important dead people.⁷⁸ The semi-guided tour worked, but some visitors could not abandon their docent for fear of violating preconceived notions of etiquette.⁷⁹ Numerous docents spoke of visitors that followed them, as one docent said "like a puppy." To counter this, docents

⁷⁶ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 112, 127; Chia-Li Chen and Chen-Gia Tsai, "The Influence of Background Music on the Visitor Museum Experience: A Case Study of the Laiho Memorial Museum, Taiwan," *Visitor Studies* 18, no. 2 (July 2015): 183–92.

⁷⁷ Hogan, interview; Brazier, interview; Westcott, interview.

⁷⁸ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 18.

⁷⁹ Storm, interview; Brazier, interview; Hogan, interview; Lee, interview.

remained in a space rather than moving on to the next one to wait because otherwise visitors tended to follow them. Permission to explore mattered little to visitors once the docent exited a room. Storm confessed, “I would like them to have more independence and to feel that they can walk around and look at things.” But she ascribed this dependence to the traditional form of HHMs, noting, “They’re almost always worried they’re going to be left behind.”⁸⁰

Visitor response to the semi-guided tour varied.⁸¹ Size mattered significantly in determining if groups even split up at all. A small group of two or families generally stuck close to the docents. But the pull-back worked well with larger groups, often comprised of several different smaller groups.⁸² However with big groups came “herding.” Docents were reluctant to interrupt visitors engaged with the exhibit. One docent waited for questions in the doorway to the next room, hoping to draw visitors eventually to that area. Because the docent never had a group larger than ten and knew there was little time to backtrack, the docent tried to wait until everyone was ready to enter the next space.⁸³ Hogan took her cues from visitors. If a visitor moved quickly into the next space, she offered supplemental material that did not comprise her regular introduction. When half of the group moved into the next space, she would follow. She repeated the introduction quietly to those small groups that trickled in after the room statement. Her most difficult problem was when this technique no longer worked because large groups of people with varying levels of interest finished rooms at different times. It could be “a real mess” when she wanted to show the informal parlor’s exhibit film and

⁸⁰ Puppy quote from Brazier, interview; Storm, interview; Lee, interview.

⁸¹ Gunter, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview.

⁸² Clark, Second Interview; Gunter, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁸³ Docent Doe, interview.

move the group upstairs together.⁸⁴ Gunter's biggest tour was twenty-six, half of whom disappeared regularly. The only effective way to draw most of visitors back together was resuming the narrative and it proved challenging to move them through the house in ninety minutes.⁸⁵

The problem of steering exceptionally large groups through the semi-guided tour illuminated other issues that arose giving this style of tour. *Streakers* are visitors who move fast through a museum or exhibit with only a few stops while *studiers* spend more time looking at individual elements or the exhibit as a whole.⁸⁶ Both kinds toured the WWFH regularly. Some people raced through the home quickly.⁸⁷ Other guests enjoyed being left alone to look or read thoroughly.⁸⁸ Generally the semi-guided tour provided just enough pace control for those who needed structure and enough space for those who liked to move at their own speed.⁸⁹ However, sometimes visitors moved so quickly, one docent could not "catch them." Volunteer Pris Stickney sometimes left the main group to give the quicker visitors information. However her personal philosophy was that the people pacing themselves deserved docent accompaniment. But few groups split long enough to force her to make this decision. But other docents expressed the challenge posed by big groups comprised of both streakers and studiers. As such, one docent felt she and the tour were not equipped to handle larger groups.⁹⁰

The freedom of the semi-guided tour allowed visitors with varied learning styles to craft their own experience with the images, panels, and interactives. The panels

⁸⁴ Hogan, interview; Hogan, "Docent Survey."

⁸⁵ Gunter, interview.

⁸⁶ Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 41.

⁸⁷ Lee, interview; Stickney, interview; Gunter, interview.

⁸⁸ Gunter, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Stickney, interview; Lee, interview.

⁸⁹ Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 54.

⁹⁰ Gunter, interview; Stickney, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Lee, interview.

appealed to the portion of people who preferred reading over interactives. The images and illustrations provided fodder for non-verbal learners.⁹¹ Some visitors simply wanted the guide to talk. Others did not want to be coerced into participating. Gunter understood this sentiment as she rarely enjoys guided tours. She preferred drawing her own conclusions, choosing her movements, and avoiding interaction. Then she contemplated her experience further after leaving.⁹² A bigger concern than the lack of objects was Holmes' apprehension about an engagement model that forced "visitors through the kind of led-by-the-nose discussion questions" that resembled the discussion sections of courses that made her college students "miserable."⁹³ Their distaste for participation was not unique, according to museum visitor participation expert Nina Simon.⁹⁴ When these learning styles collide, they can cause headaches for the docent and some visitors. Volunteer docent Maria Schneider gave one tour where other guests grew frustrated with a gentleman's extensive interest in the home. She pulled him aside and let him know he could come back through and ask questions after the group tour. It was unclear whether he dominated her narrative by asking questions, rendered the pull-back ineffective or if she was not allowing him to linger and continuing with her tour.⁹⁵

Nonetheless, an advantage of the semi-guided tour and the lingering docent was the one-on-one engagement opportunity. Some visitors approached Storm individually during the pull-back, more willing to speak to her than to the whole group, who were strangers. She learned from her guests during these engagement points as she imparted

⁹¹ Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 57–58.

⁹² Stickney, interview; Gunter, interview.

⁹³ Holmes, "Docent Survey."

⁹⁴ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 4.

⁹⁵ Maria Schneider, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016.

her own wisdom. These actions contributed to the conversational nature of the tour between docent and guest.⁹⁶ This “decentralizing communication” allowed for “individual transactions and interactions.” Often guests want to participate in a dialogue but receive a monologue instead.⁹⁷ Stickney found she could “really interact with people” at WWFH more than the other houses Historic Columbia administered. This once culminated in a two hour tour. The semi-guided structure facilitated more discussion and created a “relaxed” atmosphere where she did not have to talk the entire time nor did her audience expect her to on many of her tours.⁹⁸

A self-guided tour was not an option for visitors. Of 645 visitors who answered an evaluation question about whether they preferred the self-guided portions of the tour, only fifty-one people, or just under eight percent, responded affirmatively. In late March 2015, the interpretative team added a survey question asking visitors if they wanted the tour to be self-guided. The first month of responses revealed thirty-two people, or just over ninety-one percent of respondents, replied no.⁹⁹ But Historic Columbia’s most consistent and largest conundrum was staffing the home, making the self-guided tour appealing. Historic Columbia suffers from the larger trend in HHMs of volunteer recruitment declining along with attendance.¹⁰⁰ The organization relies on volunteer staff during the week and a paid, part-time weekend staff with docents that work a couple days a month. Staffing was an immediate concern because of the impending increase in spring visitation when attendance comes out of its winter lull and the heavier flow of guests on

⁹⁶ Storm, interview.

⁹⁷ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, first quote, 107, second quote 81.

⁹⁸ Stickney, interview.

⁹⁹ Taylor, “WWFH Trends”; “Evaluation 2014 Summary,” 2; James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Question Added to Wilson Survey,” March 31, 2015; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH April 2015 Survey Monkey Stats” (Historic Columbia, May 2015), 13.

¹⁰⁰ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 97.

weekends.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, of the volunteer docents who participated in the first round of training, few completed the process. Docents approved to conduct tours trickled through the training pipeline but not quickly enough to fill the schedule.¹⁰² In the early months, staff filled numerous gaps in the weekday schedule, which ran Tuesday through Friday since homes were closed on Mondays. Three of those days, the tour facilitator conducted half of the six tours offered a day. Every day the first full month the site was opened, there was at least one unfilled tour time.¹⁰³ On numerous days of the week only one WWFH docent was available when two shifts were needed. Compounding this issue was that docents typically worked three hour shifts, only allowing coverage for two tours. As a result, staff filled-in for the last tour of the day and frequently the first tour of the day.¹⁰⁴ Historic Columbia took measures to ease docent fatigue and manage the homes more efficiently. The retirement of volunteer coordinator and frequent fallback docent Ann Posner had resulted in more scheduling gaps as her replacement Betsy Kleinfelder underwent training. In the spring of 2015, as the tour facilitator's contract was ending, Historic Columbia changed its tour times for all of its HHMs, staggering and offering two houses every hour.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Follow Up," December 7, 2013.

¹⁰² Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, "Staff WW Tours for March," February 27, 2014;

Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, "April Staff Tours," March 26, 2014.

¹⁰³ Ann Posner, "March WW 2014 Calendar" (Historic Columbia, February 27, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Ann Posner, "April Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar" (Historic Columbia, March 26, 2014); Ann Posner, "May 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar" (Historic Columbia, April 2014); Ann Posner, "June 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar" (Historic Columbia, May 13, 2014); Ann Posner, "July 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar" (Historic Columbia, June 2014); Ann Posner, "September WW 2014 Calendar" (Historic Columbia, August 2014).

¹⁰⁵ Posner, "September WW 2014 Calendar"; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "October Woodrow Wilson Schedule," September 24, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "November WW Schedule," October 17, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, "November 2014–WWFH Calendar" (Historic Columbia, October 2014); Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "January WWFH Schedule," December 19, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "February WWFH Schedule," January 23, 2015; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "March Woodrow Wilson Schedule," March 3, 2015; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to

The tour time changes relieved pressure but WWFH docent fatigue remained a threat. Given the limited number of docents trained to conduct WWFH tours and the detailed exhibit itself, Doe thought the self-guided tour seemed a reasonable solution. Doe and Gunter supported a self-guided option, understanding there are pros and cons to both styles.¹⁰⁶ Gunter thought self-guided tours could spark an increase in visitation and allow visitors to take in information missed on the guided tour. The drawback was that some people need to be directed to specific information. For example, in the formal parlor, Gunter tried to make sure people read the demographics panel to comprehend how integrated the legislature was. Then she could demonstrate with the other panels the intelligence and power wielded by legislators, which was “part of what we whitewashed in the history.”¹⁰⁷ The self-guided option also gave guests flexibility with time. They could take two hours or twenty minutes.¹⁰⁸

Gunter’s example illustrates that the written text of the exhibit more than any other factor worried docents about the self-guided tour. Bacon-Rogers too felt that the panel mounted artifacts like the tissue ballot and the relationship between Thomas Dixon, author of the *Clansman* which was adapted into *Birth of a Nation*, and his college acquaintance Woodrow Wilson needed docents to make stronger connections. However, docents were essential for other reasons. There were no labels for the digital interactives and the stereoscopes to instruct visitors on use or pose a subject for exploration.¹⁰⁹

Docents answered questions that the panels sparked or did not address, which Doe almost

Interpretative Team, “April WWFH Schedule,” March 17, 2015; Heather Bacon-Rogers, email message to Weekend Staff, “Weekend Updates 6/27-6/28,” June 25, 2015; The new tour schedule launched April 7, 2015. Historic Columbia, “New Tour Times,” April 2015, Historic Columbia.

¹⁰⁶ Gunter, interview; Docent Doe, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Gunter, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 165, 174.

always encountered on tours. The panels were too numerous. They contained too much information, a common problem within exhibits written by historians who tend to write for peers, and included more than can be consumed in a one to two hour period. For example, one docent thought the panel information was “a little excessive” while another thought them “well-done” but containing more than a docent could talk about anyway.¹¹⁰ On the opposite end of that spectrum, rhetorical questions on the panels written at a more remedial level confused some of Bacon-Rogers’ visitors, who have asked her whether the questions were for school groups. While the self-guided tour “has its merits” in extending reading time, she could not envision a tour that was completely “docent-free.” The language also prevented it. She warned that the panels’ advanced text played into the stereotype that museums are elite white spaces and “just an intellectual bore.”¹¹¹ Lee understood part of her purpose as a docent was to accommodate people who are reluctant to read and help aid visitors who do not yet know what being “a museum of Reconstruction” means. Historic Columbia wanted “everyone to get at least something out of it,” which may mean the docent giving some information in each room. Lee received some complaints from fellow public historians that they do not want to be led around but conceded they are a completely different visitor. This visitor, whom visitor expert John Falk identified as the Professional/Hobbyist, will get something from a self-guided experience. Both Lee and Westcott remained unconvinced how much a visitor would take away from the museum unaccompanied.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Docent Doe, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Serrell, *Exhibit Labels*, 75, 127; Katie Menne, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Clark, Second Interview.

¹¹¹ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 47.

¹¹² Lee, interview; Westcott, interview; Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 64.

The consensus from docents and visitor evaluation data was that docents remained essential to the experience. For Bacon-Rogers, the guides were “the most valuable part of that house.” Even a self-guided tour supporter admitted the docent “adds a lot to the quality of the tour.”¹¹³ Data confirmed nearly forty-six percent of 556 evaluated visitors that were asked what information they found most interesting overwhelmingly selected “what the tour guide told us.” The panels came in second at just over twenty-three percent, suggesting docents were critical to the visitor experience and the exhibit.¹¹⁴ Only three visitors mentioned the panels specifically. One thought they were well-done. Another thought there were too many text panels. Two thought the panels informative but one of those wanted more time with them.¹¹⁵ Docents stationing in the home may be a better solution than the self-guided tour, according to three docents. It would allow visitors to get their questions answered and offer a few engagement points courtesy of the docent. On “Dollar Sundays,” Historic Columbia offers one dollar tours of a house each third Sunday of the month for local residents. Two docents who have stationed in the home for that event found the method effective. Bernadette Scott witnessed “people reading signage at their own pace and in so thoughtful a manner.”¹¹⁶ For this work, ideally, Bacon-Rogers argued, two or three docents would be stationed downstairs and upstairs at all times. This would accommodate those who were only interested in the house itself and some brief information as well as those wanting

¹¹³ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Docent Doe, interview.

¹¹⁴ I evaluated the visitor evaluation data for 2014. Taylor, “WWFH Trends”; “Evaluation 2014 Summary,” 5.

¹¹⁵ “Survey Monkey Download.”

¹¹⁶ Gunter, interview; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Lee, interview.

extended time. She too had experienced visitors on dollar Sundays spending two and half hours reading everything.¹¹⁷

The difficulty of the subject matter, the text panel heavy exhibit that some docents and visitors found overwhelming, and the long tradition of docent guided tours in HHMs dictated the need for docent interaction in the WWFH. While Historic Columbia successfully implemented a semi-guided tour with a pull-back technique that facilitated visitor exploration and one-on-one engagement, there were drawbacks to this style of interpretation. Because it produced problems with tour management, particularly large groups, and there were only a handful of docents certified to conduct the tour, some docents came to think a self-guided or stationed tour should be offered. However, docents proved vital in presenting a new, unfamiliar interpretation to audiences. The docents wove a small number of objects into a powerful narrative where visitors made meaningful connections with authentic objects related to the family and Reconstruction and the time period. Docents incorporated objects as they saw fit and spent more time in spaces where social objects generated more engagement. After seeing visitors embrace an unconventional house tour and their genuine interest in learning about the relatively little-known subject of Reconstruction, several docents came to favor museum interpretations that moved away from objects and driven by thematic substance. Both docents and guests of the WWFH were in the midst of an HHM revolution, changing the way they thought about a century old philosophy of ordering an abundance of non-essential objects into period rooms to tell the story of elite lives.

¹¹⁷ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

CHAPTER 3

A NEW WAY OF THINKING: DOCENT TRAINING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE LOST CAUSE

The theme of education appears three times in the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH), via the discussion of Joseph Wilson and James Woodrow's employment with the Presbyterian seminary, Tommy's education covered in his bedroom, and integrated public education introduced in one of the bedrooms. Tommy and his father operated in the ivory tower of a Presbyterian world. Tommy's private school experience stood in stark opposition to the creation of South Carolina's quasi-integrated public education system, revolutionary in its introduction and the most enduring legacy of Reconstruction.¹ Just as Reconstruction changed the way South Carolina educated its populace, the WWFH revolutionized Historic Columbia's training process to re-educate docents via workshops on Reconstruction-era Columbia, Wilson's teenage years, language and adult learning practices, and the Lost Cause. The organization also evaluated and cleared each docent to conduct tours to ensure they modeled best public history practices. This chapter evaluates the ways in which museum administrators implemented a new training program to create an innovative historic house museum (HHM) tour. But this approach did not come without dissent. For those who saw the training process through, most came to terms with or reversed the Lost Cause

¹ Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 390–91; Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 4, 193–94.

indoctrination that in some ways haunt docents on their tours. With regards to those who could not or would not participate in training or tours, the process illuminated weaknesses of twenty-first century museums tackling complex histories that rely heavily on volunteer interpreters.

3.1 DESIGNING THE TRAINING

The first training program was intense and contested as it sought to train docents on a controversial exhibit that had yet to be installed. The training involved early engagement with docents as the tour and exhibit was finalized and required a three week break to accommodate the holidays.¹ Historic Columbia offered two days as options for docents for each session. Weekend staff were given an alternate schedule but allowed to attend volunteer sessions and vice-versa for make-ups. The three month training plan launched with the first of six training sessions, an overview of Reconstruction, on November 18, 2013. Other speakers and topics followed. Training also included several days devoted to an “open house” viewing of the new installation and walk-throughs demonstrating the tour. Docents then presented a tour to staff and friends. In total, the training asked interpreters to attend and complete ten active training requirements.²

The first sessions used academic lectures and pre-assigned reading material to tackle both Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson. Holding these paired sessions trained

¹ Robin Waites, “WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14” (Historic Columbia, January 8, 2014); Document sent by Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH General Calendar,” January 13, 2014. This was also the deadline for school, garden and preservation tours, which took less precedence during the relaunch.

² Waites, “WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14”; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Dialoging about Race,” November 15, 2013; James Quint, email message, “WWFH Training - Final Schedule,” January 13, 2014; Sarah Blackwell, “Wilson Training Update,” March 19, 2014, Historic Columbia Collection. Blackwell circulated this document via email.

docents to meet the dual interpretative needs of the house simultaneously.³ After the first session on Reconstruction, docents were to be able to identify the varied timeframes for Reconstruction, the constitutional amendments, different Reconstruction plans, the gains made by black Americans, and the Lost Cause. The lecture presented images from the exhibit and political data for analysis. Two charts listed the occupations, literacy rates, and servitude status before the Civil War of South Carolina's black legislators during Reconstruction. A third broke down the state legislature by party and race. This data specifically challenged major myths of Reconstruction related to the competency of black politicians.⁴

Docent retention was an issue immediately. Twenty-six docents attended the first training session, but by the second session a few weeks later, attendance dropped by half. Some made up this work while others in attendance began to drop from training.⁵ University of South Carolina (USC) professors Thomas Brown and Ken Clements presented on Columbia during Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson respectively for the second session.⁶ Brown promoted the primary theme of Wilson's teenage years as a window into a specific time and place. He asked docents to look at WWFH not as an

³ The authors label these techniques N.U.D.E. traits: Non-linear, Unorthodox, Dactylic, and Experimental. Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 93.

⁴ Jennifer Taylor, "General Overview of Reconstruction Lecture and Questions to Consider," November 2013; James Quint, email message to Ann Posner, "Woodrow Wilson Family Home Training Session 1 Reconstruction Era," November 13, 2013; Tables 1-3 were pulled from Thomas Holt, *Black over White: Negro State Legislators in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 39, 52, 97.

⁵ Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Woodrow Wilson Training," November 14, 2013; Ann Posner, "WW Volunteer Training Attendance" (Historic Columbia, December 10, 2013), Historic Columbia Collection.

⁶ Waites, "WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14"; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Dialoging about Race."

“enclosed destination” but a “vantage point for looking out across Columbia” at the “peak” of when the Wilsons arrived. He listed five central questions for volunteers:

1. What was Reconstruction?
2. How did proponents of Reconstruction try to accomplish their goals?
3. What did Reconstruction achieve?
4. How did Reconstruction end?
5. Why does this history matter today?

The simplified version of his answers to the first and last question complemented much of what docents learned in the overview of Reconstruction. Reconstruction was “the renewal of nationhood” and the “destruction of slavery” through the “reconstitution of a financial system” and citizenship. To achieve this, the Republican Party, which controlled the federal government and initially was committed to black rights, introduced a two-party system to the South and allowed federal courts “to determine and enforce” citizenship for black Americans as well as for women, immigrants, veterans, and former Confederates. It was important to remember Reconstruction was both “an open-ended process” and an “historical period.” Interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment continued and “community memory” evolved.⁷ Clements argued that, although Wilson never wrote a memoir or autobiography, docents could speculate how the president’s Columbia experience shaped him. Did Tommy Wilson want to emulate his father, his “first and most important teacher” who taught him the value of oration and leadership, or was it a competition? How did his self-proscribed status as a “momma’s boy” shape his expectations of women in his life? Given he “spoke slightly” of his female students

⁷ Thomas J. Brown, “Main Points for Training of WWFH Volunteers,” November 12, 2013, Historic Columbia Collection; Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites, “WWFH Materials for Ken and Tom,” December 4, 2013.

and opposed women's suffrage, did he think of women as emotionally nurturing but intellectually inferior?⁸

Historic Columbia designed the third session to expose docents to the exhibit itself. A fifty page document of the exhibit circulated to docents for reference but not necessarily full consumption. Small group work allowed docents to ask questions in general and about the first two sessions. The session included discussion and analysis of exhibit images, such as the women of USC's Normal School and Wilson's childhood drawings.⁹ Training resumed in the New Year, including a private meeting with select volunteer docents to discuss the script. Docents understood the break was "unavoidable" and that training "takes time to do it well" but still grew weary of the length and break in continuity.¹⁰

Although conservative in using lectures and shadowing, the last two sessions on public engagement and cultural sensitivity by Daniella Cook were more radical in encouraging "thought and behavior that promotes greater interaction."¹¹ "Engaging the Public" offered techniques to facilitate twenty-first century learning goals, including critical thinking. Cook introduced six points on Adult Learning Theory:

1. Adults have a need to know why they should learn something.
2. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.
3. Adults have a greater volume and different quality of experience than youth.

⁸ Kendrick A. Clements, "Discussion Questions about Woodrow Wilson in Columbia," December 2013, Historic Columbia Collection; Freed, email message to Waites, "Ken and Tom."

⁹ Robin Waites, "Exhibit Content Training Session 3" (Historic Columbia, December 12, 2013), Historic Columbia Collection; Robin Waites, email message to Ann Posner and James Quint, "WWFH Session 3," December 12, 2013. Images from an unlabeled file folder in Historic Columbia's collection.

¹⁰ Quote from Annie Wright, "Results of WWFH Volunteer Training," PowerPoint (Columbia, S.C.: Historic Columbia, March 10, 2014), slide 15, Historic Columbia Collection; Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016; Margie Richardson, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016.

¹¹ Quotes from Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 93. The authors label these techniques N.U.D.E. traits: Non-linear, Unorthodox, Dactylic, and Experimental. Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "WWFH Staff Engagement Training," November 12, 2013; Waites, "WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14"; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Dialoging about Race."

4. Adults must see a need to know or be able to do.
5. Adults enter into a learning experience with a task-centered, problem-centered or life-centered orientation to learning.
6. Adults are motivated to learn by both extrinsic (i.e., promotion) and intrinsic motivators (i.e., self-esteem).¹²

Cook’s presentation also included how to apply Inquiry Based Learning and Engagement Theory strategies. Her coverage of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy Model gave staff and docents tasks and verbs to describe the Higher Order of Thinking Skills (Creating, Evaluating, Analyzing) and the Lower Order of Thinking Skills (Applying, Understanding, and Remembering). “Effective questioning” promoted not just learning but higher order thinking. It required giving respondents time to think and a specific “function” for each question, such as listing and grouping. Below are a few examples of function questions:

1. Clarifying: Could you give me an example?
2. Refocusing: How does that refer to our earlier . . . ?
3. Summarizing: Can you put that into a single sentence?
4. Labeling: Can you suggest one or two words to label?
5. Interpretative: What are the differences between . . . ?¹³

Weekend staff docent Halie Brazier found the strategies presented improved all of her tours by providing public history training in visitor services she did not receive as a graduate student focused on exhibit and curatorial skills. She normally told about something “in an entertaining way” rather than asking visitors about an object or image. Yet, just forty-three percent of docents found the small group discussion covering adult learning and inclusivity the “most useful aspect of training.” Two volunteers ranked

¹² “Volunteer Training” (Historic Columbia, 2013), author’s personal files; “WWFH Training Session Planning” (Historic Columbia, November 13, 2013), Historic Columbia Collection; Daniella Cook, “Application of Adult Learning Theory,” n.d., Historic Columbia Collection. The handout was adapted from M. Knowles’ “Adult Learning” in the ASTD Training and Development Handbook.

¹³ Daniella Cook, “Support HCF Staff Prepare Volunteer Trainings” (PowerPoint, Columbia, S.C., December 9, 2013), slides 1, 4-5, 9.

group work and interactive exercises as what they liked least. Pris Stickney argued that she preferred “getting the facts” and did not have as much “baggage” about Reconstruction as other docents.¹⁴ Language and cultural sensitivity, which dealt heavily with race and issues of privilege, was one of the most dismissed sessions by volunteer docents, a topic reserved for the next chapter.

The training sessions changed format and focused on the tour near the approach of the opening on February 15, 2014. Historic Columbia launched ninety-minute staff-led sample tours with the second week of January devoted to the first floor and the following week the second floor. Five sessions each week allowed limiting the number of participants in each group to five for questions. Eighteen signed-up. Docent questions demonstrated the thematic challenges that lie ahead. Questions were fact-oriented, such as the price of the home, or logistical, such as ticket sales and seating for guests, rather than big picture ideas. Delays in installation and a snow storm derailed plans to give docents both a week to practice tours and to evaluate thirteen of them before the public launch. Docents conceded having a completed exhibit would have been ideal but said it did not prevent them from learning the tour. Seven would ultimately pass the first wave of training, culminating in a tour evaluation, and be approved to conduct tours.¹⁵

¹⁴ Brazier, interview; Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 6; Pris Stickney, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; John Clark, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

¹⁵ Ann Posner, email message to Volunteer Docents, “Upcoming Woodrow Wilson Training,” January 9, 2014; Waites, “WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14”; Document sent by Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH General Calendar”; Ann Posner, “First and Second Floor Training Sessions Sign-Up Sheet,” January 21, 2014, Historic Columbia Collection; Ann Posner, “Questions and Suggestions from WW Training Session First Floor,” January 21, 2014; James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor and John Sherrer, “Tour Notes,” January 24, 2014; Ann Posner, “February WW 2014 Calendar” (Historic Columbia, February 2014); Daniella Cook, “Historic Columbia Foundation WWFH Tour Observation Report” (Columbia, S.C., March 13, 2014), 1; Clark, Second Interview.

3.2 DOCENT RESPONSE TO TRAINING

The debate over more interactive training sessions based on best practices demonstrates docents were not monolithic in their response to training. Docents generally preferred lecture-style workshops and reading on their own. Most felt prepared to conduct tours and found shadowing essential to crafting a successful tour. Some embraced the structure of the tour that limited putting too much of oneself into it while others found ways to make their tour their own. Some docents found passing the training process and conducting tours incredibly gratifying while others covertly, and to a lesser degree, overtly resisted training and the tour. This resistance bubbled under the surface even after the training program was simplified following the opening.

Historic Columbia asked docents to fill out evaluations for the first training program. Docents were given a survey before training began and after it ended. Each session was also given a corresponding survey. Just over seventy percent of docents evaluated were “very satisfied” with training and the remaining were “somewhat satisfied.” Although docents saw training as a normal requirement of employment, many who passed also “enjoyed” the process, found it “rewarding” to learn a difficult tour, and were “happy” to learn about the lesser-known subject of Reconstruction.¹⁶

Most docents reported learning from reading the material alone, large group lectures and planned activities with the group. Fifty-seven percent of docents deemed large group lecture useful. The lectures filled gaps in knowledge or provided a

¹⁶ Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 4; Jennifer Gunter, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 27, 2016; Brazier, interview; Heather Bacon-Rogers, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 4, 2016; Docent Doe, interview; Kathy Hogan, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Katie Menne, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

“refresher” on Wilson and Reconstruction, specifically as they pertained to Columbia and brought social change.¹⁷ Two volunteer docents claimed lectures were their favorite, one of which joined another docent preferring the mode over hands-on activities.¹⁸ Others saw room for improvement, such as allowing more time for speakers, feeling an elitism from one of the specialists, and wanting fewer lectures.¹⁹

The vast majority read recommended material and conducted research on their own to get a better grasp of Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson. When asked about the most useful aspects of training from six categories ranging from lecture to small group discussion, “reviewing material on my own” was the most popular response from sixty-four percent of docents.²⁰ Volunteer Kathy Hogan “immersed herself” in Marion Lucas’ *Sherman and the Burning of Columbia*, Richard Zuczek’s South Carolina study *State of Rebellion*, Walter Edgar’s *South Carolina: a History*, and Woodrow Wilson’s 1901 essay “The Reconstruction of the Southern States.” Wilson biographies, especially A. Scott Berg’s which had been recently released at the time of WWFH’s opening, proved popular with volunteers. In addition to Wilson biographies, John Clark “perused” five recommended readings “to get a better feel for Reconstruction.” Sitting at his computer after training sessions, he would gather with his thoughts and seek additional information.

¹⁷ Blackwell, “Wilson Training Update”; Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 6; Gunter, interview; Quote from Halie Brazier, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

¹⁸ Bernadette Scott, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Richardson, “Docent Survey”; Quote from Docent Doe, interview; Pris Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016.

¹⁹ Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview; Hogan, “Docent Survey”; Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 14.

²⁰ Cyndy Storm, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 4, 2016; Docent Doe, interview; Maria Schneider, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Anne Weir, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 6.

Trainers and supervisors should note his use of fiction to illuminate the period. He highly recommended the novel *Freeman* by Leonard Pitts about a former slave who returns to Mississippi during Reconstruction to look for his family. It provided a “different perspective than Columbia” and gave him greater “clarity” on the “very early Reconstruction years,” particularly military government and the challenges of the Union soldiers. This helped him compensate for the WWFH’s focus on the socio-economic-political happenings in Columbia from 1870-1874.²¹

Training survey results showed all docents felt prepared to some degree to lead tours and were more comfortable being challenged by visitors or talking about race by the end of training. This was remarkable given over half felt “not prepared at all” before training commenced. However, despite two docents who spoke of being “confident” going into their tours, “prepared” and ready to “deflect,” only twenty-nine percent of docents surveyed felt “very prepared.” Furthermore, the small gains made in comfort levels discussing race demonstrated docent anxiety regarding race related conversations and foreshadowed interpretative problems discussed in the next two chapters.²²



Figure 3.1 How Prepared Do You Currently Feel to Lead Tours Regarding the Reconstruction Era and Woodrow Wilson’s Life?

²¹ Hogan, interview; Storm, interview; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Clark, Second Interview.

²² “Prepared” quote from Bacon-Rogers, interview; “Deflect” quote from Stickney, interview.

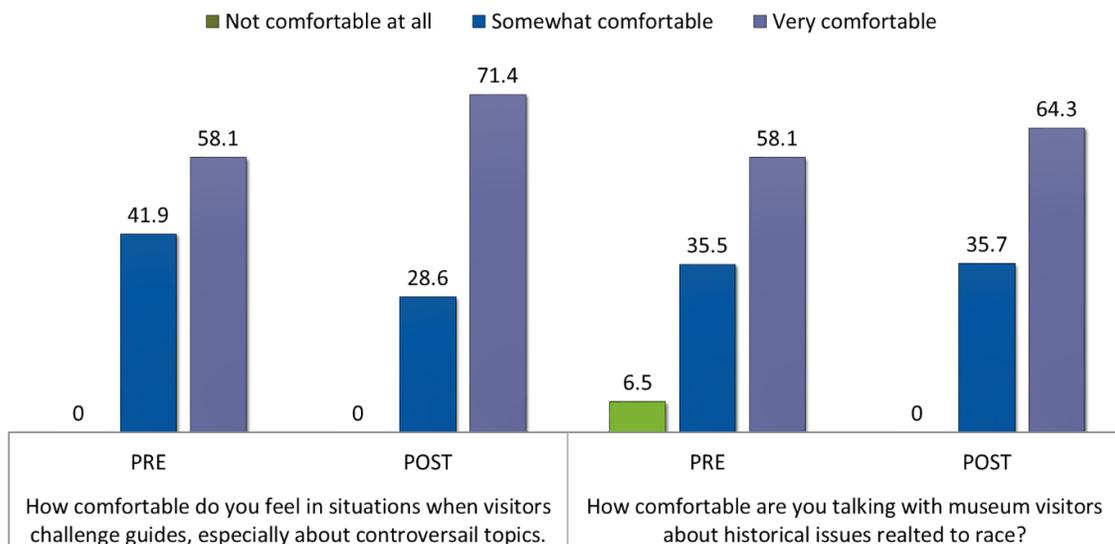


Figure 3.2 Docent Comfort Level in Being Challenged and Discussing Race²³

Docents agreed shadowing an approved tour was essential to the training, especially to see “how it is practically done in each room.” Two volunteers considered it part of the training they liked most.²⁴ Trainers modeled techniques recommended by consultants Daniella Cook and Annie Wright when giving shadow tours:

1. Use hand gestures
2. Show rather than tell how the tour should unfold
3. Avoid academic speech
4. Ask visitors to “imagine for a moment” and then give them space to imagine
5. Repeat visitor questions to answer clearly and concisely, expanding only if time allows
6. Use previous and upcoming spaces to address questions and connect rooms and content
7. Repeat new information to make it “stick”²⁵

²³ Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 2, charts from slide 9, 10. Wright cautioned that post-evaluations were a smaller sample size. Thirty-four docents completed pre-training surveys but only fourteen completed the post-evaluations.

²⁴ Storm, interview; Gunter, interview; Westcott, interview; Morgan, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Stickney, interview; Hogan, interview; Hogan, “Docent Survey”; Quote from Brazier, interview.

²⁵ Imagine quote from Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Technique Recommendations for WWFH,” January 21, 2014; Room foreshadowing quote from Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 3; “Stick” quote from Wright, email message to Waites, “Feedback on the WWFH Tour.”

Some docents shadowed more than twice to see a range of docent responses and techniques to incorporate. Volunteer Jean Morgan “split the difference between them all” and added her own signature interests.²⁶ Cook recommended Docent Doe’s “stellar tour” as “a great model for guides.” The docent wove “a clear, coherent story line between Reconstruction and the Wilsons,” encouraged visitors to explore and answer questions, displayed “a strong grasp of the content,” and used technology proficiently. Docent Doe liked giving the tour first to potential docents because the first crop “didn’t know what we were getting into” initially. The docent called it a “learning experience” because some of the shadow docents would bring up topics that visitors had not.²⁷

Docents crafted their tours in a variety of ways. In preparation for practice, two docents wrote out their script by hand. While one docent confessed to practicing in front of a mirror, two others avoided verbally giving their tour repeatedly. Volunteer Holly Westcott absorbed as much as she could and then spoke, hoping “something reasonable came out.” Practicing tours with friends built confidence in giving the tour and learning to adapt tours to visitor interest. Hogan reasoned practicing was the only way to learn how to give the tour and lessoned nerves about presenting the material to white “diehard” southerners, like the two friends on her practice tour. They did not object to the interpretation.²⁸

The script’s requirement that docents offer transition, room and engagement statements for each space illuminated an issue with personal ownership over one’s tour. Two docents broached ownership from two perspectives. Brazier embraced the “stricter”

²⁶ Lee, interview; Storm, interview; Stickney, interview; Morgan, interview.

²⁷ Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 1; Docent Doe, interview.

²⁸ Gunter, interview; Brazier, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Westcott, interview; Storm, interview; Hogan, interview.

script that limited the “freedom” to personalize her tour beyond fine-tuning based on visitor interest. She “didn’t necessarily want to put too much of me into it.” Morgan disagreed. In “making it mine,” she brought in seminary history she used on her Robert Mills mansion tour. But she needed to identify a thread to clarify the tour in her own mind and find a “logical stepping off point” to establish a “story” and “flow.” She gradually pursued an idea that came out in training, America’s “rapid expansion” West and across the globe and the loss of interest in Reconstruction. Historians on National Public Radio validated this thread that “we just didn’t give as a nation Reconstruction long enough to actually make change because it was very, very brief.” Civil War era America took “generations to build” and the nation could not “change all of that, roll it back in twelve years.” The reproduction American flag in the informal parlor represented this thread. Her process took time. She completed the first training but waited to be evaluated until late August when she produced her “own interpretive methodology and presentation.”²⁹

The most immediate issue was the length of training and revising training to meet a now accessible exhibit. While twenty-three percent of the first round of trainees wanted more time, thirty-nine percent thought training took too long. Two docents wished the more sensible form of training finalized by Historic Columbia had been possible the first time.³⁰ With at least nine volunteers interested in the second round of training, Historic Columbia outlined a plan for streamlining the process into four sessions. Trainees received, in advance, a packet of materials that included the Adult Tour Script, Wilson

²⁹ Brazier, interview; Morgan, interview; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Heather Bacon-Rogers, “Practice Tour of WWFH,” July 30, 2014; Last quote from Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 95.

³⁰ Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 5; Brazier, interview; Docent Doe, interview.

Frequently Asked Questions, panels and images, and lecture handouts. First, prospective docents attended a preview tour to get acquainted with the house and showcase the format. Two lectures followed, one on Reconstruction and another discussing the Wilson family during Reconstruction and President Wilson as a byproduct of Reconstruction. The latter filled the second session gap previously covered by USC faculty. It combined a visually heavy PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the restoration, planning of the exhibit and Wilson's childhood in Columbia by Fielding Freed, Director of Historic House Museums. The final session called for an "active presentation on audience engagement," controversial topics, and race related issues with small group activities and demonstrations. Executive Director Robin Waites wanted some diversity from the shadow/lecture model. The organization tapped Porchia Moore, a PhD library sciences student at USC who specializes in museum inclusivity. The luxury of duplicate sessions disappeared as training was consolidated into two half days with two sessions separated by a lunch break. Before evaluation, docents shadowed at least two tours with paying guests, one of which had to be with the tour facilitator. Weekend staff adopted this format too. The organization also established a firm evaluation process. Docents not approved the first time resumed shadowing but, if they failed a second time, were to re-take the entire Wilson training if they desired to continue. The marked difference in planning and implementation was that initially docents were expected to "co-lead a tour" with a small group, which offered the real environment but staff support. Historic Columbia used the model for its April, July and September training programs.³¹

³¹ Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, "April Staff Tours," March 26, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner and James Quint, "April 7th - Training Session 1," April 3, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, "June 2014 Volunteer Training Class," June 24, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Action Items," May 21, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email

3.3 EVALUATING THE DOCENTS

Evaluations demonstrate the greatest problems plaguing docents as they began tours was the pulling back of their narrative as part of the semi-guided tour and asking engagement questions. But other issues manifested themselves, such as issues with technology and choices in language. To better address these issues, staff evaluators remodeled the evaluation form after the first wave of assessments to address specific benchmarks required of the tour. Docents needed to hit content points on the Wilsons and Reconstruction and offer room statements, engagement questions, and transitions in each room. The new form included inclusivity and interactive checkpoints for certain spaces to ensure docents intertwined black and white narratives of Reconstruction, incorporated gender, dealt with controversial topics effectively and comfortably, and displayed a level of ease working with interactives. Extra note-taking space allowed evaluators to list specific parts of tour content that needed work. Wright, who created the original document, thought the revisions monitored how training transferred to the tour and encouraged tour consistency.³²

A range of issues manifested themselves in the nineteen docents evaluated. Seven docents had trouble conquering the order of the home/rooms or which information and

message to Docent P and Jean Morgan, "WWFH June Follow-Up," August 6, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Volunteers, "WWFH June Follow-Up," June 13, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor and James Quint, "Monday Afternoon Presentation with Portia," April 9, 2014; Ann Posner, "Woodrow Wilson Family Home Training Schedule July 21 and 28" (Historic Columbia, July 15, 2014), Historic Columbia Collection; Blackwell, "Wilson Training Update"; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Volunteer Feedback," May 6, 2014; Wright, "Results of WWFH Volunteer Training," slide 5; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Heather Bacon-Rogers, "Evaluations," August 29, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Volunteer Docents, "Tour Coverage Needed and Training," September 17, 2014.

³² See appendix for a sample copy of the evaluation. Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team and Daniella Cook, "Revised Tour Review," January 23, 2014; Sarah Blackwell, email message to Ann Posner, James Quint, and Jennifer Taylor, "Volunteer Survey Review from Annie," April 4, 2014.

themes went in each room. This ranged from one docent performing the second floor portion of the tour out of order to offering key points better suited and assigned to other spaces.³³ Nine docents introduced incorrect content, mostly misstatements, or omitted key information. Cook also found half of the four docents she evaluated possessed “sufficient knowledge” but had not “mastered” content.³⁴

While some content mistakes are to be expected when learning a tour, over a quarter of docents ignored or seemed uncomfortable demonstrating the technology. This illuminated a generational ambivalence about twenty-first century learning models for the HHM. Some older docents rushed visitors through the experience of digital map play, failed to go into detail about its features, or abandoned visitors who needed assistance for a richer experience.³⁵ Four docents, three of which who also struggled with the map,

³³ This data is based on nineteen docents and twenty-eight total evaluations. Fifteen were volunteers, two were staff, and two were weekend staff. Sixteen passed the evaluation process. Additionally, Daniella Cook evaluated two of those docents as well as one staff member and Docent U. She did not use the formal evaluation form so her reflections on those evaluated are included but not factored into statistical analysis. I intentionally use gender neutral plural pronouns to promote anonymity in the evaluation process. The evaluations were required, and thus, I feel they should remain confidential. Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent B Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 20, 2014), Historic Columbia; James Quint, “Docent C Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 20, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, “Docent F Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 4, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, “Docent G Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 6, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent H Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 12, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, “Docent O Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, n.d.), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent S Informal Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, June 18, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent S Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, July 18, 2014), Historic Columbia.

³⁴ Ann Posner, “Docent H Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 12, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 17, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent J Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, April 2, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, October 30, 2014), Historic Columbia; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent L Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, June 6, 2014), Historic Columbia; Posner, “Docent O Tour Review”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent R Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, July 24, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent S Informal Tour Review”; Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 1.

³⁵ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent M Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, August 21, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, “Docent N Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, October 30, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner and Jennifer Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 11, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent S Tour Review.”

made no attempt to present the family tree interactive.³⁶ A few docents also avoided hands-on objects as well. One audience member had to ask a docent if the stereoscopes could be touched and another fumbled to work it with no instruction from the guide. Some bypassed the stereoscopes altogether.³⁷

The tour also required precision of language. Some docents excelled at this while others slipped into coded language that reinforced a Lost Cause interpretation of Reconstruction, which was noted and discussed. Coded language on race will be discussed in the next chapter, but negative, universalizing statements about carpetbaggers was the most common non-race related concern. Carpetbaggers were “capitalizing on” Reconstruction and took “advantage of” the situation. Even after being corrected on the Lost Cause rhetoric, one of these docents replaced the language with synonyms. The docent referred to carpetbaggers as “white opportunists” and scalawags as “collaborationists.” The docent replaced an incorrect reference to the Union presence during the Wilson’s time in Columbia as an “occupation” force with a “substantial” federal presence. The largest number of troops stationed in South Carolina occurred before the passage of the 1868 state constitution. By late summer of that year, the army maintained only three posts in the state: Columbia, Charleston and Aiken.³⁸ But for every docent relying on ingrained Reconstruction language, there were others who chose

³⁶ Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent N Tour Review”; Posner and Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 26, 2014), Historic Columbia; John Sherrer, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, June 4, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent S Tour Review.”

³⁷ Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, June 4, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent M Tour Review”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 20, 2014), Historic Columbia.

³⁸ Posner and Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014; Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 50; Edgar, *South Carolina*, 397.

precise language to convey complex ideas and or avoid Lost Cause terminology. One docent tackled the “myth” of the Carpetbagger head-on in the political conversation sparked by the formal parlor. Other docents could discuss the troop presence without using the word *occupation* and described Reconstruction as a “failed revolution” or situated it within the mindset of the “New South.”³⁹

Despite these small challenges, the most significant obstacles were mastering the semi-guided tour and inclusion of engagement questions. Not all docents favored engagement questions designed to make audiences think critically about the exhibit. Although they could prompt exploration, questions could also produce awkward silences. Engagement required a common skillset cultivated among docents—distilling whether some visitors prefer active listening. Following training, docents identified forming and asking questions and giving time for visitor responses as skills they gained. Inquiry based learning required questions that moved beyond simple yes or no responses but were not so open-ended that they were overwhelming. One docent observed the home “lends itself” to asking questions in a way other HHMs do not, but docents have to gauge the best timing to ask a leading question and where to insert them in the tour. Likewise, Brazier found people generally answered as she intended and was “pleasantly surprised” the questions advanced her “narrative” for her. Scott found tailoring questions to the strengths and interests of the group strengthened her own tour. Another docent who gave a stellar evaluation tour modeled strong engagement techniques—repeating questions to make sure everyone heard and understood them and frequently inviting guests to “imagine” how Wilson felt as a teenager growing up and how women felt about black

³⁹ First quote from Taylor, “Docent R Tour Review”; Second quote from Taylor, “Docent L Tour Review”; Third quote from Taylor, “Docent S Tour Review.”

men voting.⁴⁰ But some docents felt awkward using this interpretative style. Two docents were uncomfortable with reflective questions because visitors rarely responded.

Volunteer John Clark found there was “a huge difference” between asking a twelve year old and a seventy-five year old person, “Why do you think they would do this?”⁴¹

Even the most prepared docent struggled with engagement. Nearly a dozen docents ran into some problem with engagement questions on their tour.⁴² Of the eleven major engagement points in the primary rooms, three docents hit four or less engagement points.⁴³ It was tempting to revert to yes or no questions. Others who heavily incorporated objects into their narrative or who had guests show great curiosity about an object missed opportunities to craft questions about material culture. Over a quarter of the docents performed “fair” or needed support asking different levels of questions.⁴⁴

Not having an audience was one of the greatest hindrances to this successful training program and to the evaluation process. It limited docents’ ability to practice engagement questions and explains why docents struggled with this technique during their evaluations. Waites, Cook and other evaluators requested Historic Columbia staff play the audience. Waites also invited staff at other museums to get a “sneak preview” as

⁴⁰ Ann Posner, “Docent D Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 24, 2014), Historic Columbia.

⁴¹ Wright, email message to Waites, “Feedback on the WWFH Tour”; Allison Marsh, email message to Robin Waites, “Questions on Panels @ WWFH,” December 17, 2013; Docent Doe, interview; Brazier, interview; Bernadette Scott, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “March Results,” May 1, 2015; Celia Galens, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Walt’s Tour,” June 12, 2014; Clark, Second Interview.

⁴² Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent A Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 10, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent L Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent M Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent N Tour Review”; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Jean Morgan,” August 21, 2014; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent Q Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, October 1, 2014), Historic Columbia.

⁴³ Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent R Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent S Informal Tour Review.”

⁴⁴ Ann Posner, “Docent B Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 20, 2014), Historic Columbia; Quint, “Docent C Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” March 26, 2014; Taylor, “Docent R Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent S Tour Review.”

“guinea pigs.” The most successful docent at encouraging participation that Cook evaluated had an audience of five, suggesting to her that future training and practice should incorporate an audience “to connect with supported engagement.”⁴⁵ For her evaluation, Brazier brought in five or six female co-workers who wanted to see the house. She thought it created a “more authentic experience” than awkwardly addressing the evaluator because she saw the reactions and fielded questions of uninformed people. When visitor attendance declined after opening, it also became difficult to demonstrate genuine engagement and pull-back techniques on shadow tours. As such, when a small group tour was prearranged, Volunteer Coordinator Ann Posner contacted trainees.⁴⁶

Equally as troubling as the engagement questions predicament was mastering the semi-guided tour. A dozen docents could not sustain the semi-guided tour throughout their evaluation, frequently giving too much exposition and forcing their tours to run well over the allotted seventy-five minute time limit. Some added general knowledge about the home and the Wilsons and others brought friends on the tour, which may have extended the conversations. Either docents failed to encourage their audience to explore or talked so excessively guests felt compelled to stay with them.⁴⁷ One docent never defined the semi-guided tour but told guests to move “as you want to.” Another docent’s

⁴⁵ Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Staff, “WWFH Trial Tours,” February 4, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Guide Evaluations,” January 16, 2014; Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 1; Ann Posner, email message to Historic Columbia Staff, “Please Be a ‘Audience Member,’” February 21, 2014.

⁴⁶ Brazier, interview; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Maria Schneider,” May 14, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Group Tour at Woodrow Wilson,” May 15, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Jennifer Taylor and Ann Posner, “Shadowing at WW,” August 14, 2014.

⁴⁷ Taylor, “Docent A Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent B Tour Review”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent E Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 28, 2014), Historic Columbia; Posner, “Docent F Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent H Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent H Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent J Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent L Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent M Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent S Informal Tour Review”; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Betsy Kleinfelder and Holly Westcott, “Holly’s Evaluation,” October 30, 2014.

closing monologue segued from Wilson’s passion for women to a recitation of a love letter he had written to his wife Ellen ten years into their marriage about a “storm of love making.” The docent, feeling there was a lot to offer with this personal commentary, did not wish to do another evaluation demonstrating the pull-back and withdrew from training. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a single docent went “too far into the realm of self-guided,” inviting guests to “take a look” at an artifact with no lead-in or description. This was the only time a docent was encouraged to add more to a “bare bones” tour.⁴⁸ Whether because of nerves, the compulsion to fill silences, or struggles with content, docents fell back on the information in the panels. This left no motivation for the visitor to read the panels or investigate objects. In one case, a visitor wanted to use the stereoscopes but the docent resumed their narrative and guided the visitor to a related panel.⁴⁹ Many of these same docents as well as a few others provided summaries of exhibit film content that were redundant, most often by detailing the Reconstruction amendments in the informal parlor rather than letting the citizenship film do the work for them.⁵⁰

Docents received tips and strategies to facilitate the self-guided design, such as looking for cues from guests. For example, one woman was about to explore the family tree interactive and a docent interrupted to discuss the family picture. Evaluators

⁴⁸ First quote from Taylor, “Docent K Tour Review”; Letter from Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent N Tour Review”; Posner, email message to Taylor, “Jean Morgan.”

⁴⁹ Taylor, “Docent B Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent E Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent H Tour Review”; Posner and Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review”; Fielding Freed, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, June 4, 2014), Historic Columbia; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014; Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 2; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Docent P’s Evaluation,” March 14, 2014.

⁵⁰ Posner, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent H Tour Review”; Posner, “Docent H Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent M Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent S Informal Tour Review.”

encouraged docents to embrace rather than fight the silence the semi-guided tour generated. Docents were to show restraint after giving required thematic points, using their wide breadth of knowledge to supplement visitor interest on a case-by-case basis after inviting visitors to read panels and study objects. Those strong enough to be passed but who needed more practice in pulling-back filled gaps on the schedule on slower traffic days.⁵¹

3.4 “*You Cannot Please Everybody:*” Rejecting the Interpretation.

Engaging the audience, maintaining the semi-guided style, demonstrating features of the twenty-first century museum, relying on panels, and using precise language were the most common issues illuminated by the evaluations. However, the most contentious training issue for docents was the evaluation process itself. Nevertheless, those who passed understood its purpose. But the evaluation process was not the only reason the majority of docents eschewed the new tour and exhibit. Some docents also held a negative view of Reconstruction and/or attachment to the previous Wilson interpretation. Only those docents who gave WWFH tours consented to oral history interviews, quietly demonstrating the controversy spawned by the museum. As such, museums should expect to be challenged by their docents when undertaking a difficult or controversial exhibit or tour.

The issue of evaluations divided docents. Because such formal evaluations to conduct tours had not been done in other houses, docents noted the lack of consistency

⁵¹ Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Walt’s Evaluation 3/20/2014,” March 21, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Docent U,” March 5, 2014; Docent U, email message to Ann Posner, “Woodrow Wilson Tour,” March 6, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Docent U, “WW Tour,” March 11, 2014; Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 2; Taylor, email message to Posner, “Docent P’s Evaluation.”

and questioned whether Historic Columbia thought the WWFH was special or if the evaluations foreshadowed changes to come for the docent program. Stickney recalled, “The feedback was very negative on that from the other docents. They did not like that.” For some docents, the evaluation made them hesitant to participate.⁵² Clark speculated that, with “people giving their own time” and not wanting to be “judged,” the intimidation of an evaluation or resentment of “constructive criticism” could spark people to “walk away at any point . . . if they’re not happy.” Evaluations of training and completion rates corroborate these whispers in the gift shop. Only fourteen percent of docents found “getting feedback on my practice tours from staff” useful, ranking last in most useful aspects of training alongside “role playing in a group.” While fifteen docents finished the first four training sessions and four had one session to make up in the month before opening, seven of them never made it to the evaluation process and three more stopped training after failing their first evaluation.⁵³

Some docents grew resentful of the Reconstruction-heavy script and evaluation demands, thus challenging the interpretation by minimizing Reconstruction in their tours. The two docents most eager to give tours, docents U and P, also struggled the most with the evaluation process and made the tour about Wilson. They had both given hard hat tours of the Wilson home when it was closed and their devotion to this tour made them a concern for staff from the beginning. Cook confirmed these fears when her evaluation cited Docent U for not “grasping” content and the thematic organization of each room

⁵² Stickney, interview; Morgan, interview; Docent Doe, interview.

⁵³ The quote in the subtitle also came from Clark, Second Interview; Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” slide 6; Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, “WW Attendance Record,” January 15, 2014; Ann Posner, “WW Volunteer Training Nov. 2013 Session 4” (Historic Columbia, January 15, 2014), Historic Columbia Collection.

and not following the script. Rather, this docent relied on “highly detailed” accounts about Wilson’s education or architecture. Both docents wanted to work opening weekend but their content issues worried staff, who ultimately decided the opening provided an opportunity for inclusion “in a limited capacity.” So committed to being a WWFH docent, docent U offered their schedule before passing the evaluation process and volunteered to work non-tour related events at the home.⁵⁴ Docent U and another docent who also relied on old information from previous Wilson tours both tried to be added to the schedule when a new volunteer coordinator replaced the retiring Ann Posner. Both were encouraged to shadow more tours to learn the content and transitions the docents missed but never attempted another evaluation.⁵⁵

The interpretative team decided to have two evaluators for Docent P, the other eager trainee.⁵⁶ Docent P thought the tour ventured “too deep in the weeds on Reconstruction.”⁵⁷ This explained this docent’s use of more Lost Cause rhetoric than any other docent and ongoing commitment to privileging Woodrow Wilson. In contrast, other docents lost Wilson in their tours. One volunteer excited about the tour never passed the evaluation because the Wilson content was inaccurate or missing.⁵⁸ Post-approval, a weekend staff docent consciously chose to minimize the Wilson content. Sometimes

⁵⁴ Ann Posner, email message to Robin Waites, “WW Schedule,” January 31, 2014; Quote from Robin Waites, email message to Ann Posner, “WW Schedule,” January 31, 2014; Docent U, email message to Ann Posner, “March Schedule,” February 18, 2014.

⁵⁵ Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Tour Coverage,” September 8, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “WWFH Tour,” October 16, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Betsy Kleinfelder, “WWFH Tour,” October 21, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Donna Stokes,” February 26, 2014; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Volunteers for WW Book Signing,” September 4, 2014.

⁵⁶ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Shadow Volunteers,” February 4, 2014.

⁵⁷ Docent P, email message to Ann Posner and Docent U, “Meeting with Ann,” March 25, 2014; Ann Posner, forwarded email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Meeting with Ann,” March 25, 2014.

⁵⁸ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Make Up Sessions,” May 14, 2014; Kleinfelder, email message to Taylor, “Tour Coverage.”

“guilty of not introducing what the room does for the family,” as she put it, she rejected the notion the docent has to put Wilson in when Historic Columbia is “really getting at Reconstruction.” In the informal parlor, she bypassed the room statement on an after-dinner conversational setting for the Wilsons to explore citizenship. “To me that’s the most important part” and “what Historic Columbia is doing with this work.”⁵⁹

Docent P ultimately went through four evaluation attempts conducted by four different evaluators. The docent needed tremendous support with selecting and including the correct content and themes, not just due to the omission of half of the room statements. By the second evaluation, there was only a gradual improvement in selecting evidence and then only related to Wilson. With each passing evaluation, the docent could not restrain the impulse to make the tour about Wilson. The docent drifted into long asides about Wilson’s early life pulled from the old WWFH interpretation, biographies, and the Augusta boyhood home tour. In Tommy’s bedroom, the docent consistently referred to a tour point from Augusta that Tommy wrote constitutional by-laws for his baseball team. The docent attempted to inject themselves into the narrative by sharing anecdotes about their grandfather being hired by the Wilson administration and visiting Wilson’s birthplace in Staunton while driving a moving van. The presidential library staff thought the docent was there to pick up the birth bed on loan while the Columbia site was closed. By the last evaluation, the Wilson narrative remained, most heavily in the study.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lee, interview.

⁶⁰ Posner and Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” March 26, 2014; Freed, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014; Sherrer, “Docent P Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014; August tour information from Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 72–73; Stephanie Herzberg, “Tour of Boyhood Home.”

The docent's evaluation failures went beyond being a Wilsonphile. Not only did the docent not explain the semi-guided tour but the long narrative the docent wove demonstrated a resistance to the technique. As a result, the docent repeatedly received low marks in tour length and self-exploration. On the final evaluation the evaluators had to prompt instructions for the semi-guided experience. The docent rarely used engagement questions, and in some spaces had no "hook" but only a general call for questions. The docent offered basic thematic transitions with no complexity: "Now we're going to talk about . . ." or "I will meet you in the next room." The docent made bad jokes and refused to cut them. One was that the "normal" school was not teaching students how to be "normal."⁶¹

When another member of the interpretative team was brought on to reinforce that the constructive criticism stemmed from institutional policy, the docent grew frustrated and delivered a half-hearted tour for the third evaluation. Not only did the new evaluator find the docent's body language unfriendly, but the docent's progress declined to Fair and/or Needs Support across the board on presentation and content, audience engagement, and to some degree procedures. The docent hit only one engagement point and four rooms needed major work.⁶² The docent finally passed on the fourth evaluation conducted by three evaluators. The tour was strong in several spaces, but the docent suffered from the same critical issues. In most areas of content, timing, engagement, assessing the audience, and self-exploration, the docent ranked fair or between fair and

⁶¹ Posner and Taylor, "Docent P Tour Review"; Quote from Taylor, "Docent P Tour Review," March 26, 2014; Fielding Freed, "Docent P Tour Review" (Columbia, SC, April 18, 2014), Historic Columbia; Freed, "Docent P Tour Review," June 4, 2014; Sherrer, "Docent P Tour Review"; Taylor, "Docent P Tour Review," June 4, 2014.

⁶² Freed, "Docent P Tour Review," April 18, 2014.

good from all three evaluators. All agreed Docent P needed support in engagement, one believing it the key issue. However, the docent hit six engagement points. The docent occasionally fell back on the simplified transition statements and left little time in some spaces for the self-guided experience. Still drawn to controversial Reconstruction topics, the docent spoke extensively on Sherman and the burning of Columbia controversy. The docent talked too much in general, highlighting the old carpeting in the home and bouncing around from topic to topic.⁶³ Not long after passing, Docent P took a hiatus from volunteering to pursue business interests.

The resistance of other docents ranged from indecisiveness to outright opposition because of intimidation or disagreements with interpretation. Three strong WWFH docents were noncommittal to giving tours initially, although they had wanted to complete training. Scott revealed “it was ‘assumed’ I would be trained to assist.” New docents Westcott, who sensed a lack of interest among seasoned docents, and Maria Schneider both learned the WWFH before other house tours because it was Historic Columbia’s “greatest need.” Stickney’s resistance stemmed from never having had any interest in giving Wilson tours before the reinterpretation. Plus she thought “Nobody wants to know about Reconstruction . . . They come here to see Woodrow Wilson.” She decided that she owed herself and the organization to do it. She was “slowly won over” by learning Reconstruction and used her change of heart to bring other reluctant docents on board. Likewise, Clark told guides intimidated by the training that he found the tour easier because of the panels.⁶⁴ Education Coordinator James Quint thought that “one of

⁶³ Freed, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014; Sherrer, “Docent P Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review,” June 4, 2014.

⁶⁴ Ann Posner, email message to Robin Waites, “WW Volunteers,” December 19, 2013; Richardson, “Docent Survey”; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Pris Stickney, email message to Robin Waites, “WWFH,” June

the faults of Historic Columbia in this process is that we put this house tour on a pedestal and it has intimidated some folks, especially a number of the volunteers.”⁶⁵ Even though they passed, two docents lacked confidence in presenting the interpretation during their evaluation. Rather than emphasize the theme of the Wilson family during Reconstruction, one docent said the site was “interpreted to Reconstruction now.” Another seemed self-conscious despite sharing good information.⁶⁶

A combination of resistance and the challenging nature of the tour led to low volunteer completion rates. The main complaint Stickney heard was the house was just “different.” Some had loved the house and giving the previous Wilson tour as it was and “just weren’t sure.” Morgan knew of others who disagreed with the interpretation and refused to do tours. The “sticking point” was seeing the house and Reconstruction through “twenty-first century eyes” and not the people of the time. Morgan thought “initially, the interpretation was not doing that.”⁶⁷ By May, Posner had lost hope for five docents but continued to court ten partially trained docents, inviting them to come shadow on busier days and setting up makeup sessions designed to push them through the process. Only three were approved in the next year.⁶⁸ Three long-term, successful docents completed training but declined tours before the evaluation process. One of them pulled

25, 2014; Stickney, interview; John Clark, First Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016; Westcott, interview; Holly Westcott, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; “Greatest need” from Schneider, “Docent Survey.”

⁶⁵ James Quint, email message to Erin Holmes, Jennifer Thraikill, and Halie Brazier, “WWFH Tours This Weekend,” February 18, 2014.

⁶⁶ Quint, “Docent C Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent G Tour Review.”

⁶⁷ Stickney, interview; Morgan, interview.

⁶⁸ Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor and James Quint, “WW Sample Tours,” February 26, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Make Up for Volunteers,” May 7, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Shadowing Jen Taylor’s Tours,” April 23, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Anne Weir et al., “Woodrow Wilson Training Session Make-Up,” May 14, 2014; Ray Hopkins, email message to Ann Posner, “Woodrow Wilson Training Session Make-Up,” May 14, 2014; Kleinfelder, email message to Taylor, “WWFH Tour”; Ann Posner, email message to Vicki Cannon, “Vicki Canon,” June 3, 2014.

what Posner called the “volunteer trump card.” The docent was so “out of sorts about the whole thing” that she warned she could always volunteer somewhere else. Some volunteers simply did not complete training, even if they liked the tour. One docent wrote the tour he shadowed was “first class all around,” “informative, unique, well-done, intriguing, thought provoking.” He “felt proud to be a part of Historic Columbia.”⁶⁹

Docents with years of experience or attachments to previous interpretation may initially resist tour changes but with encouragement and continued exposure some may embrace it. Jennifer Pustz suggests these are teachable moments about restoration and preservation that can “help steer” docents “from the nostalgia to the interpretative benefits of the restoration.”⁷⁰ Historic Columbia made valiant attempts to acknowledge and correct docent concerns. As a result of post-opening feedback sessions led by Cook, the organization circulated a revised script inspired by docent-feedback and visitor evaluation results, created a virtual tour of the second floor for guests that could not go upstairs, and remade a controversial exhibit film about Wilson and the memory of Reconstruction, which is discussed in the fourth chapter. Docents appreciated the upgrades to the script and films, even if revisions did not meet everyone’s individual requests. After seeing the revisions to the Wilson film, a reluctant docent commented she was now interested in learning the tour. Historic Columbia debuted the film in April 2015 at a training session demonstrating the tour’s evolution since opening. Existing volunteers

⁶⁹ Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, “July WW Schedule,” June 19, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Jean and Jeanette,” March 18, 2014; Jim Staskowski, email message, to Ann Posner, “Tomorrow,” June 12, 2014.

⁷⁰ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 44; Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 97.

who started Wilson training and some of the resisters were invited “to keep trying to bring them on board.”⁷¹

Still, most of the WWFH docents, even if nervous or disliking evaluations in general, understood why evaluations were necessary for “quality control” and representing the site well. One docent saw the WWFH as “a very different project” that required “a good impression” and docents “who really knew what they were talking about and were capable of giving the tours.” Hogan agreed. The home was “not just about furniture” but “American values.” Historic Columbia needed “to make sure that people understand that.”⁷²

3.5 WHO MAKES THE BEST DOCENT?

The majority of volunteer docents either refused or felt incapable of conducting the WWFH tour. Given this, public history professionals must consider whether volunteers make the best docents for twenty-first century museums. Administrators should expect to lose docents who are not paid and/or not trained as educators or historians. Bad HHM docents ruin a visitor’s experience in stellar HHMs and generate bad publicity. But good ones can elevate the average HHM from forgettable to memorable. Of course the primary issue is that volunteers are essential for many museums to remain open. Half of Jennifer Pustz’s respondents in her study on interpreting domestic workers in HHMs had twenty or fewer part-time volunteers but

⁷¹ Waites, “WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14”; Document sent by Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH General Calendar”; Daniella Cook, email message to Robin Waites, “Follow Up from Training and Next Steps,” February 4, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Volunteer/Staff Feedback Sessions,” April 17, 2014; Waites, email message to Volunteers, “WWFH June Follow-Up”; Stickney, email message to Waites, “WWFH”; Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview; Quote from Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Robin Waites, “March Volunteer Meeting Notes,” March 5, 2015.

⁷² “Quality control” quote from Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview; Hogan, interview; Brazier, interview.

others had hundreds. Only a quarter of the HHMs paid guides exclusively. One third only had volunteers. The WWFH reflected a third of HHMs that used both volunteers and paid docents but relied most heavily on volunteers.⁷³ Operating budgets aside, HHMs should consider if unpaid volunteers with limited public history training should be placed into frontline interpretative positions. And if so, the WWFH docents illuminate key characteristics that define the successful docent capable of giving complicated interpretations. But regardless of professional or volunteer status, docents learning the WWFH had to come to terms with their own Lost Cause indoctrination.

In the context of learning and expressing complex ideas about race, gender and politics, the most successful volunteer docents were history majors, educators, holders of advanced degrees or a combination of these characteristics. A large majority of the sixteen docents filling out surveys, eleven of which went on to participate in oral histories, were history majors and/or held advanced degrees. Five volunteer and four paid docents majored in history.⁷⁴ Despite previous exposure to Reconstruction, three specifically spoke of learning more in training, especially on the local level. Two volunteers felt they knew more about Reconstruction going in than others. Because much of the material explored an era of history rather than just the house and family, one docent admired participants who had less knowledge about Reconstruction.⁷⁵

Most docents who excelled in giving the tour held advanced degrees. Two weekend staff docents were history PhD candidates at USC. Jennifer Gunter's education

⁷³ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 92; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 43–45.

⁷⁴ Stickney, interview; Hogan, interview; Cyndy Storm, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016; Storm, interview; Clark, First Interview; Richardson, "Docent Survey"; Docent Doe, interview; Erin Holmes, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016; Brazier, "Docent Survey"; Menne, "Docent Survey"; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Gunter, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016. She wrote her undergraduate thesis on Reconstruction in Mississippi; Clark, First Interview; Docent Doe, interview.

made her more aware of “how big the story is” but she also noted this can make being a docent “harder . . . when you know too much about the history.”⁷⁶ Five weekend staff docents at one point had or were earning master’s degrees in public history from USC. The visitor focus of Brazier’s docent experience differed from the heavy emphasis on research, exhibit design and collections of her degree. Guiding tours required “translating all of that scholarship into performing it kind of in a way” and tapping into her customer service background.⁷⁷ Among the volunteers, one held a master’s in U.S. history and two earned PhDs, one in English and another in political science. Clark went to Wilson’s alma mater, Davidson College. There he enjoyed his first history course more than his first political science course but ultimately earned a PhD in political science with an emphasis in international relations. His education and work for a Congressman and South Carolina governor Dick Riley gave him critical thinking and analytical skills related to historical and political events and the ability to handle a variety of audiences and inquiries diplomatically.⁷⁸ Five others held master-level degrees, including three related to teaching or school administration and one in library sciences and hospital administration.⁷⁹

Traditionally, Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan have argued, the majority of docents “are neither trained educators nor performers” even though some of the best docents, according to Jennifer Pustz, are “retired teachers who carry their classroom experience into their work with the public.” In the case of the WWFH, there were two

⁷⁶ Holmes, “Docent Survey”; Gunter, interview.

⁷⁷ Lee, interview; Brazier, interview.

⁷⁸ Hogan, interview; Westcott, “Docent Survey”; Clark, First Interview.

⁷⁹ Scott, “Docent Survey”; Weir, “Docent Survey”; Menne, “Docent Survey”; Richardson, “Docent Survey”; Stickney, “Docent Survey.”

librarians but most were former teachers.⁸⁰ Among those docents taking the survey and conducting oral histories, five served as secondary teachers. Five also taught on the college level, including Clark who spent a brief stint at Columbia's Reconstruction era historically black college, Benedict. Posner sought to add retired principal and "assumed" guide Scott to the ranks of WWFH because she "naturally uses 21st century learning model" on her tours. After retiring from teaching and a position as Social Studies School District Coordinator, Hogan sought "to use my talents in history education and also give back to the community." The WWFH was "a wonderful opportunity to do both." Morgan, a French teacher who "always loved history," explained the "logical pairing" of teachers as volunteer docents was rooted in "the desire to inform people" of things they do not know. Morgan's need to "latch onto a thread and follow it and see where it leads to" discussed earlier stemmed from her teaching.⁸¹

Perhaps most significantly, the tour forced many white docents, regardless of age or paid status, to come to terms with their own indoctrination of the Lost Cause. The oral history evidence suggests a cathartic experience for the guides. Those hailing from South Carolina and the South were particularly cognizant of this influence. Although a far larger number of docents hail from South Carolina, six spoke on the record. Three are from the upstate, a hotbed of Klan activity during Reconstruction and to some degree today. Five spoke openly about being taught the Lost Cause.⁸²

⁸⁰ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 112; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 44; Posner, email message to Waites, "WW Volunteers"; Richardson, "Docent Survey."

⁸¹ Morgan, interview; Hogan, "Docent Survey"; Scott, "Docent Survey"; Westcott, "Docent Survey"; Weir, "Docent Survey"; Posner, email message to Waites, "WW Volunteers"; Clark, First Interview. From my own time teaching courses at the University of South Carolina, I know Jennifer Gunter and Erin Holmes have taught college courses.

⁸² Westcott, interview; Lee, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, First Interview; Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview; Morgan, interview; Brazier, interview; Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 62; Kimberly Johnson, "Ku Klux Klan Recruitment Drive Raises Old Fears in South Carolina," *Aljazeera*

Clark was the most vocal volunteer about his exposure to the Lost Cause interpretation of Reconstruction history. Clark grew up in Kingstree, between Florence and Charleston, in the same community as Michael Allen. Allen, a community partnership specialist and three decade veteran with the National Park Service, works extensively on commemorating Beaufort, South Carolina's unique Reconstruction experience, the Port Royal Experiment. His work is inspired partially by an overgrown lot he had passed day after day in Kingstree. He did not learn until adulthood that the property once belonged to a black Civil War officer, Reconstruction-era mayor, and state senator. Kingstree never discussed this remarkable local hero, which is not surprising given Clark's comments on his education and how Reconstruction has been remembered.⁸³ In 1957-1958, Clark used the state history textbook by Mary C. Simms Oliphant as a student in eighth grade history. He learned the "Yankees and the Carpetbaggers and freed slaves ran the government and it was corrupt." In this story corruption, alcoholism and excessive drinking plagued the legislature. The "Ku Klux Klan was a good organization" and "needed" even if it was "unsavory" in the 1950s. The Klan rode with their "white sheets, the white hoods" and made "blacks think they were ghosts and scared them away from voting. And we all got chuckles out of that." The Klan and Red Shirts, the statewide paramilitary force that used fraud and violence to return

America, August 1, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/8/1/ku-klux-klan.html>; "KKK Drops Recruitment Candy Bags in Oconee Co. Neighborhood," July 14, 2014, <http://www.foxcarolina.com/story/26017859/kkk-drops-recruitment-candy-bags-in-upstate-neighborhoods>; Carla Field, "Group Announces KKK Rally at Upstate 'Headquarters,'" *WYFF4*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.wyff4.com/news/group-announces-kkk-rally-at-upstate-headquarters/25876262>; Andrew Reeser, "Klan Member Rides Across Two Upstate Towns Promoting Rebel Flag," July 2, 2015, <http://www.foxcarolina.com/story/29467267/klan-member-rides-across-two-upstate-towns-promoting-rebel-flag>.

⁸³ Clark, First Interview; Gina Smith, "Reconstruction History Long Ignored, Neglected: Are We Finally Ready to Talk?," *Island Packet*, June 12, 2015, NewsBank; Schuessler, "Taking Another Look."

white Democrats to power in 1876, bled together. He said, “I don’t remember a real clear distinction.” Aided by the Red Shirts, Wade Hampton, he learned, “saved South Carolina from the horrible Reconstruction when everything was corrupt and white people had basically lost their rights.” He understood there was violence, but it was framed contextually as morally right.

In South Carolina in the twentieth century, Oliphant was arguably the single individual most responsible for spreading the tenets of the Lost Cause and a negative interpretation of Reconstruction.⁸⁴ Among the twenty books she penned on the state’s history, her textbook *Simms History of South Carolina*, first drafted by and named for her famous historian grandfather, was used in schools from the late 1930s until 1985. Upon her induction into the state’s Hall of Fame in the early 1980s, Gov. Dick Riley, whom Clark worked for, said, “We think of her as the lady that wrote our history book. We loved history because of her.”⁸⁵ Oliphant’s belief in the Lost Cause never wavered, even if her overt, racist language became more coded after the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and academics overturned the Dunning School that reinforced her interpretation. She

⁸⁴ Multiple authors reference the “generations” of students who read Oliphant’s textbooks. “Mary Oliphant, Author of S.C. History Text, Dies,” *State*, July 28, 1988, Final edition, sec. Metro/Region, 1A, NewsBank; “Mary Simms Oliphant,” *State*, August 9, 1988, Final edition, 8A, NewsBank; Will Moredock, “Palmetto State Mistaught Its Own History for Decades,” *State*, May 30, 2003, Final edition, sec. Editorial, A13, NewsBank; James Oscar Farmer, “Playing Rebels: Reenactment as Nostalgia and Defense of the Confederacy in the Battle of Aiken,” *Southern Cultures* 11, no. 1 (February 28, 2005): 57; Clark, First Interview.

⁸⁵ Farmer, “Playing Rebels,” 57; Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 168; Riley’s quote appeared in Oliphant’s obituaries. Associated Press, “Mary Simms Oliphant, 97, Author of S.C. Histories,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 28, 1988, Six edition, sec. Metro, 5C, NewsBank; “Mary Oliphant, Author,” 1A; “Mary Simms Oliphant,” 8A; Moredock, “Palmetto State Mistaught,” A13.

could no longer write Reconstruction was “the darkest and bitterest period the State has ever known” but that premise endured through her coded and modified text.⁸⁶

Clark’s recounting of the Oliphant text is remarkably accurate sixty years after his history class. For Oliphant, the dawn of Reconstruction created “a tremendous problem” for the state with the “freeing of thousands of uneducated and irresponsible slaves.” The 1970 textbook edited out the word “irresponsible.”⁸⁷ Although the language changed after Clark’s exposure to the textbook, the lesson remained the same. Former slaves, “unused to freedom,” struggled as to whether to align themselves with “their former masters” or “the Union conquerors” for leadership. Men attending the 1865 state constitution like Wade Hampton III wanted to grant partial voting rights, even though freedmen outnumbered whites, were inexperienced in citizenship and government, and were mostly illiterate. Disenfranchisement and “Black Codes” limiting equality passed instead. This legislation proved unwise even it was “intended to help in keeping order” and not “put the Negroes back into slavery” as the laws were construed by non-southerners. Although some slaves were illegally educated and freedmen educated themselves quickly, Republicans “took advantage of every point of the lack of experience of the Negroes” and had “no real interest in the welfare of the people.” The party, with the “encouragement of Congress and the backing of federal troops” indoctrinated freed people with the notion that Democrats wanted to re-enslave them. “Conservative white South Carolinians” were held hostage by “an unlawful Assembly, maintained by federal bayonets.” Oliphant reduced the real villains to “Alien” scalawags and outsiders while lauding the quiet

⁸⁶ Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Mary C. Simms Oliphant Furman, and W. Gilmore Simms Oliphant, *The History of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: Laidlaw Brothers, 1970), 375; Mary C. Simms Oliphant, *The Simms History of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: The State Company, 1932), quote 244.

⁸⁷ Oliphant, *Simms History* 1932, 241; Oliphant, *History of South Carolina* 1970, 285.

nature and dignified behavior of black politicians from South Carolina, who were “men of better character than the white scalawags.”⁸⁸

The 1970 textbook included a section, the “Feeling between whites and Negroes,” that noted that the “worst part of Radical rule” was dismantling the “old feeling of friendship and confidence” between black and white South Carolinians. This was far nicer language than 1932. In that version, before the Freedmen’s Bureau, carpetbaggers and scalawags turned the “ignorant and child-like negroes” against white people, “nearly all the slaves” demonstrated “their love for their masters by . . . loyally serving the wives and children of the absent soldiers.”⁸⁹ In Oliphant’s revised text, Civil War hero Robert Smalls, who continued to hold office and political appointments “after the overthrow of Reconstruction,” became the lens for these black scalawags and the “Progress of the Negro.” But even “Smalls was known for his kindness to the family of his former master when they were left destitute after the war.”⁹⁰

In 1985, when state standards required the integration of black history into the classroom, the Board of Education replaced Oliphant’s eighth grade textbook.⁹¹

Bureaucratic state educators nonetheless praised the enormous influence of her textbook

⁸⁸ Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 283–91.

⁸⁹ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 240, 243; Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 284, quote 291.

⁹⁰ Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 290, 299, 305.

⁹¹ Henry Eichel, “A Very Different S.C. History Textbook,” *Charlotte Observer*, December 1, 1985, One-Six edition, sec. Viewpoint, 3B, NewsBank; “Mary Simms Oliphant,” 8A; Michael Sponhour, “Professor Has Flair for History Flashy New Textbook Gains Teachers’ Favor,” *State*, August 18, 1991, Final edition, sec. Metro/Region, 1A, NewsBank; Paul Tosto, “The History We Don’t Teach Confederate Flag an Invisible Issue in Most Schools,” *State*, January 2.6, 1997, Final edition, sec. Front, A1, NewsBank; “Confederate Flag Isn’t an S.C. Classroom Issue,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 27, 1997, Three edition, sec. Metro, 5C, NewsBank; Paul Tosto, “History Learns a Lesson: Blacks Also Built S.C.,” *State*, February 1, 1997, Final edition, sec. Front, A1, NewsBank; Adam Parker, “Link to the Past - Perennial Debate Over Black History Month Is Considered Afresh,” *Post and Courier*, February 22, 2009, Final edition, sec. Faith and Values, F1, NewsBank.

when she died three years later.⁹² Journalists of Clark's generation recalled reading it. Of all the culture and institutions that promoted the Lost Cause, Will Moredock called her "his favorite malefactor" in romanticizing the South and promoting white supremacy for generations of South Carolinians.⁹³ In 2015, Oliphant's historic preservationist granddaughter rejected the textbooks as "racist to the core."⁹⁴

As Clark became "an inquiring adult" and avid reader, he explored Reconstruction further. He was not surprised "at the twist" in the interpretation in his eighth grade class. He grew up legally segregated from black people in school. Although he was skeptical of the inequality around him, he felt "guilty as an adolescent that I didn't think about it more. We were taught colored people were happy the way things were."⁹⁵ The WWFH "conflict[s] with what I was taught then."⁹⁶

Other docents recollected similar memories. Westcott spoke of being from a generation that did not want "to fight the [Civil] war all over again." Decades earlier while conducting research on the Georgetown, South Carolina planters club the Indigo Society, she realized the post-Civil War world "became a matter of reconstructing a society---of figuring out how life could be lived post-slavery." And that "involved a lot

⁹² "Mary Simms Oliphant," 8A; Bruce Smith, "S.C. Novelist Coker Is Honored Grand Lady` and Writer Simms Inducted into Hall of Fame," *Charlotte Observer*, February 8, 1992, Three edition, sec. Metro, 1C, NewsBank; Associated Press, "Mary Simms Oliphant, 97," 5C; For quotes, see "Mary Oliphant, Author," 1A.

⁹³ Eichel, "Different S.C. History Textbook," 3B; Moredock quotes are from the following two articles. Moredock, "Palmetto State Mistaught," A13; Will Moredock, "Mary C. Simms Oliphant's Troubling History of South Carolina," *Charleston City Paper*, May 9, 2012, sec. Opinion, <http://www.charlestoncitypaper.com/charleston/mary-c-simms-oliphants-troubling-history-of-south-carolina/Content?oid=4070745>.

⁹⁴ Cindy Sutter, "A Complex Relationship - Boulder Filmmaker Explores History of Slaveowners and Slaves on Her Ancestors' Plantation," *Daily Camera*, February 16, 2006, sec. Living and Arts, D01, NewsBank; Quote from Issac Bailey, "Textbooks Were 'Racist,'" 17.

⁹⁵ Clark, First Interview.

⁹⁶ Clark, Second Interview.

more than I had been taught in history classes previously.”⁹⁷ One docent’s “family was an educated family” but nearly all of them “believed in the memory that was created of the Lost Cause.” The docent attended pep rallies in high school with the Confederate flag, where “we’d sing *Dixie* all the time.” The docent concluded, “The interpretation is exactly what we [southerners] said it was.” Southerners created it and a good many Northerners accepted the idea that state’s rights caused the Civil War and that Reconstruction failed because it was corrupt and the state was controlled by ignorant blacks. Thus the docent emphasized the new information the docent learned into the tour: the military presence “wasn’t a real oppressive presence,” there was massive rebuilding and municipal services offered, white children often did not attend public schools, and USC integrated its campus and Normal School. The docent laughed, “And that’s what makes it so exciting that it’s here. This is the first place. And maybe that’s the way it should be. That the South is the first place that has a museum dedicated to Reconstruction, the real facts about Reconstruction.” Reconstruction “should be talked about” as part of southern history, even if “it may be uncomfortable” to some. And the subject is critical to the WWFH “if you want to talk about the house, the family and the era in which they lived and how that might have affected them.” The docent chuckled thinking how southerners “would never admit” that they “are ashamed of the legacy.”⁹⁸

The power of the Lost Cause extended beyond volunteers over fifty to Millennials who received less heavy-handed myths of it. Brazier still hears the Lost Cause narrative and people “discounting” slavery around her and in her hometown of Lexington, South Carolina. Just outside of Columbia, Lexington was also home to white teenager Dylann

⁹⁷ First quote from Westcott, interview; Remaining quotes from Westcott, “Docent Survey.”

⁹⁸ Docent Doe, interview.

Roof, who spewed Lost Cause rhetoric in Mother Emanuel A.M.E. church just before he killed nine black worshippers in the summer of 2015. Brazier still catches people saying the Civil War was about state's rights and not slavery. She remembered schools teaching, if not the Lost Cause, then "at least Lost Cause Light" in the 1990s. Even in college, she "wasn't really paying attention enough" to question interpretations. She continued, "This house definitely challenged those notions and made me really think about my own education and the way that we talk about it." She laughed that the tour became her favorite, "once I understood" it. The tour was "something different" interpretively and "challenging to what I had grown up learning." She continued, "I got to stretch myself and learn something new or supplement what I knew."⁹⁹

Though decades separated them in age, two docents used the tour to come to terms with their own family's connection with white supremacy. In Heather Bacon-Rogers' asking of visitors to consider the possible racist actions of their ancestors rather than succumb to "white guilt," the Tour and Programs Coordinator revealed, "This house makes me question too what my family was doing . . . I'm telling audiences about these horrible things that are going on. Do I have these horrible things in my past too?" Rogers received a Lost Cause education but not to the extent of previous generations or people she has had on the tour. As Rogers recalled it, black people were not portrayed as ignorant but Reconstruction was framed as "a waste" with no positive outcomes and was violent for no reason. She grew up in Aiken County on the border of Edgefield County. She knew families that went back five generations in Edgefield, white families present

⁹⁹ Brazier, interview; Jason Horowitz, Shaila Dewan, and Frances Robles, "Dylann Roof, Suspect in Charleston Shooting, Flew the Flags of White Power," *The New York Times*, June 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/us/on-facebook-dylann-roof-charleston-suspect-wears-symbols-of-white-supremacy.html>.

during Reconstruction when local whites incited a violent riot against blacks. She exclaimed, “Why did I not know this? The next county over. That [violence] was going on but not right next door.” She learned this information from the tour. Realizing she had been taught misinformation in school, the tour mobilized her to engage “with the subject matter and to find out what I had missed out on by being educated in small town South Carolina.” While Rogers wondered about her family’s white supremacy, volunteer Walt Hall embraced his as a teaching tool. Hall is a descendant of Red Shirts. When he first shared this ancestry, he was encouraged to incorporate this personal element in his tour if he so desired. One staff member found that Hall’s “family’s history as an aside” in the room detailing political terrorism added to the tour.¹⁰⁰

Three additional docents claimed the South as home, two of which are from Virginia.¹⁰¹ Morgan and other southern docents received a similar education to the docents from South Carolina. They laugh now about how their textbooks said slaves were happy and well-treated because they were property and masters did not mistreat property. She admitted “in hindsight” that interpretation “now seems ridiculous.” Lessons were “southern-centric” with a view that Reconstruction was “evil.”¹⁰²

Docents outside of the South suffered from a lack of information rather than a false narrative. Stickney, a “Midwesterner through and through,” grew up in suburban Chicago and Milwaukee. She remembered “learning the term carpetbaggers and that’s about it.” She perceived that Reconstruction happened and was bad. After she listened in

¹⁰⁰ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Friday,” November 14, 2013; Galens, email message to Taylor, “Walt’s Tour.”

¹⁰¹ Gunter, interview; Holmes, “Docent Survey”; Jean Morgan, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

¹⁰² Morgan, interview; Quote in the last sentence are from Morgan, “Docent Survey.”

on a follow-up training meeting where docents talked about what they had learned in school, she concluded that bias had to have some impact. She said, “They had a lot of stuff thrown at them growing up that I didn’t have. And I don’t think you can totally leave that behind.” She could tell on her own practice tour that the good friend she brought was hearing a different interpretation than the one learned in school. Likewise, volunteer Anne Weir, because of her northern education in Michigan, had to learn it, not overturn it. Non-southerner Katy Menne echoed this sentiment growing up with no “strong opinion about the Civil War or Reconstruction.” Wisconsin native Cyndy Storm learned Reconstruction from a Northern perspective, that the Federal government tried to rebuild the South and incorporate African Americans into the society and economy but this was deeply resented by white southerners. But neither of Storm’s two general survey college courses in U.S. history spent much time on Reconstruction.¹⁰³ Hogan, a New Jersey native educated in Maryland before settling in South Carolina, was an exception to those trends. The Civil Rights Movement heavily influenced her Catholic schooling, which she credited with shaping her activism and profession as a social studies teacher. When she came to South Carolina, she waited fourteen years to enter a social studies classroom. She thought “they won’t be open to my understanding of history. I can’t teach about the Civil War and Reconstruction the way that South Carolinians would expect.” She was happy when she returned to the classroom though. It led to her position as Social Studies School District Coordinator, where she and academic historians helped write the state’s standards and support documents for United States history to ensure classrooms were historically up-to-date with scholarship. After a “considerable controversy” over the

¹⁰³ Stickney, interview; Weir, “Docent Survey”; Menne, “Docent Survey”; Storm, “Docent Survey.”

Reconstruction interpretation in the classroom, she “was delighted to see that the interpretation of the WWFH reflected what the state is requiring students to be taught about the era.” Results of bench-mark testing showed teachers were not meeting the standard and current interpretations, not because they were “purposely misinterpreting” but teaching what they were taught with Dunning-school style textbooks.¹⁰⁴ The home’s mirroring of state curriculum was not coincidence. Historic Columbia chose to interpret Reconstruction not just because of Wilson’s “light footprint” in the home and the opportunity to interpret an often misunderstood part of American history but also because teachers expressed a need for this history.¹⁰⁵

Volunteers and professional docents steeped in history, holding advanced degrees, and often working in education perform the tour effectively and use it to reconcile their Lost Cause education. But the question remains whether volunteers are best suited to conduct an interpretively challenging tour. As Tour and Programs Coordinator, Rogers had 100% confidence in the “grade A” volunteers who could adapt to give all four of the HHM tours Historic Columbia offered. Of the five dozen or so guides unwilling or incapable of giving the Wilson tour, only twenty-five to thirty percent still had her confidence in being able to conduct house tours. The WWFH training determined which volunteers were exceptional, in their ability to learn the information and handle controversial topics and conflict. “For me it [WWFH] is the litmus test” when combined with knowing other houses. She called for a more intense screening process to assure quality and perhaps paying a small wage for the three hour shifts volunteers worked.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ “Considerable controversy” quote from Hogan, “Docent Survey”; Hogan, interview.

¹⁰⁵ “WWFH Training Session Planning.”

¹⁰⁶ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

Clark also suggested payment may be the key when he discussed volunteers' objection to the evaluation process. He said, "You're dealing with people giving their own time. They can walk away at any point. They can quit giving tours if they're not happy." For Clark, volunteering should be "enjoyable and relaxing," not time-intensive.¹⁰⁷

The other truth is there are plenty of PhDs and public historians who need jobs, like Brazier, who worked weekends at Historic Columbia because she could not find full-time public history work after earning her master's degree. Many would excel as interpreters and provide valuable support to exhibition and curatorial staff. With museums strapped for cash, this seems impossible, but institutions should consider the overall benefit, accuracy and productivity of two full-time staff versus ten volunteer docents. When the snow storms "brought the evaluation process to a grinding halt" and left staff scrambling to conduct tours and evaluate docents under the duress of an open museum, no member of the staff raised concerns that four weekend staffers were forced to conduct tours before being formally approved.¹⁰⁸ Rogers, who manages the weekend staff, explained they can be fired if they present a Lost Cause narrative or lack professionalism. Furthermore, they are younger, between the ages of twenty-three and forty-five, and often in academia and constantly learning and educating themselves. They read and utilize the supplemental information circulated and convey Historic Columbia's approved research and information, which is not always a guarantee with volunteers. They also share information they encounter and seek permission to incorporate it. Pustz also confirmed that, although paid docents tend to be paid low wages, they work more

¹⁰⁷ Clark, Second Interview.

¹⁰⁸ Brazier, interview; Ann Posner, email message to John Sherrer and Fielding Freed, "Make Up Tours," February 18, 2014; Sarah Blackwell, email message to Robin Waites, "Make Up Tours," February 18, 2014; James Quint, email message to Sarah Blackwell, "WWFH - Weekends," March 14, 2014.

frequently than volunteers, allowing them to hone their skills and be more likely to embrace interpretative changes. They also require less supervision than paid staff but might have less availability if the position is not full time. Rogers thought weekend staff should be included in more workshops with the volunteers as a resource for helping docents answer complex questions and enhance their tours. Her own strong historiographical background is why weekend staff docent Erin Holmes would have preferred to learn the information on her own. However, she “understood the necessity” of training “after listening to some of the older docents.”¹⁰⁹

Lastly, Historic Columbia suffers from the larger trend in HHMs of volunteer recruitment declining along with attendance. Staffing was an immediate concern and became the most consistent and largest logistical conundrum for the organization. And as the chapter discussed earlier, several docents felt pressure to learn the WWFH tour as a result. Rogers argued placing volunteers who did not agree with the interpretation or were incapable of learning such a complex tour into the WWFH would go “against our mission.” But turning guests away would be equally “bad for business.”¹¹⁰ Thus staff filled numerous gaps in the volunteer schedule during the week, including the tour facilitator who conducted half of the tours each day.¹¹¹ Historic Columbia eventually staggered its tour schedule, allowing two houses rather than four to be offered each hour.

¹⁰⁹ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Holmes, “Docent Survey”; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 43–44.

¹¹⁰ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 97; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up”; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

¹¹¹ Posner, “March WW 2014 Calendar”; Posner, “April Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar”; Posner, “May 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar”; Posner, “June 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar”; Posner, “July 2014 Woodrow Wilson Tours Calendar”; Posner, “September WW 2014 Calendar”; Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, “October Woodrow Wilson Schedule”; Kleinfelder, “November 2014– WWFH Calendar.”

This somewhat eased docent fatigue.¹¹² However, a small, reliable team of two to four full time docents would professionalize tours and resolve scheduling conflicts.

Strikingly, regardless of age or professional public historian status, docents walked away from training and tours with a profound sense of the impact of the Lost Cause mythology in their own lives. Those from South Carolina and older docents who grew up with Jim Crow, both de facto and de jure, seemed most cognizant of the Lost Cause's power. The WWFH is not just changing how visitors think about Reconstruction, discussed in the last chapter. It is changing the way its docents think about how history has been crafted and defended in their world to support white supremacy. Meanwhile, Gunter is "still learning better ways to say things, better ways to guide different groups through" while Morgan continues to work on transitions that feel "abrupt."¹¹³ Both this professional and volunteer remain committed to crafting their best tour. Without a doubt, volunteers and paid professional staff are capable of giving complex HHM tours rich in social, gender and racial history. But in the case of the WWFH, only a minority of volunteers are willing to attend the training required to learn this kind of tour and master the tour's content. And as the next chapter will demonstrate, interpreting racial violence and oppression posed problems for everyone. However the vocal and coded opposition to elements of language and cultural sensitivity training and an exhibit film interpreted as portraying Wilson as a racist came from retired, white volunteer docents, suggesting age and white privilege pose problems on the front lines of interpretation.

¹¹² Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "February WWFH Schedule"; Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "March Woodrow Wilson Schedule"; Kleinfelder, email message to Interpretative Team, "April WWFH Schedule"; Bacon-Rogers, email message to Weekend Staff, "Weekend Updates 6/27-6/28"; The new tour schedule launched April 7, 2015. Historic Columbia, "New Tour Times."

¹¹³ Gunter, interview; Morgan, interview.

CHAPTER 4

AREN'T I A CITIZEN?: INTERPRETING VIOLENCE

As discussed in the previous chapter, the endeavor to convert the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH) from a presidential shrine into a Reconstruction museum required a new training program for docents. As part of this training, Historic Columbia implemented a session on language and cultural sensitivity. It was designed to help docents use precise, inclusive language, understand privilege and the social construction of race and other identities, and interact with a diverse range of visitors. However, white paid docents trained as public historians overwhelmingly embraced the workshop while the older, white volunteer docent base was divided about its effectiveness and need. The training was to serve as support for docents preparing to discuss the black experience during Reconstruction and venturing into the turbulent waters of white violence against the black community. The new interpretation also required docents to present the social and economic changes the period ushered in for black workers, including domestic laborers for the Wilson family. This resulted in a contentious debate among docents and the interpretative team on how to frame the segregated spaces domestic workers occupied in the Wilson home's pantries. The space also illuminated a weakness in the interpretation in that sexual violence was largely ignored. However, docents effectively challenged Reconstruction memory and white supremacy in Bedroom 14 devoted to political terrorism and the election of 1876. Docents were at their most confident in this

space but acutely aware of the mental toll the room's interpretation of violence took on themselves and the visitor.

4.1 THE PROBLEM OF PRIVILEGE: LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY TRAINING

Museums that wish to be inclusive must encourage docents to speak to a multitude of audiences who do not approach history through “the heroic, white, male-dominated narrative.” Historic Columbia’s attempt to prepare docents for this best practice resulted in the creation of an interactive training session on cultural and language sensitivity. Both the volunteer base and the weekend staff, often pulled from the ranks of public historians trained at the University of South Carolina (USC), were required to attend. This training was necessary in part because Historic Columbia lacked a diverse volunteer base to facilitate naturally a conversation about these issues among docents. Of America’s 86,000 nationally designated historic sites, just three percent openly represent minorities in their staffing across racial, ethnic, gender or sexual orientation lines.¹ The two women of color volunteering at the time of the reinterpretation embraced the exhibit and tour and participated in training. Timing and outside obligations detoured them from becoming WWFH docents. Historic Columbia offered the hour long inaugural version of the workshop twice to accommodate docents’ schedules. Eighteen volunteers and five paid docents completed the first sensitivity training offered before the museum’s reopening in February 2014. The organization ultimately extended the session to ninety minutes because of the lengthy conversations guided activities generated. Thirteen volunteers, eight of them new inductees, and two paid docents attended the second

¹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 76, quote 140.

workshop held in April.² For later sessions, participation declined to a handful of recently recruited docents.

Historic Columbia asked Daniella Cook, assistant professor in the Department of Instruction and Teacher Education at USC, to craft and lead the first session two weeks before opening.³ Cook specializes in understanding how students, teachers and communities underserved in public education are affected by class, race and power. These themes manifested themselves in the training, but inclusivity stretched beyond them. Before meeting, she assigned “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh, which listed the ways McIntosh herself had benefited from her whiteness. Cook also circulated a link to the second episode of *Race: the Power of An Illusion* discussing the construction of race and the contradictions of American independence and equality in the context of slavery.⁴

Given that the WWFH’s interpretation heavily emphasized the black experience during Reconstruction, materials and discussion revolved frequently around interpreting history that was not focused solely on white narratives and interacting with visitors self-identifying as people of color. However, topics centered on race opened the opportunity to ask docents to consider audiences they may unknowingly exclude with their language.

² Ann Posner, “WW Training Class April 2014” (Historic Columbia, April 29, 2014); Posner, “Training Attendance,” January 15, 2014; Taylor, email message to Bacon-Rogers, “Evaluations”; The details of the cultural and language sensitivity workshop have been modified from a History@Work blog for the National Council on Public History. Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Inclusive Training at Historic Columbia,” *National Council on Public History History@Work*, March 6, 2017, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/inclusive-training-at-historic-columbia/>.

³ Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Dialoging about Race.”

⁴ Cook, email message to Waites, “Follow Up”; Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg and Soniya Munshi (New York: Worth Publishers, 2016), 97–101; California Newsreel, *Race the Power of an Illusion, Episode 2*, Digital, 2003, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UZS8Wb4S5k&feature=share&list=PLTFtnXiHqi_Dsunt4Z5JKDDi_gkhxGi_j.

Cook built on her pre-session materials with activities and handouts. “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race” succinctly explored race as a modern social construct.⁵ She distributed a document entitled “Tour Guide Etiquette: a Guide for the Well Intentioned Volunteer,” a modification by Allison Bailey and Maura Toro-Morn of the pamphlet “Cultural Etiquette: a Guide for the Well-Intentioned” from Amoja Three Rivers. “Tour Guide Etiquette” offered thirteen tips for docents to make visitors feel included and welcomed. These ranged from not asking visitors to speak for their “race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or nationality” to not letting “racist, sexist, or homophobic language and comments go unnoticed.” The tips also stressed the importance of body language, such as spreading “eye contact around” rather than looking at women when addressing reproductive rights or black visitors when discussing slavery.⁶ “Challenging Your Assumptions,” modified from *Teaching Intolerance: Writing for Change*, asked docents to locate the normative language in a series of thirteen sentences. The exercise illuminated ageism, sexism, racism, and classism as well as biases against the disabled and non-Western cultures. Docents circled the “assumption/s” in sentences, such as “Fashion Tights are available in black, suntan, and flesh color” and “Our founding fathers carved this great state out of the wilderness,” and defended their answer.⁷

⁵ California Newsreel, “Ten Things Everyone Should Know about Race,” *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, 2003, http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-x.htm.

⁶ Alison Bailey and Maura Toro-Morn, “Tour Guide Etiquette: A Guide for the Well Intentioned Volunteer,” n.d.; Amoja Three Rivers, “Cultural Etiquette: A Guide for the Well-Intentioned,” *SOA Watch: Close the School of the Americas*, http://soaw.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=626.

⁷ Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor and James Quint, “Monday Afternoon Presentation with Portia,” April 9, 2014; James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor and Ann Posner, “Monday Afternoon Presentation with Portia,” April 9, 2014; Southern Poverty Law Center, “Challenging Your Assumptions,” *Teaching Tolerance*, http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/writing_for_change1.pdf, 29-32.

As new volunteers joined Historic Columbia and committed to conducting the WWFH tour, the language and sensitivity training resumed under the leadership of Porchia Moore, a PhD candidate in library sciences at USC who studies museum inclusivity. She continued with the activities and handouts selected by Cook but brought her own unique insight as a public history practitioner and frequent visitor to museums.⁸ She opened sessions with a fifteen to twenty minute presentation of her own research on museums and inclusivity. She generated complex conversations, particularly when she asked docents to identify appropriate terms for referring to enslaved peoples and people of color from a larger list. These issues surrounding language choice initially prompted Historic Columbia to develop the workshop. The organization was concerned that several docents were “old enough to have learned racial language in their youth that is now antiquated” and may use inappropriate language.⁹ Moore insisted that docents know why they use a specific word and be able to defend that choice. When attendance swelled beyond two or three docents, Moore initiated an interactive component that visually presented privilege to participants through the privilege walk. Docents took steps forward or backward based on a series of questions that illuminated various forms of privilege.¹⁰ For smaller sessions, docents answered these questions on their own and then spoke about their individual results.

⁸ Posner, email message to Taylor and Quint, “Monday Afternoon”; Quint, email message to Taylor and Posner, “Monday Afternoon”; Porchia Moore, “Radical Trust,” *The Inclusion*, May 7, 2014, <https://inclusion.com/2014/05/07/radical-trust/>.

⁹ Posner, email message to Waites, “WW Volunteers.”

¹⁰ Examples of Privilege Walk Activities can be found here: “Privilege Walk Activity” (Inclusion and Diversity Education, Lakeland College, n.d.), https://www.lakelandcollege.edu/cm/diversity/content/documents/Classroom_Activity_Privilege_Walk.pdf; “Module 5: Privilege Walk Activity” (School of Social Welfare, University of Albany, n.d.), http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf.

The language and cultural sensitivity session combined with content training eased fears related to discussing race among some docents. Before and after the first training program, Historic Columbia administered a survey to gauge docents' comfort level "talking with museum visitors about historical issues related to race." After training, the six and half percent of docents taking the survey that previously were "not comfortable at all" dropped to zero. Those "somewhat comfortable" remained nearly unchanged at just over thirty-five percent but those "very comfortable" rose six percent to sixty-four percent. However, these statistics are not conclusive. Thirty-one docents completed the pre-training survey but only fourteen of the twenty-three docents who completed all training took the post-training survey. Furthermore, three volunteers during their formal staff evaluation displayed obvious discomfort with taking about historical

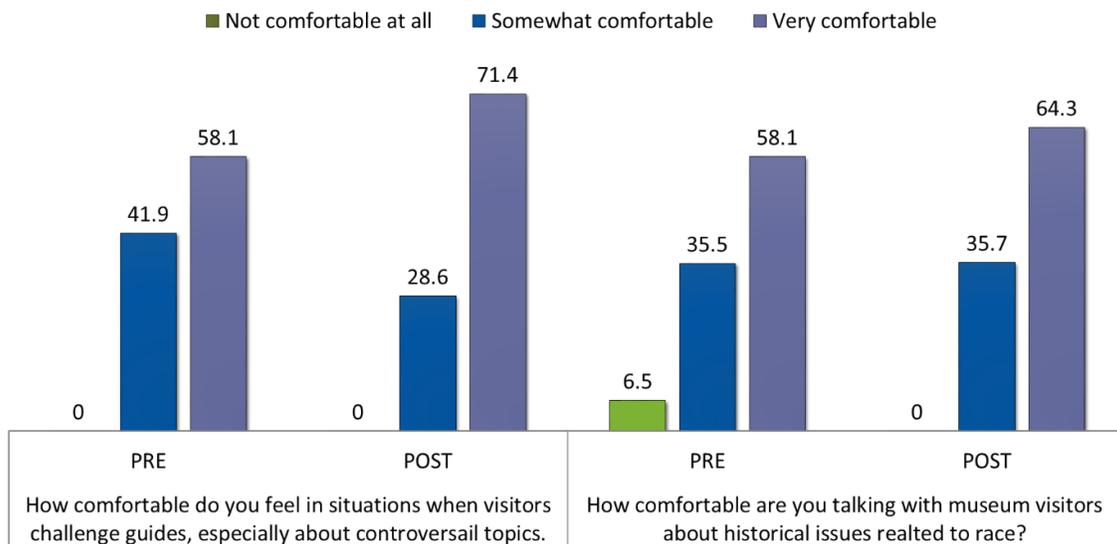
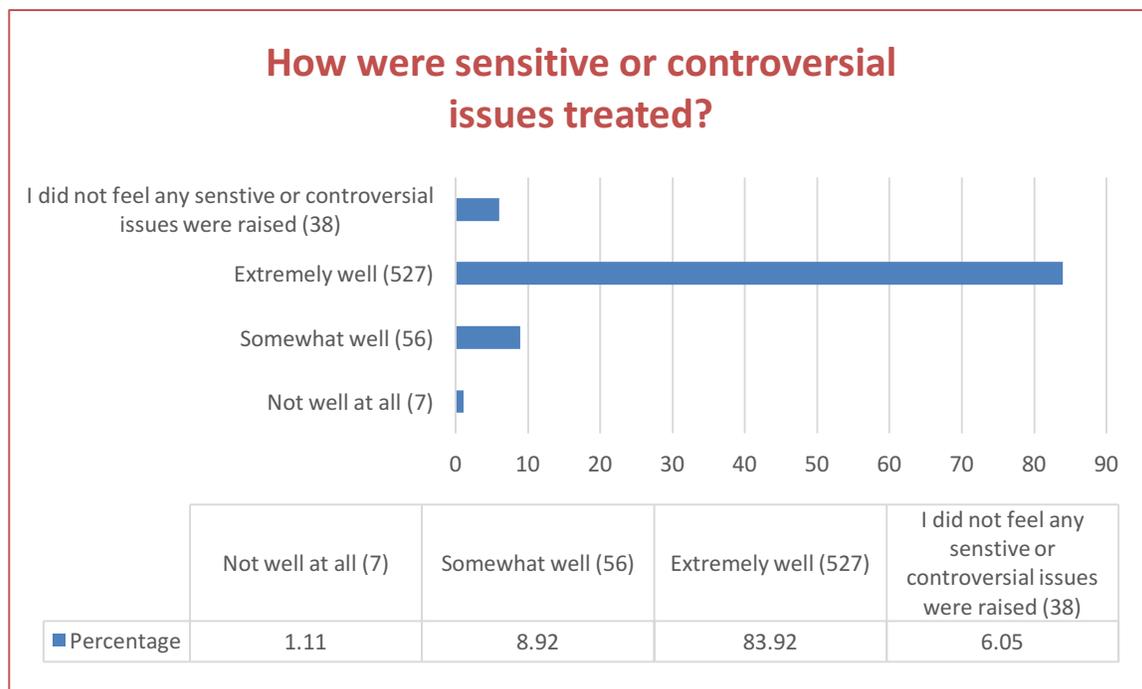


Figure 4.1 Docent Comfort Level in Being Challenged and Discussing Race

issues connected to race. They compensated by ignoring racial aspects of Reconstruction and focusing on Wilson content instead and did not pass those attempts.¹¹

However, of the 628 visitors who visited WWFH in 2014 and completed a survey on their experience, nearly eighty-four percent thought docents handled sensitive issues “extremely well.”¹² Survey results and the high standards set for the docent’s tour evaluation built into the training process demonstrate sensitivity programming is valuable for museums dealing with complex issues of race and creating inclusive environments for all of its visitors.

Table 4.1 Visitor Evaluation Question on Sensitive or Controversial Issues



¹¹ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Betsy Kleinfelder, “WWFH Tour,” October 21, 2014; The subject of the following email has been changed to keep the evaluation process confidential. Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Docent A,” February 26, 2014; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent A Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 10, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner and Jennifer Taylor, “Docent P Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 11, 2014), Historic Columbia; Daniella Cook, “Historic Columbia Foundation WWFH Tour Observation Report” (Columbia, S.C., March 13, 2014), 2; Annie Wright, “Results of WWFH Volunteer Training,” PowerPoint (Columbia, S.C.: Historic Columbia, March 10, 2014), Historic Columbia Collection.

¹² Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home Trends,” PowerPoint (Historic Columbia, January 12, 2015), slide 9.

Although the training appeared to have correlations to positive feedback on visitor surveys and was thus a success, a docent survey and docent oral histories conducted for this dissertation reveal that older, white volunteers were more likely to be critical of the sensitivity workshop than paid docents. Ten volunteers and six paid weekend staffers participated in the survey and eleven gave oral histories. Volunteers were divided. Some enjoyed and learned from the training while others openly admitted disliking some aspect of the session. Conversely, the weekend staff welcomed and benefitted from the training.

Four weekend docents praised exercises related to white privilege, with one calling the session their favorite. The discussion of privilege resonated most with them. They spoke specifically about being able to “see visually” privilege during the privilege walk. The straight line formed by the group at the beginning of the activity divided as they took steps forwards or backwards. These steps corresponded to their responses to questions related to the privileges received or denied them according to their gender, class, racial, and sexual identity. They worked through their preconceived associations of the word *privilege* with wealth by listening to incidents of discrimination experienced by leaders and attendees. For example, one docent never had considered a person of color returning clothes to a department store with a white friend to prevent accusations of theft. After the session, weekend staff member Halie Brazier described being hyperaware of being a white docent telling the story of “terrible things that happened to black people” as a result of Reconstruction era violence and being “a descendant” and “a beneficiary of that system” in the present. The assigned reading “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” drastically changed her understanding about privilege but also made her “overthink” her

tour. One docent, however, suggested some activities and examples be “more directed” at the Wilson home rather than “general” ideas surrounding inclusion.¹³

There was some consensus among weekend staff who trained with volunteers that white privilege and other activities may not have been as effective for older volunteers with ingrained racial views, who had not sat in a college class in decades or did not give tours frequently. One weekend staffer noticed in her blended docent session that two volunteers were surprised to hear that docents should not defer to black visitors to speak about racism. Another recalled a white male volunteer “piped up” with a comment akin to black people can also be racist. She “figured he probably wasn’t going to sit and marinate on his own white privilege.”¹⁴

Volunteers expressed a range of opinions and at times illuminated contradictions they saw in the training and their racial philosophies. They enjoyed and learned from the session, were ambivalent about it, or openly admitted disliking it. For one volunteer, the workshop was ranked as the least favorite, but several spoke of the session’s importance in both the training process and understanding white privilege. For the first time, some volunteers thought about privilege or considered the appropriateness of their word choices. One admitted the lesson opened her eyes while another called for an end to white people dismissing or ignoring their privilege. Volunteer Kathy Hogan struggled to ascertain how much impact the training had on her tours because language and behavior are “not conscious” and she only had a few black visitors to measure any language shifts against. Other volunteers attributed their opposition to their learning styles, exposure to diversity training outside of their volunteer work, and already possessing progressive or

¹³ Brazier, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Lee, interview; Gunter, interview.

¹⁴ Brazier, interview; Bacon-Rogers, “Docent Survey”; Holmes, “Docent Survey.”

neutral views on race and racism. They argued group work in general did little to facilitate their learning and labeled some exercises too “touchy feely” and “silly.” Pris Stickney explained she was a “facts person” and neutral on race, finding no language she should correct on her tour. She hinted at a political correctness, how “we have to be so conscious nowadays.” Two volunteers claimed the session failed to add to their working knowledge of inclusivity from previous professional training yet used “the blacks” to refer to the black community in their oral histories. Another volunteer used the same term on the formal tour evaluation required for clearance to conduct tours.¹⁵

However, volunteer Jean Morgan articulated the most specific objection to the training, which was rooted in a conversation that tested her racial and docent ideology. Morgan thought the session was not well-prepared, citing a technical glitch and quick pace of the session as evidence, but that was not her primary issue. She walked away from the workshop simultaneously believing “it was one-sided” but acknowledging institutional racism and the challenges of white docents interpreting black history. The docent had shared a volunteer experience at the Mann-Simons property, a site administered by Historic Columbia and devoted to the history of a black entrepreneurial, middle-class family in nineteenth and twentieth century. A black visitor argued all white baby boomers of her generation were racists. Morgan thought her presence refuted this

¹⁵ Jean Morgan, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Holly Westcott, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 26, 2016; Anne Weir, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; The following docent requested their interview remain anonymous. Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016; Bernadette Scott, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Cyndy Storm, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 4, 2016; Pris Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016; Kathy Hogan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 16, 2016; John Clark, First Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016; John Clark, Second Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 11, 2016; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, March 17, 2014), Historic Columbia.

claim, but Daniella Cook countered that the visitor may have regarded Morgan as a “white do-gooder.” The docent thought the comment contradicted an earlier session conversation that all people have biases but racism is institutionalized prejudice. The training moment provided Morgan “a valuable insight” into a new perspective. But both experiences reinforced for her that “maybe racism runs one way, but prejudice runs both ways.” She no longer volunteers at Jubilee, the long-running black festival held each fall at the site, because she does not want her presence to be misunderstood. She advocates for Historic Columbia finding a way to staff Jubilee with black volunteers because Mann Simons is considered by the black community “their site” and “the presence of so many white faces is probably offensive to them.”¹⁶

Regardless of the level of acceptance among volunteers, docents from both groups acknowledged exposure to the concept of white privilege mattered and was a critical concept for the tour. However, the majority of paid docents had been exposed to these ideas because they attended university more recently. And while three weekend docents concluded the training appealed to them on an intellectual level cultivated in graduate school, education level was not a factor in volunteers’ ambivalence about the session.¹⁷ Among the volunteers who spoke on record, five held master’s degrees and two earned PhDs in a range of fields including history, English, political science, education, library sciences, and hospital administration.¹⁸ Four docents, three of them volunteers, had previous exposure to diversity training as part of their professions. Survey data and the

¹⁶ Morgan, interview; For an introduction to the Mann-Simons site, see “Mann-Simons Site,” *Historic Columbia*, accessed December 27, 2016, <http://www.historiccolumbia.org/mann-simons-site>.

¹⁷ Brazier, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Lee, interview; Gunter, interview.

¹⁸ Hogan, interview; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Weir, “Docent Survey”; Richardson, “Docent Survey”; Stickney, “Docent Survey”; Clark, First Interview; Westcott, interview.

educational background of docents suggests that language and cultural sensitivity are best practices. They keep an organization's cadre of well-educated, retired volunteer docents current with cultural sensitivity theory and trends even if they do not fully embrace the ideas. It also appeals to professional public historians on staff. As one weekend staffer surmised, "We can all use a little more training on sensitivity and language."¹⁹

4.2 A LABOR OF LOVE AND SORROW: INTERPRETING THE LIVES OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

Sensitivity and language training provided tools to tackle not completely resolve the unique challenges certain rooms manifested with regards to interpreting black individuals who occupied the Wilson home and the violence of the period. The pantries and dining room emerged as the center of interpreting black workers and their relationship with the Wilsons. Interpretations of middle and upper class homes struggle to expose the domestic complexities of different people occupying spaces for diverse purposes. Some HHMs omit these complexities or leave out controversial or potentially offensive information that traditional white museum goers may not be prepared for or wish to witness, but most sites are moving toward more inclusive narratives. In the mid-1980s and 1990s, HHMs began to address this noticeable gap in their interpretation of domestic servants. A 2003 nationwide survey of 358 postbellum HHMs revealed domestic servant interpretation had infiltrated nearly three quarters of house tours but lacked proper contextualization or more than a "mention." Organizations wrestled with this interpretative turn because they felt a lack of material culture and primary sources impeded their ability to elucidate the lives of workers. Docents compensated by using the

¹⁹ Gunter, interview; Hogan, interview; Storm, interview; Clark, First Interview.

architecture, original fixtures, and spaces associated with domestic service, such as the kitchen, servant stairs and laundry room. Period, non-original tools used in domestic chores also helped facilitate the discussion. This method explains why most HHM tours placed the most significance on the use of appliances/technology followed by living conditions and working conditions.²⁰

The goal of HHMs should be to present the servant narrative as central and not tacked onto a white story, as these individuals were part of an inclusive “cast of characters.” The four HHMs devoted to Woodrow Wilson vary in their levels of success incorporating servants and enslaved people. Jennifer Pustz argued “the first step” for HHMs to discuss domestic servants is to rethink their previous history “as shrines, collections of antiques, and architectural masterpieces.” The majority of these shrines and America’s museums are institutionally spaces of white privilege dedicated to the history of “white male conquest.” Because the WWFH’s new interpretation made Reconstruction inclusive and black southerners central in the interpretative storyline, the discussion of domestic life in traditional work spaces that come off as segregated did not operate as a supplement to a white narrative. However, public historian Casey Lee felt the pantries, although “great,” still felt “tacked on.” She concluded this might be unavoidable since they are workspaces attached to more hospitable family spaces. The three other Wilson HHMs, like eighty-five percent of HHMs with publically open spaces occupied by domestic workers, struggle with “tacked on” inclusivity but are trying to maintain their relevancy by challenging this lenticular logic and including non-whites. Lenticular logic as defined by Tara McPherson is the ability to see only one of two linked histories or

²⁰ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 45, 72; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 34–35, 38–39, 42, 46–47, 50, 57–58, 67, 72, 212 footnote 7.

images at a time, usually one of whiteness, when they are in fact bonded together.²¹

While the birthplace of Woodrow Wilson is the most inclusive, two others have yet to incorporate fully a diverse narrative about black occupants of these homes.

The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum (WWPLM) house tour retains its original interpretation highlighting the “virtues and sensibilities” of America’s Scotch-Irish Presbyterianism but now includes those who performed labor in the home.²² The tour starts at the back entrance of the red-brick Greek revival manse, reflecting recent trends in moving tours through work spaces first, rather than the front door. The scene is a typical breakfast in 1857. The first room unveils the cook’s world in the kitchen. She started her day at dawn, firing up her modern range stove, and likely had access to a few chickens, livestock and a garden on the property. Implying the labor performed, the guide called this space the most important room in the house. Entering through the kitchen and addressing slavery immediately was a conscious choice to avoid “stirring in” slavery at the end of the tour. Staff changes in the curatorial department, script issues, and Staunton likely being Tommy’s first exposure to slavery prompted the revisions. The tour never clearly expressed the latter. The church where Joseph pastored leased one to three slaves under a strict contract with owners detailing specific provisions. After passing through the family-centered sitting room, entry into the cook’s private bedroom, a perk of her position, brings non-family members back into the narrative. Other perks included a nice bed, hand-me-down clothing and a five day

²¹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 76, 139–141, quotes 139–140.; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 11, 48; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 27, 2013; Lee, interview; McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 5, 7.

²² James S. Wamsley, “Staunton’s Indomitable Mrs. Herbert McK. Smith,” *The Commonwealth*, April 1973, Papers of Emily P. Smith, Chairman of the Board - Incoming Correspondence - S - 1960, Box 6, Folder 12 5 Feb. 1959-Apr. 1973 Miscellaneous Typed or Printed Tributes to Emily Smith, The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library, Staunton, Virginia Hereinafter, cited as WWPL.

Christmas break.²³ The interpretation in this final space of the floor paints the Wilsons as benevolent paternalists.

A segregated second floor removes enslaved workers from the remainder of the tour; however, several opportunities for a more inclusive narrative exist within the current script. The parlor transformed to a church room for weddings, church meetings, and evening devotionals. The image created of enslaved individuals laboring during church related services expands the scope of the tour's primary theme: "a middle-class minister's family in antebellum Virginia and the household and *values* that produced a future President of the United States." The tour does not ask visitors to consider how enslaved labor in Tommy's first household shaped the family as new benefactors of slavery, which operated in conjunction with their values as Presbyterians, other than that they utilized it. In the dining room, a newspaper and scraps left on plates signal that the Wilsons just finished their quiet breakfast. The tour could induce visitors to imagine the clearing of the table while the family enjoyed the free time that slavery produced. Rather, this space introduces Joseph's domestic life and career as segue to his office. Cementing Woodrow Wilson's status as southerner and Virginian, the tour concludes in the master bed chamber with Tommy's birth.²⁴

Staunton introduces slavery upfront but does not weave the narratives of black lives throughout the entire tour. As such, the home misses its potential to become what Jennifer Scott defines as a *radical* house museum that challenges biased power structures

²³ Cynthia Polhill, the coordinator of Visitor Services and a twelve year veteran of the WWPLM, conducted my tour. Polhill, "Tour of Birthplace"; Cynthia Polhill, "Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum" (guided tour, Staunton, Virginia, June 18, 2015); Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 49; Andrew Phillips, "Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum" (guided tour, Staunton, Virginia, June 18, 2015); Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 5, 7, 23.

²⁴ Polhill, "Tour of Birthplace"; Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 11.

and “narrow histories” of elite whites.²⁵ A decade ago, a study of plantation museums found sixty percent “symbolically annihilated or erased” the memory of enslaved Americans, skewing the visitor’s perceptions of antebellum society. Almost thirty percent depicted black laborers as faithful and their enslavers as moral, hardworking people. Staunton’s Presbyterian focus ensures the tour at times drifts into this second category. The remaining ten percent fit in or most likely in between two categories: relative incorporation or segregated information, such as irregularly-offered or supplemental tours. The birthplace tour is pushing the boundaries of relative incorporation but falls short of moving beyond the “add and stir” approach it wanted to avoid.²⁶ A bolder claim would be that, if the Wilsons, a “Northern-raised and educated couple liked the southern people and their way of life and remained in the South the rest of their lives” as the presidential library maintains, slavery was one of the things the Wilsons liked or easily accepted; after all, they remained in the region during civil war. A. Scott Berg argued that matriarch Jessie was more conflicted over slavery than her husband whose “ambivalence . . . would follow Tommy to the White House.”²⁷ However, an 1857 letter Jessie wrote to her father on display in the WWPLM unveils the benefits and pleasant experience she had operating a slave household. After inquiring how Thomas Woodrow was adjusting to his move to a slave state, she revealed, “My experience has taught me that there are some disadvantages connected with the peculiar institution, as well as advantages. The responsibility incurred by the housekeeper is so much greater than in a free state.” Jessie

²⁵ Theme quote from Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 23. Italics mine; Jennifer Scott, “Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century at a Post-Emancipation Site,” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 74.

²⁶ This study evaluated 130 plantation museums or related sites. Eichstedt, “Museums and (In)Justice,” 127–129, first quote 128, second quote 131.

²⁷ Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 7; Berg, *Wilson*, 30.

performed less labor in Virginia, described her domestic sphere as “pleasant,” and never feared Joseph traveling because the two women and man sleeping beneath her in the basement were “reliable good creatures.” Jessie felt comfortable with the institution and her family’s safety and appreciated the work and morality of these three individuals.²⁸

Slavery would continue to be an important force in the Wilsons’ lives when they moved to Augusta, Georgia in 1858. The Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home’s (WWBH) depiction of black laborers and citizens rests between symbolic annihilation and the narrative of faithful black workers and moral white employers. A two-story kitchen still stands on the property. However, the WWBH detaches black Augusta from the current narrative just as the labor in this space was separated from the Wilson home during the Civil War and Reconstruction. The tour’s most vivid description of Mitty and other domestics is that she, according to tradition, was famous for fruit pies and they may have used a pump for running water. Because Augusta allowed free blacks to work, move and worship freely and Joseph was not listed as a slaveholder in the 1860 census, Historic Augusta believes the family had two to three paid black servants and that Mitty came with the family from Virginia. Executive Director Eric Montgomery took Staunton’s previous tour when it depicted *servants*, which corroborated Augusta “tradition.” Augusta’s interpretation is unlikely given the Staunton church leased enslaved people. Montgomery rightly concluded the mystery may never be solved but addressing this ambiguity exposes visitors to ideas about how Mitty and her peers reacted to emancipation and Reconstruction. Reconstruction changed opportunities and negotiating

²⁸ Jeanie Wilson to Thomas Woodrow, April 27, 1857, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm, S. 2 P. 4 (Washington: Library of Congress, 1969), Thomas Cooper Library Microforms, Columbia, SC; Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 39.

power for these individual if they were free before the Civil War. If not, Reconstruction thrust them into the free labor system for the first time, dependent on Wilson's sporadic pay.²⁹

The final tour spaces of the President Woodrow Wilson House (PWWH), his last home at S Street in Washington D.C., show the functionality of rooms and technology that facilitated domestic labor rather than the laborers. Visitors learn that the uppermost floor is used for storage but that the black couple that worked for the Wilson family slept there. The home boasts a working elevator that eased staff in moving Wilson through the home. The stairs to the Butler's Pantry, the pantry itself, and the dumbwaiter all could have been used to talk about non-elite people in the home and how their interactions crossed in caring for the retired president, a glimpse of which visitors got in the nurse's room. The tour ended in the kitchen, which featured the original stove, toaster and ice box used by the couple and a series of pictures protected in plastic and circulated to visitors. The docent, unaccustomed to being asked Isaac and Mary Scott's names, could not recall them.³⁰ After the tour, another docent Betty van Iersel spoke about a letter suggesting Isaac was a porter at Galt's Jewelry Store. The Scotts maintained a house, although they had no children and slept at S Street six days a week. They worked for Edith Galt Wilson the rest of their lives. A Wilson biographer noted Edith called them "the best of the old-time coloured Virginia stock." It was Isaac, in fact, who, at Edith's request, had shooed the press away from Wilson's death vigil at midnight, less than

²⁹ Stephanie Herzberg, "Tour of Boyhood Home"; Montgomery, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*, 18, 39, 41, 53–54.

³⁰ Alex Toegel, "Tour of the President Woodrow Wilson House" (guided tour, Washington, D.C., June 20, 2015).

twelve hours before his passing.³¹ In 1954, Edith brought Mary for an event at the Staunton museum. Edith told the museum's leader Emily Smith to "make use of" her maid of thirty-three years "if she can be of help in the kitchen or elsewhere." Edith explained that Mary's husband was "Mr. Wilson's valet-but he is old-deaf now-but faithful as a watchdog." Edith's secretary insisted that Mary come along although Edith thought it unnecessary.³² Other than Edith, the Scotts occupied S Street far longer than anyone else. S Street was their home too. Every tour should name them and discuss their lives for their experience stands in stark contrast to the privileges and power the Wilson's enjoyed. Far from the first, the Scotts were the last black domestic workers to engage intimately with the dying southerner at his most vulnerable.

The WWFH, similar to other Wilson HHMs, relied on architecture and room function to illuminate the lives of those laboring in the home. However, the WWFH's silences in naming and going in depth about specific laborers' lives were products of the historical record rather than intentional omission. Several WWFH docents used the built environment and its conditions to illuminate the lives and contributions of black Americans and excelled in generating engagement question opportunities in the pantry spaces. Four WWFH docents emphasized the stark differences in work spaces from the rest of the home. Tour & Program Coordinator Heather Bacon-Rogers, tongue-in-check, introduces visitors to "a perfect lovely space just like the rest of the house." These docents build on the visual inconsistencies by asking questions about air conditioning, heat, insulation, and claustrophobia, the latter being effective with larger groups. The

³¹ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Notes from Meeting with Betty van Iersel" (The President Woodrow Wilson House, Washington, D.C., June 20, 2015); Quote from Berg, *Wilson*, 704, 737.

³² Edith Bolling Wilson to Mrs. H. McK. Smith, 1954, Edith Bolling Wilson Papers, Folder 28, 1954, WWPL.

WWFH differs from most HHMs, which most commonly interpret the kitchen, because the home's detached kitchen no longer stands.³³ However, Historic Columbia designed and constructed an accessibility ramp that corresponded to the kitchen's size and location. The ramp led to two segregated back porch doors and was visible through the pantry window. A Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1919 on the panel "Domestic Servants" provided another visual reference. From the script's inception, visitors were to answer a question about the segregated architecture and locate the kitchen-turned-ramp. The first few months of tours demonstrated the butler's pantry offered rare back-to-back engagement points that maintained visitor interest. The final script set up the space telling visitors they had "passed through the dining room and are standing in spaces devoted to food storage and preparation." From there, docents asked, "What is missing from the space?" After responding the kitchen, docents invited guests to view the ramp and could follow-up by asking how the architecture separated people by role.³⁴

While servant stairs traditionally are considered the most powerful architectural feature in an HHM, WWFH docents relied less on these outside stairs and more on segregated entryways. Docents found visitors easily imagined workers entering the space from the exterior door to plate meals for the adjacent dining room.³⁵ Because visitors forget they just walked past a backdoor in the hallway, weekend docent Jennifer Gunter asked, "Why would you have this backdoor six feet away from the other backdoor?" The question unpacked the segregated racial dynamics of the household and Columbia. Erin

³³ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Gunter, interview; Morgan, interview; Brazier, interview.

³⁴ Hogan, interview; Brazier, interview; "Domestic Service," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014); Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 7; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 5; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 4; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 9; Taylor, "Tour 02 06 14," 9; Taylor, "Tour Second Training," 9; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 12; Taylor, "WWFH Script," June 13, 2014, 12.

³⁵ Storm, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview; Stickney, interview.

Holmes, a weekend docent and academic who specializes in the built environment of elites and enslaved people, used the architecture to inspire complex conversations with her visitors. Some of them lingered after tours “to discuss how architecture expressed the ambitions of the middle class and was an instrumental part of the segregation of African Americans.” Those experiences were “always fantastic, especially when they came in expecting (and wanting) a ‘Woodrow Wilson: Future President’ kind of tour.”³⁶

Depending on the docent, one of the greatest limitations or assets from popular culture in the pantry was the BBC television program *Downton Abbey*. Before programming like *Downtown Abbey*, HHM guests had difficulty conceiving the experience of living with an employer while in a subordinate position.³⁷ But the show inspired both docents and visitors to make comparisons between the employees at the WWFH and the fictional show. Docents expressed strong reactions to the *Downton Abbey* effect. Bacon-Rogers felt her narrative stymied by the show. She estimated “fifty percent of the time” visitors responded to black inclusion with something akin to “just like *Downton Abbey*.” This posed “a hindrance” in explaining Tommy’s domestic world. She wanted to “get away from” this association with the BBC show and *Upstairs Downstairs*. Domestic work in the South during Reconstruction was different from early twentieth century Great Britain. She wished she could flatly reply, “No. These are former slaves who are finally able to make their own money, to make their own jobs. This is far more significant.” She appreciated visitors were connecting the tour to their experiences

³⁶ Gunter, interview; Holmes, “Docent Survey.”

³⁷ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 60.

but wondered if “they’re not getting the gravity of what work was like for these recently freed individuals.”³⁸

To counteract this, docents encouraged visitors to think about the transition to wage labor beyond abstract terms. Docents asked visitors about their economic “worth.” This became a stepping stone for discussing the excitement of women negotiating “this whole new system, a wage labor system.” Building on the work of Jacqueline Jones, Thavolia Glymph argued that in these early years of freedom, even when black women were forced by economic needs to take jobs in white homes, that these women negotiated terms of their employment and needed not feign loyalty. Freedwomen capitalized on their knowledge of labor, calculating the time needed to perform tasks as free wage laborers rather than enslaved workers. They also resisted attempts by white employers to transform a skilled service into full-service domestic help. Women chose part-time work for its flexibility, allowing time to build their own free homes and engage in household production for their families and for the market.³⁹ Docents transformed this historiographical knowledge into a question about skills and power. Gunter asked: “Are you worth ten cents for ten sets of sheets?” She also pointed out the recipes to demonstrate skillsets. “How skillful do you have to be?” to work in the Wilson home. Volunteer Cyndy Storm approached the subject from the perspective of employers, drawing on older, wealthier southern whites who remembered maids and cooks in their households that went home to their own families at the end of the day. She asked visitors

³⁸ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

³⁹ Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 56, 58–59; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9–11, 139, 150–51, 168–69, 172–73.

to consider whether they would hire a sixteen year old girl or a more experienced older cook and what skills their budget afforded.⁴⁰ Choosing residency, commuting from home or living on the second floor of the kitchen, was another example the script and exhibit offered to docents to convey the agency and choices made by America's newest citizens. The fire map became a popular panel image for docents to discuss workers exercising autonomy in their choice of accommodations.⁴¹ A summer revision of the script placed formerly supplemental statements about freedwomen, "rarely allowed to attend to their own families under slavery," into the required narration. These women negotiated wages and made financial choices with their families about sharecropping, part-time work in the home, and domestic work.⁴² Starting in the pantries and culminating with a panel in the family-centric dining room, docents were able to contrast many black Americans performing similar domestic work they had done while enslaved, such as taking care of white children, with the groundbreaking ability and attempts to reunite black families and develop and keep their households intact for the first time.⁴³

During training and in their own tours, a handful of docents gravitated to the *Downton Abbey effect* and used it to oppose early tour drafts that placed emphasis on the typical household's racial divisions. The team worked to convey clearly that workers entered and used spaces differently than residents and guests. This opened a conversation

⁴⁰ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Gunter, interview; Storm, interview.

⁴¹ Brazier, interview; Gunter, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁴² Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 6; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 10–11; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 02 04 14 Working Draft" (Historic Columbia, February 4, 2014), 10–11; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 10; Taylor, "WWFH Script," June 13, 2014, 12.

⁴³ Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 7; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 5; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 4; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 5; Clark, Second Interview; Stickney, "Docent Survey"; Brazier, interview; Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview; Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, 52, 59, 77–78; "Marriage Divorce Orphans," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

about “segregated architecture.” From the beginning, the script insisted the Wilsons built a home that “reflected prevailing trends in domestic architecture that separated people according to their roles.” The panel, however, acknowledged that the middle and upper classes hired servants, but that in the South, “domestic service usually intertwined with race relations.”⁴⁴ Still, Morgan interpreted early script versions as political because of an “insistence” that “work spaces were segregated.” For her and others, race only mattered in that the South relied heavily on black workers because of demographics and the legacy of slavery. Segregated workspaces and staircases were “segregation by role” whether that be in the South, the nation, Great Britain or on television. Pam Redfield noted dishwashers and servers today often enter workplaces through a back door. Her great grandmother, a German immigrant and laundress, brought the wealthy family’s laundry out the back door.⁴⁵ Similar to the negative connotations surrounding the word “privilege,” semantics was the issue. Dr. Cook suggested that the pantry portion of the script “talk about segregated architecture without using the word segregated.” Docents insisted the script acknowledge that, while architecture may have separated southerners racially, “throughout the country before and after emancipation, regardless of region,” it also demonstrated “the segregated nature of work regardless of race.”⁴⁶ The WWFH docents who emphasized social and class segregation reflected trends in interpreting domestic workers across the nation. Institutions in the southern Atlantic states, which had

⁴⁴ Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 7; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 5; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 4; “Domestic Service, Panel.”

⁴⁵ Ann Posner, “Docent D Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, February 24, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, “Docent N Tour Review” (Columbia, SC, October 30, 2014), Historic Columbia; Morgan, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Pamela Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t] for Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” January 10, 2014.

⁴⁶ Waites, “Tour Review First Floor”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 01 10 14 Post Volunteer” (Historic Columbia, January 10, 2014), 7.

high Irish and black servant populations, tended to rate discussing racial prejudice of high significance. But many HHMs privileged class prejudice more or only disclosed the race or ethnicity of domestic workers without contextualizing their status as immigrants or “the significance of their heritage regionally and nationally.”⁴⁷

In some ways, the WWFH suffered from more problems in interpreting domestic workers than most HHMs. Not only did it lack any objects that belonged to employees but none of the traditional primary sources identified their names. Over fifty-six percent of HHMs studied in 2003 conducted research on domestic servants, most commonly with census records and city directories. Historic Columbia did the same, also perusing the local resources available in Columbia’s rich university and state archives, which can be overlooked by museums. But the research yielded only general information about domestic servitude at the time in Columbia. Although the people who worked for the Wilsons remained invisible, the butler pantry’s panel presented two pie charts based on the 1880 federal census that clearly show visitors that ninety percent of Richland County’s washers, housekeepers and butlers were black and seventy-five percent black women.⁴⁸ Bacon-Rogers wondered “Was it a husband and wife? Was it two women?” She was fascinated by these individuals more than the Wilson women and embarrassed that Historic Columbia did not know more. Historic Columbia even struggled to identify Nannie and Minnie, two domestic workers in Annie Wilson Howe’s ca. 1892 family portrait displayed in the dining room. The organization had a list of six possibilities based on city directories around the time of the photograph. Three laundresses named Minnie

⁴⁷ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 47, 63, quote 64.

⁴⁸ “Domestic Service, Panel”; Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 52–53; Docent Doe, “Docent Survey.”

and surnamed Clark, Sims and Watts were potential candidates. Only two Nannies were located, Chapple, a cook, and Antonio, occupation unknown.⁴⁹

Tours often ignore domestic conflict, both the complexity of the relationships between domestic servants and their employers as well as familial clashes.⁵⁰ The WWFH struggled to interpret conflict as well. This can best be seen in the interpretation of the Howe family portrait and the silence on sexual violence. The portrait depicts Annie's nuclear family on the front porch of their Columbia home, along with her brothers Woodrow and Joseph, Jr. and father Joseph, Sr. The image became a popular engagement point with all but a handful of docents and visitors. When visitors did not broach the subject themselves, docents asked why Nannie and Minnie were included in the photograph and how those pictured felt about the workers inclusion. Bacon-Rogers often experienced one person opening the conversation with, "Oh, they thought of them as family" before another counters with, "They don't look happy." This debate made the image "the best piece in that whole room." But Morgan left the question "open-ended" because the cynic saw a display of wealth and status while others saw family.⁵¹ The disparities between these two approaches reflects the tendency of HHMs to favor narratives of friendship or closeness between employers and employees over narratives of

⁴⁹ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Docent Doe, interview; John Sherrer, "Woodrow Wilson's Perspectives on African Americans," January 8, 2016, Historic Columbia Collection.

⁵⁰ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 62–63.

⁵¹ Annie Wright, email message to Robin Waites, "Feedback on the WWFH Tour," March 18, 2014; Fielding Freed, email message to John Sherrer, Jennifer Taylor, and Sarah Blackwell, "Tour Notes," January 24, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Action Items," May 21, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Daniella Cook et al., "WWFH Notes from Guides," April 21, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Volunteers, "WWFH June Follow-Up," June 13, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Volunteer Docents, "Follow Up From WWFH Feedback Sessions," May 27, 2014; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 12; Docent Doe, interview; Stickney, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Morgan, interview; One volunteer ignored the portrait and gravitated to a formal dress as an example of expensive, popular fashion requiring special labor. Redundancy deterred another since the citizenship video in the next room also highlighted the image. Westcott, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

conflict. Stories of domestics were like “family” survive because, like the best objects, positive tales and relationships are preserved over the workers that came and went or exploitation experienced.⁵²

Given that the social dynamics of the Howe household invited some interpretative division, it was not surprising that the taboo subject of sexual violence in domestic spaces was ignored in the home and mostly absent from the training. This is partly fueled by the latent historiography of Reconstruction and sexual violence. By the 1970s and 1980s, historians debated whether Reconstruction was radical enough. On the state level, South Carolina’s Reconstruction historiography expanded to include the contributions and experience of black Americans during the period, especially in the realm of black political power.⁵³ Only recently have scholars explored the dynamic of sexual violence during Reconstruction. Just as the process of Reconstruction itself was not truly as radical as memory would have Americans believe, the WWFH is not as radical as it could be because sexual violence is not interpreted in domestic spaces nor discussed as a political tool.

While the pervasiveness of sexual violence and exploitation against black women during slavery has been established firmly by historians and black feminist scholars, recent films such as *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013), *The Birth of a Nation* (2016), and *Free State of Jones* (2016) contribute to solidifying this historiography in mainstream popular

⁵² Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 60–62.

⁵³ Eric Foner, “The Continuing Evolution of Reconstruction History,” *OAH Magazine of History* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 11–13; For a comprehensive look at black political power on the state level, see Joel Williamson’s *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina during Reconstruction* and Thomas Holt’s *Negro State Legislators in South Carolina during Reconstruction*. Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 194–95, 200–01.

thought and culture.⁵⁴ Still a difficult subject for some to broach interpretively is that white women also had a history of complicity in household violence. Jealously and sexual repression inspired violence from white women. The masters' unchecked power over enslaved women brought into the center of the household a public violence, against which white women were protected and that demeaned black women.⁵⁵ Even non-southern homes were not immune. Domestics in the urban North, who WWFH volunteers stressed were no different from black domestic workers, were also "at the mercy of lascivious masters and their teenaged son" just as their southern sisters were.⁵⁶

Since the 1980s, women's history has shown the continuity between the rape and sexual coercion of the antebellum period and the late nineteenth century. In the 1990s Catherine Clinton exposed weaponized rape employed by soldiers on both sides during the Civil War, foreshadowing scholarship on its use as a political tool to challenge

⁵⁴Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vantage Books, 1972), 413-23, 459-61; Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 201, 204, 209, 211-14, 220-22; Jacqueline Jones, "'My Mother Was Much of a Woman': Black Women, Work, and the Family under Slavery," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer, 1982), 248; Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), 33-34, 37, 39, 43, 45; Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I A Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 5, 9-10, 33-39, 61, 146; Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 189, 292, 294, 323, 325-26.; Thelma Jennings, "Us Colored Women Had to Go through a Plenty," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (Winter 1990), 45-74; Jacqueline Jones, "Race, Sex and Self-Evident Truths: the Status of Slave Women during the Era of the American Revolution" in *Half Sisters of History: Southern Women and the American Past*, ed. by Catherine Clinton (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 23-24; Wilma King, "'Suffer with Them Till Death:' Slave Women and Their Children in Nineteenth-Century America," *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 148, 158-59.

⁵⁵Jones, "'My Mother Was Much of a Woman,'" 248; White, *Ar'n't I A Woman*, 41-43; Jennings, "Us Colored Women," 56, 63; Thavolia Glymph was far less forgiving than Elizabeth Fox-Genovese of the plantation mistress's violence. Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 22-24, 96-97, 139-42, 309, 314-15, 379-80; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 26, 54, 58-59.

⁵⁶Quotes from Jones, "Race, Sex and Self-Evident Truths," 23; For a discussion of sexual assault at the hands of master's son, see Jennings, "Us Colored Women," 62-63, 66; Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 295; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 201.

Reconstruction.⁵⁷ Rape against black women, which had no legal precedents established against it during slavery to mar its inclusion as a tactical weapon during Reconstruction, accompanied political violence to incite both physical and psychological suffering. The tendency of night riders to strip women's clothing to their waists or pull it up to their necks before beating them were actions some of these same men may have performed in the recent past as overseers or slaveowners. Scholarship on Ku Klux Klan and nightrider violence as well as federal records suggest that the threat of sexual abuse escalated after the Civil War even if underestimated in other historical accounts and texts. Women were attacked for their associations with black Union troops and black leaders or because their husbands or fathers had violated some southern white code, such as participating in politics or landowning. Despite the assaults on their bodies and attempts at full citizenship by white southerners, black women demanded dignity, which included withdrawing their labor in white households to escape sexual violence. But born out of this gendered violence was the myth of the black rapist, which became the fuel for a turn of the century lynching epidemic that eclipsed the real abuse conducted at the hands of white men who raped black women.⁵⁸ In 1898, Alex Manly, a biracial newspaper editor

⁵⁷Catherine Clinton, "With a Whip in His Hand," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture* ed. by Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 206-11; Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisted: Women, War, and the Plantation Legend* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 36, 128-30; White, *Ar'n't I A Woman*, 164; Crystal Nicole Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 17, 20-22.

⁵⁸White, *Ar'n't I A Woman*, 174-77; Giddings, 30-31; Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (Summer, 1989), 912-14, 916; See Catherine Clinton's body of work in the 1990s: "Bloody Terrain: Freedwomen, Sexuality, and Violence during Reconstruction," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992), 315-18, 321, 326, 328-32; "Reconstructing Freedwomen" in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 310-312, 315-319; "With a Whip in His Hand," 206-211; Lisa Cardyn, "Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence: Outraging the Body Politic in the Reconstruction South," *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 100, No. 4 (Feb., 2002), 716-719. Danielle L. McGuire, "It Was Like All of Us Had Been Raped: Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* (December 2004), 908-09; Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the*

in Wilmington, North Carolina, highlighted this hypocrisy when the state's Democrats weaponized the myth for their campaign. After Election Day, the city erupted in white supremacist led violence, formally ending the decaying experiment in Reconstruction in the only known coup d'état in U.S. history. Although the tally will never be known, dozens of black residents likely were killed and at least 1400 permanently fled or were banished because of their economic success or political activities.⁵⁹

Scholars have produced enough work on Reconstruction-era sexual exploitation to warrant its inclusion in the WWFH training materials. Hannah Rosen's 2009 *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* used federal records to argue race, as it was being negotiated post-emancipation, was a battle fought on the "terrain of gender." Sexual violence and racist rhetoric complemented one another in attempts by whites to create an atmosphere of terror for black Americans negotiating citizenship. From 1865-1871, forty-five black women were raped or sexually attacked by white men. Many rapes were not reported, not just because of fear, but because one needed access to the Freedman's Bureau, a federal prosecutor or a congressional hearing, which were located in cities. In the summer of 1866, African Americans testified in Memphis before congressional investigating committees on the recent massacre in the city as well as the rapes of women by rioters. Five women dared to speak out on record, and like black women across the South, demanded the federal government provide them protection as citizens. Black women

Postemancipation South (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2009), 8, 10, 52-53, 62, 67-70, 212-18, 224; Feimster, *Southern Horrors*, 1, 49-51, 81-85, 89-103, 116-18, 203-05.

⁵⁹ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 68-69, 82-88, 105-13; Feimster, *Southern Horrors*, 130-135; 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission, "1898 Wilmington Race Riot - Final Report" (Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Office of Archives and History, May 31, 2006), 156, <http://www.history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm>.

were not viewed as citizens but rather still marginalized as available for sex. White men first requested sex and then used force or threat to gain compliance. They also constructed free black homes and communities as a space for their own pleasure, entering these familial dwellings as if they were brothels and choosing women for a sexual encounter. Women tended to be separated from their families and the women's sphere before being assaulted.⁶⁰

Like the historiography of Reconstruction itself, public history is beginning to address the subject of sexual violence and coercion in domestic spaces. In May of 2016, Memphis erected a marker commemorating the Memphis massacre that resulted in an estimated forty-six deaths and widespread property destruction. The marker, unveiled on the 150th anniversary, acknowledged that several women were raped as part of the violence.⁶¹ Five blocks from the Wilson home on the grounds of the capitol stands the statue honoring former Dixiecrat, Governor and Senator Strom Thurmond. In 2004, the name of his biracial daughter was etched into the stone beneath the list of his four legitimate white children engraved on his monument. The obvious revision of the word "four" with the imperfect "five" chiseled on top and a less worn inscription of Essie Mae Washington-Williams' name in comparison to her siblings' serve as a jarring reminder of the hidden history of sexual assault in biracial households. In 1925, when Thurmond was twenty-two, his sixteen year-old housekeeper Carrie Butler gave birth to their daughter. The social and economic power Thurmond wielded over Butler suggests at best the affair

⁶⁰Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 1, 4-5, quote 6, 8-9, 61-62, 69-73, 77-82, 202-20, 224-33, 247-48, footnote 19.

⁶¹ Christopher Blank, "Do the Words 'Race Riot' Belong on A Historic Marker In Memphis?," *NPR.org*, May 2, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2016/05/02/476450908/in-memphis-a-divide-over-how-to-remember-a-massacre-150-years-later>; Also see Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013).

was coerced rather than fully consensual.⁶² While there is no evidence to suggest the Wilson's were complicit in sexual abuse, the dynamics of the home make it similar to those where this abuse did take place. Thus a legitimate conversation can be defended in this space.

The issue of sexual violence against women is part of a larger deficiency in HHMs. These institutions often talk about the roles women filled but not necessarily how the experience of being a woman in the period and gender affected their lives, a trend that Gunter feared would plague the WWFH. The Reconstruction lecture given during training touched briefly on sexual assault and rape as a form of terrorism utilized by whites during massacres in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866. Echoing the work of historians, consultant Daniella Cook also expressed to the interpretative team that the archives reveal the relationships and violence between white and black women. While the WWFH relayed “stories of survival” affiliated with the demise of slavery and the “political unrest” of Reconstruction, it stopped short of being an unapologetically radical HHM because of the interpretative challenges surrounding a discussion of rape.⁶³ At minimum, guides should be prepared to address questions about this topic, both for communities well aware of violence and those who sense the violence was there but lack the tools to understand it fully. For example, one middle-aged white man exited the pantry and asked about the movie *The Butler* (2013). He specifically mentioned the

⁶² Jamie Self and Sammy Fretwell, “Essie Mae Washington-Williams, Daughter of Late US Senator, Dies,” *Www.thestate.com*, February 4, 2013, <http://www.thestate.com/news/local/civil-rights/article14420552.html>; The Associated Press, “National Briefing | South: South Carolina: Biracial Child Added To Thurmond Monument,” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/29/us/national-briefing-south-south-carolina-biracial-child-added-to-thurmond-monument.html>.

⁶³ Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs*, 65; Quotes from Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 82; Gunter, “Docent Survey”; Jennifer Taylor, “General Overview of Reconstruction Lecture and Questions to Consider,” Slide 11; Waites, “Tour Review First Floor.”

opening rape scene and was trying to ascertain the historical time period. He was unsure whether the setting of the cotton field was slavery or post-emancipation sharecropping. This was a teaching moment that not all docents were equipped to embrace, that black field labor and sexual violence continued from slavery through the twentieth century. Docents must be prepared to have these discussions because visitors have questions about these difficult subjects. Additionally, by opening a discussion of sexual violence in domestic spaces, rape as a terror tactic used by Upstate Ku Klux Klan members and others across the South during Reconstruction can be broached effectively in the bedroom devoted to political terrorism.⁶⁴

4.3 INTERPRETING VIOLENCE AND THE OVERTHROW OF RECONSTRUCTION

The WWFH's move beyond an "add and stir" approach to inclusion required white docents speak to the political terrorism conducted by white Democrats that accompanied Reconstruction's demise. Historic Columbia understood the difficult and "contentious" nature of interpreting Reconstruction "because of misinformation, present day cultural bias, and assumption." However, there was no controversy in presenting that "white terrorist groups intentionally overthrew Reconstruction" because it was fact. But racism and emotion sometimes override the facts.⁶⁵ The bedroom assigned to Red Shirt and election of 1876 history supports scholarship that white South Carolinians never stopped fighting the Civil War and continuously used astonishing levels of violence to retain power during Reconstruction. As Bruce Baker discovered in his study of

⁶⁴ Rosen details South Carolina Upstate Klan members raping black women in retaliation for black men exercising their voting rights and hiding in the woods after a wave of terror. Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 216–17.

⁶⁵ "WWFH Training Session Planning."

Reconstruction memory in South Carolina, a “white supremacist narrative of Reconstruction” overshadowed a counter narrative in the public sphere. The dominant narrative buttressed Jim Crow and divided black and white workers.⁶⁶

One of the challenges for docents was overturning the narrative that justified violence and terrorism. For some, like volunteer Walt Hall who was a descendant of Red Shirts, this was family history. But South Carolina’s public history also preserved the violent legacy. In Edgefield, the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) still preserve a rarely open and nearly forgotten plantation home belonging to Confederate Gen. Martin Gary. One of the key architects of the Red Shirt campaign, Gary rallied thousands of Red Shirts from the home’s balcony. Three authentic Red Shirts are preserved among thousands of artifacts at Oakley Park. In 2014, after seeing a bit of the Red Shirts in Clive Bundy’s first standoff with federal officials over grazing fees on public land, Elizabeth Ready, local UDC president and part-time museum director, speculated “Pretty soon the Red Shirts are going to ride again.”⁶⁷ More vital to cementing this narrative across the state than Oakley Park was the work of Mary Simms Oliphant, whose textbooks were discussed in chapter two, and Louise Jones DuBose, who like Oliphant, described Reconstruction as the “darkest period” in state history.⁶⁸ While

⁶⁶ Catherine Clinton, “Bloody Terrain, 314; Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 3–6; Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 6, 11–12, 87, 89, 108–9, 145, 147, 158–60, 162.

⁶⁷ I visited Oakley Park in summer of 2014 where I discovered the posted hours of operation were no longer accurate. The UDC president graciously allowed me to tour the home quickly. Porter Barron, Jr., Oakley Park Museum and Red Shirt Shrine in “Day Trips! 17 Neat Places to Visit That Aren’t Very Far from Columbia,” *Free Times*, May 7, 2014, <http://www.free-times.com/cover/day-trips-17-neat-places-that-arent-far-from-columbia-sc-050714>; Associated Press, “Nevada Rancher Standoff Turns on a States’ Rights Debate,” *CBS News*, April 14, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/cliven-bundy-nevada-rancher-standoff-turns-on-a-states-rights-debate/>.

⁶⁸ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 244; Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Palmetto State*, ed. Walter B. Edgar (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 39. Hereinafter, author cited as WPA Writers’ Program.

Oliphant's reach extended to the classroom for decades, DuBose's influence was made possible by the federal government and the New Deal. She provided the literal road map to public history sites like Oakley Park that celebrated the Red Shirts and the election of 1876.

As assistant director of South Carolina's Federal Writer's Project (FWP), Louise Jones DuBose became the leading force in producing *South Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Palmetto State*, published in February 1941. Essays explored environment, ethnic groups, economics, education and most dominantly culture. A second section detailed cities and towns. A description of twenty-one day trips rounded out the *Guide*.⁶⁹ The state guidebooks were an attempt to find an American homogenizing national identity and spirit while celebrating the country's cultural diversity. They would also help preserve historical relics and encourage local preservation while simultaneously encouraging Americans to rediscover America. The racial dynamics, poverty and folk traditions associated with the South made the region both an asset and obstacle to these federal goals.⁷⁰ Emphasizing whiteness and relating black Americans to the "other," states like South Carolina got trapped in a nostalgic "tourist mode." By making black, and often white folkways, "exotic and quaint" in the plantation tradition, *Guides* revealed more about white southerners depictions of the South than reality. Thus, the southern *Guides* supplemented fictional works that supplied the "cultural beliefs that underwrote

⁶⁹ WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, v, 6, 9.

⁷⁰ WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, v, 6, 9; Jerrold Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1, 6–7, 9, 48, 51–54, 56, 58, 125; Louise Jones DuBose, interview by Office of Oral History South Caroliniana Library, audio recording, September 21, 1981, SCLOH # 035, South Caroliniana Library, Digital Collections, University of South Carolina.

apartheid.”⁷¹ Washington officials criticized the South Carolina edition for substituting local patriotism for truth and demanded multiple revisions of the essay “The Negro.” In the preface, Director Mabel Montgomery and DuBose acknowledged the “disagreement of historians as to fact, and the argument between fact and fantasy.” When poet and literary critic Sterling Brown claimed South Carolina relied on simplistic and misleading sociological issues, Montgomery reframed the issue as a battle between a “picturesque and interesting account” versus a “sociological discourse carrying a Northern slant.”⁷²

For both Oliphant and DuBose, the chaos of emancipation and Reconstruction warranted the violent and illegal efforts by the Ku Klux Klan and the Red Shirts to return South Carolina to white supremacist rule.⁷³ Oliphant claimed Klansmen as the “best men” of the state, sworn protectors of property and white lives, especially white women threatened with “insults” on the street. She later explained away less than palatable violence by noting the disguises were sometimes adopted by the occasional carpetbagger, scalawag and klansmen for “private vengeance.”⁷⁴ The *Guide*’s history of Rock Hill and York County in the upstate noted these communities were a hotbed of Klan activity and Reconstruction-era terror. DuBose advised readers to see Tour 16 of York County for further information on the Klan crackdown in the early 1870s by the federal government, which was a response to the group’s newfound control over blacks and white leaders.

⁷¹ Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers’ Project*, quotes from 189, 191; Leigh Anne Duck, *The Nation’s Region Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), 52, 57, 61, last quote from 74.

⁷² WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, v, vii, 8-13, quote from original Preface; Hirsch, *Portrait of America: A Cultural History of the Federal Writers’ Project*, 123, 125-26, 188-189.

⁷³ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 243; Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 285-90, 299, 305; Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina*, 38-41.

⁷⁴ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 245-46; Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 291-92.

DuBose insisted that bribed officials arrested 195 citizens, many distinguished lawyers, doctors, and clergy without warrant or evidence.⁷⁵

No story of violence looms quite as large in public memory than the Hamburg Massacre in July 1876. The WWFH includes the history and its connection to Gen. Martin Gary's Red Shirt campaign on a panel, and Oakley Park displays the 1860 Springfield rifle that future governor and white supremacist "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman carried at the event.⁷⁶ Democrats supposedly adopted a straight ticket for the election only after Gov. Daniel Chamberlain's indictment of "white people" for the affair. Oliphant blamed the black militia for actions that contributed to their own execution. They had refused to apologize for legal, armed policing of whites or to disarm after fortifying themselves in a building. Only in her last revisions did she concede the militia's threat to lynch two white citizens was only reported and that no one knew who shot first.⁷⁷ The *Guide's* history of Aiken framed Hamburg and Ellenton as "two of the bloodiest race riots of the period" that led to a "smoothly functioning" state government and community prosperity. DuBose had no qualms revealing the executed men at Hamburg had surrendered or that three hundred whites led by rifle clubs massacred between thirty and fifty blacks over a two day period in Ellenton.⁷⁸

Where the Klan had failed to restore native white supremacy, the Red Shirts succeeded. According to Oliphant, the campaign was a family affair and defined a good citizen. White women were complicit, sewing red shirts, and farms and businesses were

⁷⁵ WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, 38–41, 254, 426.

⁷⁶ Barron, Jr., "Day Trips"; "The Red Shirt Campaign," panel (Columbia, S.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

⁷⁷ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 248; Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 294.

⁷⁸ WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, quote 160, 161-163; Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 163–64, 175–76.

abandoned to participate. She later removed the claim: “Every decent white man went to work to deliver the State from its evil rulers.”⁷⁹ Heroes the Red Shirts remained, as Oliphant invited students to “write a story about a student living during Reconstruction whose father took part” in the campaign.⁸⁰ The *Guide* on numerous occasions referenced “the flaming costumes of the ‘Red Shirts,’” but the city sections and driving tours played up violent Red Shirt roots and traced the path of Wade Hampton’s 1876 gubernatorial campaign.⁸¹ In Anderson, he delivered his first of forty speeches to 6000 enthusiastic people, a “highlight in the city's history.” Bands played, banners flew, and long lines of cheering Democratic club representatives marched until the “mounted rifle club members, wearing brand new ‘Red Shirt’ uniforms, swelled the parade.”⁸² Tourists could still visit the Hampton Oak in Sumter and receive the same shelter from the limbs that protected the “garlanded platform where” Hampton, “surrounded by his Red Shirts, spoke.” Tourists were expected to “go wild” imagining a “meaningful tableau” that featured a woman draped in funeral regalia and chains. After her cloak fell to reveal her white dress and golden crown, the crowd supposedly yelled the famed “battle cry, ‘Hampton or Hell!’”⁸³

Of the nineteen tours in the guidebook, five included “points of interests” or history lessons related to white supremacy and Hampton’s 1876 campaign for governor. Tour nine moved through Columbia highlighting the Hampton family plantation, Millwood, and the governor’s last home. After detailing his life, doubts about slavery,

⁷⁹ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 249; Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 294.

⁸⁰ Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 297.

⁸¹ WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, 161–63.

⁸² WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, 165–66.

⁸³ WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, 267–69.

and war service, including evacuating and being falsely accused of burning Columbia by Sherman, the tour reminded readers that the state summoned him to lead the Red Shirts and return Democratic rule by bribery, intimidation and voter fraud. Tour nineteen brought tourists to Hampton County, a community that broke with Beaufort after it was “overrun with Northern soldiers, carpetbaggers, and scalawags.” Citizens named the county for Hampton after he laid the cornerstone for the court house. Tour ten included the National Guard Armory, the site of an 1870 Laurens riot by “armed Negroes, led by a ‘scalawag.’”⁸⁴ Historically, a crowd of whites fired on the armory after black citizens of Laurensville came to the aid of a constable in a dispute with a local white. They fled to the building after gunfire broke out. Nine Republicans perished, black and white, and Governor Robert Scott ordered his black militias to turn their weapons over. On highway 215 at West Springs, tour twelve provided a resting spot at the Ku Klux Holly Tree (a.k.a. Confederate Holly), which stood as a reminder of the three Klansmen with arrest warrants who evaded soldiers overnight by hiding in the tree, even as the soldiers camped beneath them. Further down the road in Union was the sight were the KKK retaliated against a black militia by killing several of them. DuBose reproduced the Klan’s note defending their use of force against force and equating themselves as the martyrs of Michael of Justice. Tour sixteen recounted the first KKK group organized in the state in 1868.⁸⁵

One of the most persistent myths Oliphant and Dubose perpetuated was that the Klan was formed because the Republican government only allowed black militias and “superstitious” African Americans were easy to terrify. In truth, black militias formed

⁸⁴ WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, 375–76, 384, 454.

⁸⁵ Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 88–89; WPA Writers’ Program, *South Carolina*, 399, 401, 454.

after the Klan's appearance. No black militias existed until 1869 or spring of 1870. In "ghostly white robes" of sheets and pillow cases, the Klan disbanded once leaders lost control of the members.⁸⁶ When local blacks became "threatening," the Klan, argued Oliphant, righteously executed ten incarcerated black militiamen accused of murdering a Confederate veteran.⁸⁷ With later editions of her textbook, black militias took on a less villainous role as they were ill-prepared to bear arms and Republicans received the blame for inciting "fear" and "suspicion."⁸⁸

Both women accepted voting fraud and violence as the price paid "to oust the Radicals at any cost" and proclaimed Hampton a defender of peace and moderate voice of reason. DuBose claimed that, although the last Republican governor tried reform, Chamberlain simply could not compete with the "beloved hero of the war," Hampton, and the organization, persuasion and intimidation of his Democrats.⁸⁹ Oliphant softened Hampton's moderation over time. In an attempt to mollify angry Democrats, Hampton pleaded for peace and non-violence "from the steps of the state house" despite the fact that with "one word" from him, federal troops and the Republican Coalition in the State House "would have been killed by the excited and outraged people." In the 1970 edition, Hampton condemned violence to avoid federal intervention and greater "misery" for the state.⁹⁰

Docents, thus, have decades of indoctrination to overturn in a matter of minutes. Two objects, the Red Shirt and tissue ballot, are visitor favorites and are vital artifacts in

⁸⁶ WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, 426; Edgar, *South Carolina*, 398; Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 56. Edgar claims 1869 while Zuczek placed their formation in spring 1870.

⁸⁷ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 245–46.

⁸⁸ Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 291–92.

⁸⁹ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, 249; WPA Writers' Program, *South Carolina*, 38–41, 216–17.

⁹⁰ Oliphant, *Simms History 1932*, quotes 250–251; Oliphant, Furman, and Oliphant, *History of South Carolina 1970*, 295.

broaching these subjects.⁹¹ Most docents head directly to the Red Shirt upon entry into the space for a discussion of domestic and political terrorism that began with the Klan.⁹² Bacon-Rogers has witnessed the Red Shirt's power to "drive home" the violence. Visitors realized someone wore it, some asking, "What are those stains on it?" She too wondered, "Is it age? Is it blood? I don't know." So she took her own discomfort with the brown stain on the object and directed it back on the visitor. "What does it look like to you?" Although Bacon-Rogers thought the reproduction Red Shirt looked "cheap" and added no value, Brazier preferred it. Clean and protected alongside the gun, it was "more menacing" and "creepy." It offered a glimpse of the horror without going too far and turning off visitors. Bacon-Rogers also used the shirt to ask visitors the difference between Klan and Red Shirt uniforms. Visitors had a strong reaction to realizing Red Shirts did not cover their faces. This lesson comes at the expense of excising a thoroughly gendered discussion of the shirt, which some docents chose to privilege. Gunter pointed out the shirt was "a handmade garment" and political terrorism "a family affair." She reasoned, "This is not just the men getting together. Somebody's wife or domestic servant made this. This is the way a whole portion of society felt." Storm fused the gendered origin with technology, noting a "new gadget," the sewing machine, was used to construct the shirt.⁹³

The tissue ballot, a straight Democratic ticket cast in the election of 1876, engaged visitors on voter fraud used in the election but carried less emotional weight than the Red Shirt. The ballot drew people in because it was "proof" of fraud, was a unique

⁹¹ Westcott, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview; Storm, interview.

⁹² Storm, interview; Hogan, interview; Morgan, interview; Gunter, interview.

⁹³ Brazier, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Gunter, interview; Storm, "Docent Survey."

object not normally seen in house museums, and allowed visitors to connect to their own familiarity with modern political corruption. Sometimes guests recalled George W. Bush's electoral victory over Al Gore in 2000 and can contrast that with Rutherford B. Hayes-Samuel Tilden election.⁹⁴ But often visitors responded with laughter and chuckles, as if they expected politics to be corrupt, rather than shock.⁹⁵ To stress the severity of the situation, docents frequently asked visitors "to put themselves in" the election and picture the violence. Docents instructed visitors to imagine the threats associated with open-air voting and confidently asking for a Republican straight ticket. Visitors then considered whether they would vote their conscience with a Red Shirt who carried a rifle watching. Morgan found they all exclaimed "'No!'" But Bacon-Rogers "stopped waiting for a response" because that question, "though it probes directly into what's important," made people "physically uncomfortable." So she spoke from her truth: "I'd love to think I'm brave and I'd march right up there and vote my conscience. But had I been a former enslaved male, would I? I don't know . . . I'm also a white female in the twenty-first century. Being brave now and being brave then are two different things." The question still left visitors with a level of discomfort while not opening them up to judgment from their peers. However, on more intimate tours, people felt comfortable enough to share their thoughts.⁹⁶

Docents varied in how they presented the Wilson family in relationship to the violence. Some simply noted the Wilson family had moved on to Wilmington, North

⁹⁴ Lee, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Morgan, interview.

⁹⁵ Brazier, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

⁹⁶ Gunter, interview; Storm, interview; Morgan, interview; Quotes from Bacon-Rogers, interview; Taylor, "Docent I Tour Review."

Carolina by 1874.⁹⁷ Bacon-Rogers often referenced the 1926 historical account that claimed Annie Wilson Howe's mother-in-law and aunt Felixina, wife of Tommy's uncle James Woodrow, frequently took food to Presbyterian Klan members like Dr. John A. Leland imprisoned during the Klan trials in Columbia in the early 1870s. Leland maintained in his diary that he had also witnessed an excellent sermon from Rev. Wilson during a temporary jail release. For Bacon-Rogers, the story contradicted the impulse "to paint Presidents" as coming from "wholesome backgrounds." She argued that, while Wilson may have grown up within the seminary and Presbyterianism, the same institution leased slaves for the Wilson family. According to the 1860 Slave Schedule for Richland County, George Howe, Annie's father-in-law, owned eleven women and eight men.⁹⁸

Howe's slaveholding status comprised part of the research Historic Columbia presented to its docents as the museum approached its two year anniversary. The new circumstantial evidence provided docents with tools to guide conversations by visitors about how Tommy Wilson might have responded to the rise of the Red Shirts. Two articles in *The State* in June of 1946 and 1950 shared local Joseph Physioc's remembrances of Tommy Wilson and the election of 1876. Physioc attended Columbia Military Academy, two blocks north of the WWFH, and, like Wilson, was a student of a former Confederate officer. Wearing his red shirt and gray military pants, Physioc stood with his honor guard at events for Hampton's gubernatorial campaign. Physioc also played for the Alerts baseball team. Tommy, a decade older than Physioc, occasionally joined them as a "first rate first baseman, none better." Physioc also told friends about

⁹⁷ Docent Doe, interview.

⁹⁸ Henry Tazewell Thompson, *Ousting the Carpetbagger from South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: Press of the R.L. Bryan Company, 1926), 59; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Sherrer, "Wilson's Perspectives on African Americans."

swimming with Tommy and their friends at a Congaree River swimming hole. Physioc remembered Tommy as head of his class, a leader, and defender of white children attacked by “wild” freedmen. Implying he was an honorary Red Shirt, Tommy proved his bravery ““many times in those Reconstruction days before seventy-six.”” Tommy supposedly led his naked swimming buddies’ defense ““with sticks and stones and old discarded horse pistols”” against attacks to steal the boys’ clothes.⁹⁹

Docents expressed real and imagined fears about interpreting violence and conflict in the space. Before opening, there were concerns about reactions from guests to this violence, especially older South Carolinians that might object to vilifying the formerly revered Hampton and his Red Shirts who went from heroes to terrorists. Docent Doe credited repetition smoothly conveying this theme.¹⁰⁰ Three others made their discussions on violence brief to curb blowback. Bacon-Rogers attributed the success to not focusing on “specific violence, such as the Edgefield riots,” partly due to the tour’s pace, or not privileging lynching images.¹⁰¹ Visitors attending “ethnically specific history museums” are generally given a celebratory, “insider” version of a story of “adversity, struggle, and triumph.”¹⁰² And while the WWFH celebrates accomplishments of the Reconstruction era, its violent and abrupt end disrupts the traditional model. For Brazier, detailing the violence against black people and Republicans was her “biggest interpretative challenge.” She wanted to avoid gore but worried about being perceived as “glossing over it flippantly.” She struggled to find a balance in giving “the topic the

⁹⁹ Sherrer, “Wilson’s Perspectives on African Americans.”

¹⁰⁰ Clark, Second Interview; Docent Doe, interview; Bacon-Rogers, “Docent Survey.”

¹⁰¹ Morgan, interview; Stickney, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

¹⁰² Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 43.

appropriate amount of respect.”¹⁰³ Naming violence and selecting appropriate representations bring interpretative conundrums. Beverly Robertson, former director of the National Civil Rights Museum and member of the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC), argued that she and the NAACP ultimately endorsed a private marker for the Memphis massacre after the THC insisted on using the language of riot on a state sanctioned marker. This language shielded white perpetrators of the violence by evoking twentieth century images of black riots as the Civil Rights Movement evolved to address the struggles of black urban areas.¹⁰⁴ For WWFH docents, the limit was graphic lynching images. Hogan, a former educator, objected in part because lynchings were more common during Jim Crow and because children attend the museum. She had first-hand experience working with a teacher who had shown too graphic of a lynching image to children. Children understand intimidation, bullying and the constitutional rights of assembly and speech, Hogan argued; thus, a lynching image does not advance the narrative. Conversely, docents needed time to establish trust with their audience and contextualize the images. Thomas Nast’s “One Vote Less,” with its less graphic depiction of the murder of an African American male voter, was a sufficient example that also engaged visitors. The story of William Randolph’s assassination and a lynching hidden in the background of Nast’s “Worse than Slavery” provided further evidence if needed.¹⁰⁵

The authenticity of evidence presented gave docents confidence to discuss the terrorism of the period that was once celebrated by white South Carolinians. Weekend

¹⁰³ Brazier, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Blank, “Do the Words ‘Race Riot.’”

¹⁰⁵ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Hogan, interview; Thomas Nast, *The Union as It Was the Lost Cause, Worse Than Slavery*, cartoon, 1874, Harper’s Weekly, v. 18, no. 930 (1874 October 24), 848., Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001696840/>; Thomas Nast, “One Vote Less”--*Richmond Whig*, 1872, Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-fc2c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

docent Lee had no qualms about using the word terrorism. First, it is the correct terminology. Secondly, the Red Shirt, rifle, and tissue ballot served as clear evidence that deterred confrontations. Lastly, she had a “firm grasp” of the history. “I can plant these seeds” in the rest of the house, but “you’re not going to argue with me in that room.” With light laughter she continued, “You don’t have to like it. But you’re going to accept it.” Four docents never had a visitor contest the interpretation.¹⁰⁶ Docents also reported most visitors were hearing the Red Shirt story for the first time, and political terrorism held a high degree of interest.¹⁰⁷

But evidentiary support did not ease all fears. Brazier was concerned her whiteness prevented her from understanding and “do[ing] the violence justice.” She laughed while admitting that visitors think far less about her failures than she does. But this did not diminish her concerns that she would “never have been the recipient” of political and racial terrorism. The violence was “not part of my heritage and my history and my blood” except that the “violent perpetrators” could have been family. Bacon-Rogers argued these white familial connections hit “a little closer to home” with white visitors than Historic Columbia’s other house tours because more white visitors consider their ancestors as possible executors of this violence. Brazier was “very self-conscious” about describing the violence with the brevity required of a house tour but with proper respect for the victims who deserved to have their story told.¹⁰⁸

Brazier’s unease was compounded by the issue of white docents speaking about white violence against black bodies to white audiences, which several docents

¹⁰⁶ Lee, interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview; Brazier, interview; Clark, First Interview.

¹⁰⁷ Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview; Clark, First Interview.

¹⁰⁸ Brazier, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

acknowledged as problematic. Not only are “the vast majority of visitors” to museums white, but “most of the historians are white, most of the museum people are white, most of the stories that they tell are white, most of the houses are white.” This dissuaded people of color from coming to museums, and when they came to the WWFH, they heard her, a white docent, narrating a “black story to black people.” She “felt that it’s not my story to tell and I didn’t want to disrespect it some way.” Gunter also questioned her role as both a docent and “ally.” Discussing race felt “strange,” especially when she had a diverse audience. Brazier argued she and white visitors were unable to truly understand the violence. Thus, she felt she was “talking over everybody’s heads a little bit.” Gunter confirmed, “I’m explaining these people to these people on this side of the room. It’s a weird situation to be in.”¹⁰⁹

Several docents embraced the opportunity to talk about race in general and felt confident in their abilities because of their academic training. Gunter talked “so freely” about race because of her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Southern Studies, which placed great emphasis on open dialogues about southern concepts of race. She explained, “Talking about it helps you talk about it.” Lee thought more deeply about the racial elements of her WWFH narrative and honed her skills discussing race during a public history internship in Maine at the height of the Confederate flag debate in the summer of 2015. As a South Carolinian outside of the state, she learned to articulate how white South Carolinians regarded the flag and its history. Gunter believed museums bore more responsibility in making their sites inclusive beyond white people explaining systemic racism to white people, but other docents saw museums as a natural, safe space and

¹⁰⁹ Brazier, interview; Gunter, interview; Lee, interview.

exhibits and programming a tool for addressing deep societal and social justice issues. For Lee, tours were cathartic. Visitors became surrogates for her non-immediate family members that she could not engage because “it will blow up.” But her family gave her greater insight into how Lost Cause visitors think and how far she could “push” visitors before those firmly committed to the Lost Cause dismissed her. Storm also offered a caveat: “Sometimes you can’t talk about this stuff until everybody’s dead.” But the challenges WWFH docents have faced in discussing race also benefitted the larger community. Docents from the Columbia Museum of Art visited “to see how we do race” in preparation for an African American art exhibit.¹¹⁰

The homes Woodrow Wilson once occupied all interpret race, whiteness and the black experience but do so with varying levels of success in both representation and encouraging racial dialogue. Interpreting the labor of black Americans for the Wilson family is the most common method linking these homes together. None are perfect as they traverse slavery, Civil War, intolerance and political discord. Sexual assault remains hidden.¹¹¹ With the rise of popular television shows featuring domestic laborers in elite homes, the *Downton Abbey* effect further complicates conversations about spaces segregated along racial and class lines. But Historic Columbia’s insistence on requiring white docents interpreting more inclusive narratives to attend language and cultural sensitivity training attempted to give them the education and skills needed to navigate more inclusive terrain. Docents were not monolithic in their response to training or their approach to handling racial themes demanded of the tour. But their experiences, especially their success at explaining white political terrorism, illuminate the challenges

¹¹⁰ Gunter, interview; Lee, interview; Storm, interview.

¹¹¹ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 82.

HHMs will likely face and interpretative approaches that can be explored and modified as more sites work towards greater inclusivity.¹¹²

¹¹² Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 76.

CHAPTER 5

WRITING HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING: INTERPRETING MEMORY AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Although not a universally accepted ideological approach, museums are expected to answer for the evils of colonialism and capitalism. Tied to this legacy are the sins of America's white supremacist history, which has local, regional, national and global repercussions. Interpreting this "political penance" to appease both those who demand and oppose contextualizing America's racist and exploitative history requires nuance, constant revision, and an openness to inclusive discourse.¹ The Woodrow Wilson Family Home's (WWFH) experiences tackling the unique challenges posed by conversations about white supremacy illuminate successful strategies for dialogue and approaches in public history institutions. The process also reveals the ways in which white supremacy hides itself in interpretative choices. Without dispute, the last interpretative space in the home, the bedroom devoted to the memory of Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson, proved the most challenging portion of the tour, not only for its material but in transitioning to the space and developing a tour denouement for fatigued docents and visitors. Broaching white supremacy, the craft of history, the tremendous impact of *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915), and narratives that challenged the film

¹ Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*, 15.

both when it was released and today proved more difficult than Historic Columbia imagined. But with a willingness to revise the interpretation well over a year after reopening, the organization resolved many of these issues and provided a framework for continued conversations on points in which staff and docents interpretatively converged.

5.1 A DIFFICULT TRANSITION: FROM POLITICAL TERRORISM TO A WHITE SUPREMACIST MEMORY OF RECONSTRUCTION

Docents, the interpretative team and consultants understood before opening that the last bedroom on historical memory would be the most challenging for docents and visitors. Consultant Daniella Cook warned that the space centered on memories of Reconstruction and Wilson required, “more so than any of the other rooms,” a clear transition “to make sense of the various artifacts” and “overall thematic content.” Many visitors, she cautioned, would be both physically and intellectually fatigued, especially while still “processing the content and imagery” of violence in the Red Shirt room. She recommended “explicit staging directions.” Standing near the mantle by Wilson’s quote about Reconstruction would allow docents to speak of “Wilson’s uniqueness as a president of firsts:” the first historian, the first doctorate holder, and the first southern president since James Buchanan and how these firsts “shaped his understanding of Reconstruction.”¹

The previous bedroom devoted to the election of 1876 and the Red Shirts was both a blessing and a curse when it came to transitioning. Weekend docent Casey Lee believed the space to be the strongest in the home because it elicited the “best responses” from visitors. Conversation often spilled into the memory bedroom or resurfaced walking

¹ Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 3.

back to the gift shop.² One interpretative challenge for docents was conveying the continuity between Reconstruction and Jim Crow. Tour & Program Coordinator Heather Bacon-Rogers drew connections between Black Codes and Jim Crow and then let visitors explore.³ Three docents reminded visitors the old antebellum white elites coordinated their violent revolt to resume power. Essentially, weekend docent Halie Brazier explained, “the South hadn’t learned any lessons.”⁴ But volunteer John Clark thought the longer process of redemption, the term given to the period following Reconstruction when white Democrats returned to power, got lost. “The black base” of the Republican Party did not disappear overnight. It took years to consolidate white control. Black congressmen served as late as 1885. Furthermore, he wondered how active the Klan was and remained unsure of the extent of lynchings post-Reconstruction.⁵

For two trained public historians, the final space opened a dialogue about the “craft of history,” which was what made the house “special” in Brazier’s eyes. Other historic house museums (HHMs) missed the opportunity to show “how historians can really do their craft and what it means to be a historian and what interpretation means.” For Lee, the transition was easy because she framed it “about who writes history, what narratives get passed along and why the legacy of Reconstruction is what it is and hopefully one day will be once what it was.” Jennifer Gunter introduced herself “as an historian, which helps a lot.” She conveyed her love for the time period but could also cite historians from the Dunning school to present.⁶

² Lee, interview.

³ Bacon-Rogers, interview.

⁴ Halie Brazier, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016; Jean Morgan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 25, 2016; Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016.

⁵ Clark, Second Interview.

⁶ Lee, interview; Brazier, interview; Gunter, interview.

Wilson wielded academic and political power that placed him center in this discussion but a concise explanation of his role proved difficult for the interpretative team and docents not trained in historiography. Wilson was among the first generation of southern students and historians “scientifically” trained in history and politics. A leader in the professionalization of history and a founding father of the American Historical Association, German-trained scholar Herbert Baxter Adams launched his seminar on historical and political science at the Johns Hopkins University in 1880. Wilson was one of Adams’ students and received one of the university’s first history doctorates. Professionalized history drew intellectual men that might have otherwise joined the ministry, certainly a fate that could have easily plucked Wilson from politics given his family’s professional ties with the church. This cadre of well-respected, professionally trained historians, including Wilson’s professor J. Franklin Jameson and the distinguished Frederick Jackson Turner, not only believed national unity drove American history and the story of freedom but used it to promote reconciliation. Wilson and his generation of historians, and southerners in general, cemented the Lost Cause narrative during this era, conceding slavery and secession were wrong but Southerners fought bravely. Professional history then appropriated and, with its scientific methodology, canonized a southern view of a Northern-imposed Reconstruction that was a huge failure and ignored black southerners or considered them inferior. Part of this generation were William A. Dunning and John W. Burgess, key architects of the Dunning School.⁷

⁷ Dewey W. Grantham, “Southern Historiography and a History of the South,” *American Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1953): 253–54; Michael O’Brien, “C. Vann Woodward and the Burden of Southern Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 78, no. 3 (1973): 591–92; Jack Temple Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie: The South in the American Imagination* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 8; David D. Van Tassel, “From Learned Society to Professional Organization: The American Historical Association, 1884-1900,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (1984): 931, 933, 943, 946, 954; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 73;

Seduced by the Lost Cause, Dunning and likeminded historians varied only by degrees. Similar to Adams, who pedagogically colonized colleges with the placement of his graduate students, the Dunning School transformed the popular memory of Reconstruction as a tragedy into scholarship, many tenets of which endure today.⁸ With Dunning at the helm in Columbia, Dunningites and the state studies produced by his students argued that Republican carpetbaggers and scalawags controlled black men ill-prepared for citizenship. This alliance elevated racial discord and bred corruption until white political terrorism returned order. This interpretation fueled reconciliation. According to Grace Hale, a “culture of segregation” first commandeered Reconstruction and its historiography to craft “a common whiteness” born out the period’s failures that could heal a fifty-year old wound and promote a new American empire. For half a century, southerners and historians considered the Dunning School gospel. The interpretation influenced Mary Simms Oliphant’s South Carolina textbooks and Louise Jones DuBose’s WPA South Carolina state guide book. The Dunning School’s infiltration of public history and popular memory, via works like Thomas Dixon’s *Clansman* and the blockbuster film *Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*), ensured that Reconstruction would remain the “darkest days” of American history, not just in scholarship but in the public’s imagination as well.⁹

David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 295, 357–59; “A New Beginning, 1892-1945,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 114, no. 1 (2006): 83–84; Berg, *Wilson*, 93–94.

⁸ Grantham, “Southern Historiography,” 253; Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 295; Van Tassel, “From Learned Society,” 943, 946.

⁹ “A New Beginning, 1892-1945,” 84–85; Justin Behrend, “Facts and Memories: John R. Lynch and the Revising of Reconstruction History in the Era of Jim Crow,” *The Journal of African American History* 97, no. 4 (2012): 428–29; Grantham, “Southern Historiography,” 254; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 75, 80–81.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Wilson published what was at that time a moderate, reconciliationist southern view of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Wilson's *Division and Reunion* (1893) was considered an unbiased war history that placed blame on both sides "in Hegelian fashion" and looked for truth "somewhere in the middle." The Reconstruction portion of his multi-volume series *A History of the American People* (1902) was classic Lost Cause with the same carpetbagger villains, southern victims, and Klan rescuers, although the latter were not always righteous in their activities.¹⁰ A WWFH panel with Wilson's image includes a caption about a 1901 essay in which he spoke solely about "The Reconstruction of the Southern States." The essay "reflected the scholarship that prevailed at colleges throughout the nation during this time" and "focused primarily on the forging of a new nationalist spirit." Wilson was less reluctant than his predecessors to "glorify the violence of the time" but he was guilty of presenting a "romanticized . . . relationship between the North and the South."¹¹ Wilson wrote that the Civil War made Americans for the first time fully conscious of a "national spirit" and unity that had been building, the stuff of developing empires. Thirty years after Reconstruction's end, he argued, America had moved on, "lost its passion, forgot its anxieties." Historians, without partisanship, could finally discuss this "dark chapter," which was constitutionally significant. First, the Union was legally indestructible. Only people seceded. More importantly, a "change of air" allowed a radical Republican Congress to usurp executive power by latching onto the failure of the first state

¹⁰ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and The Birth of a Nation: American Democracy and International Relations," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 18, no. 4 (December 13, 2007): 690–91; Mark E. Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation: Woodrow Wilson and 'Like Writing History with Lightning,'" *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): quote 525, 526-527.

¹¹ "Woodrow Wilson on Reconstruction," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

constitutional conventions to protect the rights of recently freed people. Uncontrollable and devoid of a basic understanding of liberty and freedom, blacks “had the full advantage of the federal power” through the Freedman’s Bureau, which promised education and property, and the forced ratification of Reconstruction Amendments, which legally recognized the freedom, citizenship and suffrage already being granted. The “dangerous intoxication of an absolute triumph” yielded generals who ruled absolutely in the military districts. But far worse were Republican rule and “negro majorities” in states like South Carolina, made possible by disenfranchising the “better whites.” Thankfully, Wilson wrote, the “traces of Reconstruction ha[d] worn away,” allowing several southern states to reform education and suffrage laws in what became Jim Crow.¹²

Despite a successful push to preserve such a white supremacist Reconstruction memory in universities and popular culture, black journalists, historians and filmmakers countered Dunning-style narratives whenever they could. Yet, the progressive black perspective, a counter-narrative that emerged alongside the Dunning interpretation, was excluded from most mainstream memory making in South Carolina.¹³ A WWFH panel exposed visitors to William Sinclair, a former USC student who “had answered” Thomas Dixon and the rhetoric of his novels with *The Aftermath of Slavery* (1905). Sinclair also led “protests against Woodrow Wilson’s support of racial segregation in federal workplaces.”¹⁴ Sinclair was but one writer who challenged the Dunning interpretation of Reconstruction. John Lynch’s memoir *The Facts of Reconstruction*, published in 1913,

¹² The essay was first published in *Atlantic Monthly* in January 1901. Woodrow Wilson, “The Reconstruction of the Southern States,” in *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson. Authorized Edition*, ed. Ray Stannard Baker and William Edward Dodd, vol. 2, *College and State: Educational, Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), 369–372, 376–378, 381–382, 385, 389–391, 395, quotes 368, 379, 388–389, 392–394.

¹³ Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 6, 11–12, 87, 89, 108–9, 145, 147, 158–60, 162.

¹⁴ “Remembering ‘Redemption,’” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

the year Wilson took office, constructed a memory based on Lynch's experiences as a politician in Mississippi to counter the biased accounts crafted by historians like Wilson. Disputing the myth of "Negro Domination," Lynch argued the South created a biracial democracy and that white Democrats exacerbated racial tensions that lead to Jim Crow. Lynch hoped rectifying the historical record would lead to black social and political gains. The black press, including the *Chicago Defender* and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) *The Crisis* endorsed works like Lynch's. Carter G. Woodson and the newly founded *Journal of Negro History* continued publishing positive interpretations of Reconstruction as did W.E.B. Du Bois. He penned an essay for the same 1901 *Atlantic Monthly* series that featured Wilson's essay and a restrained concluding essay by Dunning. DuBois' *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and a 1909 AHA paper also positively spun Reconstruction, with these works culminating in the 1935 book *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). These historians' works foreshadowed the revisionism of the 1960s by white professional historians that would finally overturn the Dunning School.¹⁵

In addressing such historiographical turns at the WWFH, for Brazier, the last room on the tour went to the heart of contesting the public's perception of Reconstruction shaped by education and popular culture. What made the house "special" was the opportunity to show "how historians can really do their craft and what it means to be a historian and what interpretation means."¹⁶ She pointed out Hillary Clinton's "Lost Cause" gaffe on the campaign trail in January of 2016. In response to a question, Clinton

¹⁵ Behrend, "Facts and Memories," 428–33, 436, 441–43; Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, 5–7, 22.

¹⁶ Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Hillary Clinton Goes Back to the Dunning School," *The Atlantic*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/01/hillary-clinton-reconstruction/427095/>; Brazier, interview.

named Abraham Lincoln as the president she most admired. She then launched into a Lost Cause defense of her answer that could have come from Dixon, Dunning or Wilson. Wilson speculated, “Had Mr. Lincoln lived, perhaps the whole of the delicate business might have been through with dignity, good temper, and simplicity of method.”¹⁷ For Wilson, in crafting the memory of the executive and legislative branches pitted against one another for control of Reconstruction, Lincoln had to be right if Congressional Reconstruction was to be remembered as so wrong. And Reconstruction had to be wrong to defend Jim Crow. Wilson grew up in an environment hostile to Lincoln yet fashioned a memory to serve as another indictment of Reconstruction. As momentum was building among Democrats to overturn Reconstruction, Edwin Booth, the most popular Shakespearean actor in the nation, came to Columbia on January 26, 1876 for a one-day engagement of *Hamlet*. Whites, so excited to see the brother of the man who shot Lincoln, literally stampeded the ticket agent within several minutes of sales opening. The show sold out quickly, prompting locals’ unsuccessful attempts to scalp tickets over twice their value. Booth privately confessed he hoped to never return South, for his fanatical welcome stemmed as much from his brother John’s infamy as his own critical fame.¹⁸ But Wilson’s invented memory lived on in Clinton’s gaffe. America might have

¹⁷ Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and Birth,” 691; Lincoln and Johnson, had they remained architects of Reconstruction and not been thwarted by assassination and Congressional obstruction, would have provided a smoother transition and kept white rule. Johnson simply lacked Lincoln’s pragmatism, charm, and leadership skills. Wilson, “Reconstruction of the Southern States,” 371–377, quote 371.

¹⁸ Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, 1986 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988), 48; William Winter, *Life and Art of Edwin Booth* (New York, London: Macmillan and Co, 1893), 98–99; Brenda Kathryn Wentworth, “The First City Hall Opera House in Columbia, South Carolina, 1875-1899” (University of South Carolina, 1978), 58; “Edwin Booth,” *Daily Register*, November 4, 1875, 4, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Hereinafter, cited as SCL, USC; “Local Items –Booth as Hamlet,” *Daily Register*, January 13, 1876, 4, SCL, USC; “Opera House January 26. Mr. Edwin Booth’s Southern Tour,” *Daily Register*, January 13, 1876, 4, SCL, USC. This same advertisement ran January 14-16, 19-22, and 26, 1876; “Local Items--To See Booth,” *Daily Register*, January 21, 1876, 4, SCL, USC; “Local Items--A Card,” *Daily Register*, January 23, 1876, 4, SCL, USC; “Local Items--Booth,” *Daily Register*, January 24, 1876, 4, SCL, USC;

been “a little less rancorous, a little more forgiving and tolerant,” and reunited more quickly, she claimed. Instead, America got Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and some “totally discouraged and defiant” southerners. She believed “he could have very well put us on a different path.” The only difference between Clinton and Wilson was a negative connotation of Jim Crow. Her team quickly clarified that America might have been in “a better place” if the federal government had not abandoned Reconstruction before achieving “equality, justice, and reconciliation,” paving the way for the “disgraceful era of Jim Crow.” The legacy of “racist efforts against Reconstruction,” her team explained, could still be seen in modern voter suppression.¹⁹

Public historians trained in historiography were comfortable discussing such complex and conflicting interpretations of history. But for docents less familiar with how history is crafted and interpretative turns, Historic Columbia attempted to clarify this process. Cook advised docents to set the stage immediately for framing the complexity of both Wilson’s legacy and Reconstruction memory further explored in the exhibit film, panels, and cases.²⁰ The interpretative team continuously reworked the transition statement to bind the two memories of Reconstruction and Wilson together and how both facilitated national reconciliation, to convey the complexity of the Lost Cause, and to acknowledge Wilson’s racial views and discriminatory policies. This connected

Edwin Booth to William Winter, “Mammoth Cave,” March 5, 1876; “Home Gossip,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1876, 4; Booth to Winter, “Louisville,” 14 March 1876, in Daniel J. Watermeier, ed., *Between Actor and Critic: Selected Letters of Edwin Booth and William Winter* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 58–59.

¹⁹ Coates, “Hillary Clinton Goes Back”; Kevin Drum, “Does Hillary Clinton Know Her Postbellum History?,” *Mother Jones*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2016/01/does-hillary-clinton-know-her-postbellum-history>; Matthew Yglesias, “Clinton Campaign Clarifies Her Support for Reconstruction,” *Vox*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/1/26/10838428/clinton-statement-reconstruction>; Wilson, “Reconstruction of the Southern States,” 385, 390.

²⁰ Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 3.

thematically to panel text on how “especially proud” white Democratic southerners were of Wilson. Not only the first southern president since the Civil War, his “academic laurels and progressive policies” worked to combat “stereotypes of regional backwardness.” In exchange for acknowledging many white Americans thought like Wilson, the script countered that some of his contemporaries worked to promote racial equality and fight discrimination. Some fatigued visitors who spent less time with the room’s exhibit panels might miss that local black citizens “vigorously protested” *Birth* or that the “Columbia City Council asked a theatre to cancel” a World War I (WWI) era showing “in recognition of black contributions” to the war effort.²¹ Ultimately, months of giving tours revealed that the transition statement was better suited to conclude the tour. A basic transition statement emerged that empowered docents to select the evidence they wanted to use: “As we enter this next bedroom, we see that memories of Reconstruction and of Woodrow Wilson as President have been formulated and evolved over several generations.”²² Pinpointing a successful transition proved difficult because it set up the last exhibit film, which sparked the greatest interpretative battles in the room and the tour.

²¹ The transition statement read: “Woodrow Wilson was certainly a complicated historical figure. The history and memory of Reconstruction proves to be just as complex. Following Reconstruction, citizens who regained power embraced the concept of the Lost Cause. White Americans generally accepted this interpretation in the spirit of national reconciliation but at the expense of racial equality. But it is important to remember the remarkable changes in the South during Reconstruction could be viewed as the first civil rights movement. Wilson’s derogatory racial views aligned with the majority of white Americans in the early twentieth century; however, many white and black Americans were working to advance equality. Yet despite his racial biases, which allowed for the segregation of Washington D.C. during his administration, Wilson won a Nobel Prize and eventually endorsed suffrage for women.” Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 16; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 13; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 13; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 12; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 23; Taylor, “Tour 02 04 14,” 23; “Remembering Woodrow Wilson,” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014); “Remembering ‘Redemption,’ Panel.”

²² Taylor, “WWFH Script,” June 13, 2014, 28.

5.2 REWRITING HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING: CRAFTING *THE LEGACY OF WOODROW WILSON AND RECONSTRUCTION*

Docents expressed a host of issues with the film *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction (Legacy)* exhibited in the bedroom on historical memory. They raised concerns about clarity, its negative tone, misrepresenting Wilson's feelings about the film *The Birth of a Nation (Birth)*, the racist imagery, and minimizing Wilson's achievements. They also thought a portion featuring the artistic reworking of *Birth* by DJ Spooky needed greater context. Their concerns ultimately resulted in a major revision of the film less than a year after the opening. But in addressing docent concerns, the new version demonstrated how complicated interpreting *Birth* was and threatened to erase black voices.

Legacy was one of the last exhibit pieces vetted by staff, film producers and historians and finalized before the WWFH reopening.²³ It devoted the most time to contextualizing *Birth* for unfamiliar audiences. None of the other HHMs devoted to Wilson in Virginia, Georgia and Washington D.C. directly address Wilson's screening of the film in the White House in 1915 unless prompted. Although the exhibit at the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum in Staunton includes Wilson's time at Johns Hopkins, there is no mention that it was there he met Thomas Dixon, whose works were adapted to create *Birth*. On the centennial of *Birth*, S Street in D.C. displayed

²³ Robin Waites, email message to John Sherrer, Fielding Freed, and Jennifer Taylor, "Room 15 Video," December 7, 2013; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Birth," January 22, 2014; John Sherrer, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Birth," January 22, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to John Sherrer et al., "Draft Script for Wilson and Reconstruction Video," January 23, 2014; John Sherrer, email message to Robin Waites et al., "Draft Script for Wilson and Reconstruction Video," January 22, 2014; Carrie Phillips, email message to Robin Waites, "Draft Script for Wilson and Reconstruction Video," January 23, 2014.

a movie projector and screen to demonstrate that Wilson brought the first films to the White House but none were mentioned by name.²⁴

In the development of the exhibit film, clarity in general was always a major concern, in explaining Wilson's relationship with Reconstruction, avoiding academic jargon or vague language, but most importantly in speaking to race. Normative writing that raced some people and groups but not others was corrected. For example, in an early draft artist DJ Spooky was described as black while director D.W. Griffith's race was never noted. The text referred to "Columbians" when it meant white Columbians. Cook suggested avoiding the word "racist" because it "might detract" from white southern visitors' revising their Reconstruction interpretation. She cautioned there was "not a right or easy answer" to discussing race. However, texts should offer explicit behaviors and specific quotes as evidence and be specific in naming the kinds of black representation *Birth* promoted, such as black men being "over-sexualized animals." As such, the team sought *Birth* scenes that directly addressed themes included in or myths of Reconstruction overturned on the tour: black troops barring whites from voting, negative depictions of black legislators, Gus grabbing Flora Cameron's arm, and two Ku Klux Klan scenes, one dropping Gus' lynched body on a porch and another fighting black troops to regain control of the town.²⁵

²⁴ Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and Birth," 711; "A Young Man Finds His Profession, Panel," *Woodrow Wilson: His Life and Times*, June 19, 2015, The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum, Staunton, Virginia; When I brought up Birth on a S Street tour, the group discussed how the Ku Klux Klan was romanticized and contemplated whether Wilson enjoyed the film for its spectacle, racist ideology or both. Alex Toegel, "Tour of the President Woodrow Wilson House."

²⁵ Jennifer Taylor, email message to John Sherrer and Robin Waites, "Room 15 Video Voiceover," January 24, 2014; Daniella Cook, email message to Robin Waites, "Room 15 Video Voiceover," January 27, 2014; Carrie Phillips, "The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction CP Edits" (Historic Columbia, January 23, 2014), 1–3; Jennifer Taylor, "The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction Jen's Edits" (Historic Columbia, January 27, 2014), 1–3; Daniella Cook, "The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction DAC Edits" (Historic Columbia, January 27, 2014), 1–3; Jennifer Taylor, "The Legacy of

The most powerful imagery in the exhibit film was archival footage of a 1926 parade commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Red Shirt campaign. The moving images were powerful in visually conveying white supremacy and memory, taking pressure off a docent to “tell it.” One guest was shocked to see footage commemorating the return of “white rule.”²⁶ For Brazier, the shocking nature of *Birth* and the parade were a “great way to hammer home” her tour narrative and how white supremacy and the Lost Cause endured, a topic she struggled to expand on with just her dialogue with guests. These primary sources “backed” her words and the scholarship for people who had learned a different interpretation and “brought more credence” to the violence and racism she had discussed. Because *Birth* is “fake” rather than documentary, she favored the 1926 Red Shirt parade, as did one other docent.²⁷ But *Birth* was not fake to all of its early twentieth century audiences. The film did for mainstream cinematic Reconstruction memory what the Dunning School had for the history profession. Film critics and Hollywood were well aware the film promoted negative depictions Reconstruction, but most detrimentally, of black Americans, the latter readily consumed by white Americans and recent immigrants who were negotiating their whiteness. Americans were three times more likely to see a film than read a periodical or newspaper.²⁸

Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction Fielding Edit with Jen’s Comments” (Historic Columbia, June 12, 2014), 1.

²⁶ Brazier, “Docent Survey.”

²⁷ Brazier, interview; Hogan, interview.

²⁸ Grantham, “Southern Historiography,” 254; “A New Beginning, 1892-1945,” 85; Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 80–81; Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 83, 85, 97; Eileen Jones, “The Cinematic Lost Cause,” *Jacobin*, Struggle and Progress, Summer, no. 18 (2015), <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/civil-war-cinema-confederacy-keaton-lost-cause/>; Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, xix.

Despite the popularity of the parade footage with docents and visitors, it was temporarily cut by an outside scriptwriter during the revision process for *Legacy*. That the exclusion was even considered speaks to the tumultuous exercise that was revising the exhibit film. A parade is an experience most visitors could relate to and *Legacy* suggested the commemoration could be mistaken for a 4th of July parade. Shots of men, women and children, the “cross section of people” that attended the parade, were ultimately returned with a new sensory experience of crowd sounds.²⁹ This was but a small skirmish in the battle over *Legacy*’s interpretation.

The revision process for *Legacy* was arduous with wide variations of drafts considered. The search for funding and script reviews began in early summer of 2014. A small group of docents provided early feedback. There were three revisions before a draft was ever circulated in mid-August for internal review. Historic Columbia began meeting with local director and documentarian Lee Ann Kornegay in the fall, but it would be well after the new year before a near final version circulated.³⁰

²⁹ James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Birth Film 1st Draft Revision,” August 1, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, “Jen’s First Revision of The Legacy of Wilson and Reconstruction” (Historic Columbia, August 1, 2014), 5–6; Jennifer Taylor and Fielding Freed, “Jen’s Second Revision of The Legacy of Wilson and Reconstruction-FF Edits” (Historic Columbia, August 11, 2014), 6; Sarah Blackwell et al., “WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS Edits JTs Edits JQ Edits FF Edits SB Edits” (Historic Columbia, October 16, 2014), 4; Fielding Freed, John Sherrer, and Jennifer Taylor, “WilsonReconstruction30Oct2014REV” (Historic Columbia, November 19, 2014), 4; John Sherrer, Jennifer Taylor, and Robin Waites, “WilsonReconstruction28Nov2014REV” (Historic Columbia, November 28, 2014), 6; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay, “Lee Ann Kornegay Shared a Video with You!,” February 5, 2015; Fielding Freed, email message to Interpretative Team and Lee Ann Kornegay, “HC Wilson Video Input,” February 9, 2015; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link,” March 5, 2015; “Remembering ‘Redemption,’ Panel.”

³⁰ Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Action Items”; Waites, email message to Volunteers, “WWFH June Follow-Up”; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Videos,” July 22, 2014; Fielding Freed, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “2nd Revision,” August 7, 2014; Fielding Freed, email message to Interpretative Team, “WW Script First Draft,” October 16, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WW Script First Draft,” October 16, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Lee Ann Kornegay Shared a Video with You!,” February 5, 2015.

The sheer complexity of *Birth* from historical and media studies perspectives, pressure to expand the discussion of Wilson’s presidential policy, and the need for brevity did little to help with *Legacy*’s clarity, one of the chief criticisms of docents. The first attempts of scriptwriting fumbled with bringing in the Wilson family after they left Columbia and reconnecting Wilson’s presidency with Columbia. The team abandoned an attempt to connect Wilson’s Civil War and Reconstruction experience to his foreign policy in Latin America and during WWI.³¹ The team added a new interview with Wilson biographer A. Scott Berg, secured during a Historic Columbia book signing. Some team members and volunteers welcomed the addition but a few public historians took issue with Lost Cause echoes in how Berg framed Reconstruction through Wilson’s eyes as a “potentially a good idea.”³² The introduction was scrapped but the original conclusion ultimately prevailed. The interpretative team wanted to retain an audio recording of an excerpt from one of Wilson’s speeches that opened the original *Legacy*, but even the most devoted proponents acquiesced. The speech’s focus on industry and monopolies felt out of a place with the needs of the film and required introducing new elements of Wilson’s progressivism or the 1912 presidential campaign for context.³³ Meanwhile, the

³¹ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “WWFH Videos,” August 12, 2014; Taylor, “Jen’s First Revision of Legacy,” 1–3; Taylor and Freed, “Jen’s Second Revision FF Edits,” 1–3; Jennifer Taylor et al., “Third Revision of The Legacy of Wilson and Reconstruction Everyone’s Comments” (Historic Columbia, August 12, 2014), 1–3; Quint, email message to Taylor, “Birth Film 1st Draft Revision”; Ann Posner, email message to Interpretative Team, Carrie Phillips, and Celia Galens, “WWFH Videos,” August 12, 2014; Fielding Freed, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “WWFH Script,” November 14, 2014; Celia Galens, email message to Interpretative Team, “WW Script First Draft,” October 14, 2014.

³² Freed, email message to Interpretative Team and Kornegay, “HC Wilson Video Input”; Taylor, email message to Kornegay, “Kornegay Shared a Video”; Richardson, interview; Gunter, interview; Rodney Welch, “The Pounding Heart of Woodrow Wilson,” *Free Times*, September 3, 2014, e-Edition edition, http://www.free-times.com/arts/the-pounding-heart-of-woodrow-wilson/article_a5ee85dc-37d9-58aa-a3a9-2643c9829431.html.

³³ The team hoped the audio could be added as a separate exhibit feature on the smart board or as a push button sound effect on the engraving image of Wilson in the memory room. As of publication, there were no plans to include the audio in the current exhibit. Taylor, “Legacy Fielding Edit,” 1; Taylor, “Jen’s First Revision of Legacy,” 1; Taylor and Freed, “Jen’s Second Revision FF Edits,” 3; Taylor et al., “Third

conclusion lacked a cohesive, workable chronology for three events the team wanted included: Wilson's death, the parade, and saving the home, all two years apart.³⁴ The team returned to *Legacy's* first conclusion and its critical thinking cues for visitors to explore "the legacy of Reconstruction and the impact it may have had on a fourteen-year-old boy named Tommy who later became president of the United States."³⁵ These would be the easy decisions.

BIRTH OF A PROBLEM

From the beginning, interpreting *Birth* was the greatest conundrum for Historic Columbia and its docents. Those working most directly with docents recognized the need to contextualize the scenes from *Birth* effectively in both the script and exhibit film. Some visitors expressed confusion after the tour to the gift shop manager about why an offensive film would be privileged even though this critique did not show up on visitor evaluations.³⁶ So concerned about the film, one volunteer requested a meeting about her reluctance to continue training after a sample training tour. She was uncomfortable conducting tours, especially because of the alarming images of black face actors, a dead body and racist tropes from *Birth*. So distracting were these images that she missed the

Revision of *Legacy*," 2; Celia Galens et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS Edits JTs Edits JQ Edits CG" (Historic Columbia, October 14, 2014), 3; Freed, Sherrer, and Taylor, "WilsonReconstruction30Oct," 1; Galens, email message to Interpretative Team, "WW Script First Draft"; Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites, "WWFH Script," November 21, 2014; Freed, Sherrer, and Taylor, "WilsonReconstruction30Oct," 1; Sherrer, Taylor, and Waites, "WilsonReconstruction28Nov," 2; Freed sent two emails on the thread on the same day. Fielding Freed, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link," March 5, 2015; Lee Ann Kornegay, email message to Interpretative Team, "Woodrow Wilson Reconstruction Video," March 2, 2015; Taylor, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link"; Robin Waites, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link," March 5, 2015; James Quint, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "Revised WW," March 9, 2015.

³⁴ Taylor et al., "Third Revision of *Legacy*," 6.

³⁵ Galens, email message to Interpretative Team, "WW Script First Draft"; Galens et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG," 4; Blackwell et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG FF SB," 4.

³⁶ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Sarah Blackwell, "Evaluations," March 26, 2014.

closing statements of the tour. Members of the interpretative team met with the docent and reassured her that revisions were coming both to the film and in a secondary background section of the script, but she did not complete training.³⁷ The docent may have been trapped in her own personal connections to Thomas Dixon. Several generations of men in her family had established and continued to serve in a Baptist church where Dixon's father was the first minister. She also recommended a chapter on "Reconstruction and the Negroes" from the North Carolina equivalent of the State Guide Louise Jones DuBose edited for South Carolina.³⁸

Another key issue for docents was a quote wrongly attributed to Woodrow Wilson that he endorsed *Birth*. Dixon tapped Wilson to quell *Birth*'s criticism. They met for thirty minutes on February 3, 1915. Afterward, Dixon coordinated with Wilson's daughter Margaret a private screening on February 18, 1915 attended by them, Wilson, his doctor, Griffith, and some cabinet members and their families (The Wilsons had watched the first film in the White House, *Cabiria*, eight months earlier). Dixon used the private screening to convince members of Congress and the Supreme Court to watch *Birth*. Groups like the NAACP were attempting to shut down the film's release by citing censorship laws that prohibited productions that could incite public unrest or riots. Newspapers and critics also protested or condemned the film citing its misrepresentation of Reconstruction and black people, glorification of lynching, and promotion of bigotry

³⁷ There are two emails from Riggins with the same title and date as follows: Beth Riggins, email message to Ann Posner, "Reminder," May 7, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Reminder," May 8, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, "Reminder," May 8, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Reminder," May 8, 2014; Fielding Freed, email message to Ann Posner and Jennifer Taylor, "Reminder," May 8, 2014.

³⁸ Beth Riggins, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Two Books about Thomas Dixon and Reconstruction in N.C.," June 2, 2014; Beth Riggins, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Two Books about Thomas Dixon and Reconstruction in N.C.," June 4, 2014.

against people of color. Wilson's implied political endorsements ended the censorship battle in New York City, setting precedent to screen the film in other cities.³⁹

The question of how friendly Dixon and Wilson were gets to the heart of the interpretative and scholarly debate about Wilson's relationship with and endorsement of the film. So much so, that the interpretative team even debated between the language of acquaintances versus associates.⁴⁰ Wilson met Dixon during his brief stint at Johns Hopkins University. They both studied under Adams and Richard T. Ely. Rooted in Hegelian theory, Adams' Teutonic germ theory that American democracy evolved from Germanic and Anglo-Saxon bloodlines gave the southerners a larger framework for their existing regional views. Wilson certainly came off as more subtle in his racism than Dixon did in his fictional works. In a 1905 curtain speech in Columbia for his play *The Clansman*, Dixon proclaimed he used Reconstruction and the white southern experience to unite the nation and help the globe, also facing similar racial crises.⁴¹

Dixon and Wilson exchanged letters but did not have frequent correspondence. Dixon clearly admired Wilson, so much so that Dixon convinced Wake Forest College to give his honorary degree to Wilson and later dedicated his novel *The Southerner: a Romance of the Real Lincoln* to the President. Dixon wrote to Wilson about politics. As a

³⁹ Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and Birth," 702-4; Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation," 512-13, 529; Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 84-85; Berg, *Wilson*, 348-49; See 1915 *New York Globe* review "Capitalizing Race Hatred" and Janet Staiger, "The Birth of a Nation: Reconsider Its Reception," in *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith, Director*, ed. Robert Lang, Rutgers Films in Print, v. 21 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 164-65, 201-2.

⁴⁰ Galens et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG," 2.

⁴¹ Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and Birth," quote 693, 689-690, 710; Berg, *Wilson*, 94; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 67-68; John Hammond Moore, "South Carolina Views The Birth of a Nation," in *Perspectives in South Carolina History: The First 300 Years*, ed. Ernest M. Lander and Robert K. Ackerman (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 339-40.

North Carolina legislator, Dixon shared news about a Confederate veterans' pension bill. He wrote in support of Wilson's governorship and presidential ambitions and as an advocate for white supremacy. Dixon recommended a cabinet position for his friend Josephus Daniels. As young men in the early 1880s, the two had been members of Raleigh's Watauga Club, a group committed to an industrialized South. As editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer*, Daniels was co-architect of the 1898 Democratic campaign in North Carolina that fueled the Wilmington massacre. Dixon used the events and historical figures as inspiration for *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman*, the source material for *Birth*. Glenda Gilmore, in her study of Jim Crow North Carolina, called Daniels "the New White Man's mouth" and Dixon "his libido." Wilson ultimately named Daniels, a key engineer of segregating federal offices, Secretary of the Navy. Wilson also appointed Walter Hines Page, Watauga club member and Dixon's publisher, ambassador to Great Britain. Daniels in fact arranged the meeting between chief justice Edward D. White and Dixon to convince the former Louisiana clansman to host a screening of *Birth*. Dixon also wrote Wilson to encourage the withdrawal of a black candidate for a Treasury department position and received Wilson's assurances there was no risk of interracial mixing.⁴²

Wilson and Dixon certainly found themselves in some of the same white supremacist circles, but did Wilson endorse the most powerful white supremacist film of all time? After the White House screening, Wilson reportedly said, "It is like writing

⁴² Dixon delivered the commencement address at Wake and convinced the trustees to give Wilson his first honorary degree, which strengthened his national profile. Two years before *Birth*, Dixon dedicated the novel to Wilson, for which Wilson thanked him. Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and *Birth*," 693–95, 698–99, 703; Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation," 512, 515; Berg, *Wilson*, 349; Kathleen L. Wolgemuth, "Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation," *The Journal of Negro History* 44, no. 2 (April 1, 1959): 158–59; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 65–67, 135–137, quote from 66.

history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true.” Nine different variations of the infamous quote have appeared in ninety years, beginning in 1915. Griffith told the *New York American* that Washington had praised the film and ““a man we all revere,”” implying Wilson, said it ““teaches history by lightning.”” In December 1915, the *Atlanta Constitution* used the phrase “history written with lightning” twice for promotions. Other publications hinted the quote was from Wilson. The regrettably true portion did not appear until journalist Milton MacKaye’s 1937 piece in *Scribner’s Magazine*. Mark Benbow speculated at best that Wilson, as a professor and president interested in using film as an educational and propaganda tool, might have used the language of “teaching,” which quickly morphed into “writing” for advertising.⁴³

Twice the exhibit directly addressed the inauthentic quote, but some volunteer docents felt *Legacy* left visitors with the impression Wilson endorsed *Birth*. A panel included the quote and noted it was “probably not authentic” because a journalist made the claim “much later.” The exhibit film introduced the quote with the language “allegedly.” It was as if the presence of the quote itself was an indictment. Scholars have done much to perpetuate the misquote, but it also endures because Wilson was vague in his thoughts about *Birth* publically. Wilson never condemned *Birth*, its message or use of his historical scholarship, possibly because he was engaged in a battle over segregation with *Birth* protester William Trotter. Nor did Wilson cut off communication with Dixon, offering to consult on future historical or political films time permitting. However,

⁴³ MacKaye or *The Rise of the American Film Industry* released the following year are generally the sources cited from this point forward. Wilson’s quote is frequently and incorrectly attributed to a *New York Evening Post* article on March 4, 1915. Memoirs of star Lillian Gish and producer Roy Aitken placed their own spin on the quote, but surprisingly Dixon’s memoir and fictionalized accounts of the Wilson meeting omit it entirely. Benbow, “Birth of a Quotation,” Dixon quote 515, 509, 517-519, 521-523, 527, 529; Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and Birth,” 704; Berg, *Wilson*, 349.

Wilson once wrote that the film was “a very unfortunate production” and wished it was not played, especially in communities with large black populations. His administration publically claimed Wilson was ignorant of the film’s character before watching it. His screening was nothing more than a courtesy to an old college buddy and certainly not an endorsement. Granted, Dixon was a notorious promoter of the movie, but that Wilson could not guess the themes and mood of the film based on Dixon’s well-known novels and plays seems unlikely. In fact, *Birth* had originally premiered as *The Clansman*, after the novel inspiring the second half of the film, until Dixon convinced Griffith to change the title. The quote also persists because Griffith gave greater historical weight to his film by quoting Wilson’s work as a scholar through various title cards. Griffith mislead his audiences by framing Wilson’s interpretation of the Klan as required rather than a violent political reaction. A still of a title card quoting Wilson is included on a WWFH panel.⁴⁴

Given the nuance required to explain the circumstantial evidence surrounding Wilson’s endorsement, *Legacy*’s revision opted for simplicity. Wilson historians Arthur Link and Kendrick Clements, a WWFH exhibit team member, agreed Dixon and the new medium of film duped the president. This was also the position of one member of the interpretative team and John Clark, the most vocal opponent of *Legacy*’s depiction of the quote. Prompted by his reading of John Milton Cooper’s Wilson biography, Clark expressed strong objections to the executive director and to the interpretative team when revisions and yearend reviews were announced. Clark viewed Wilson “a naïve victim of

⁴⁴ The title card reads: “The white men were roused by a mere instinct of self-preservation until at last there had sprung into existence a great Ku Klux Klan, a veritable empire of the South, to protect the Southern country.” “Woodrow Wilson on Reconstruction, Panel”; Mimi White, “The Birth of a Nation: History as Pretext,” in *The Birth of a Nation: D.W. Griffith, Director*, 217; Berg, *Wilson*, 348–50; Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and Birth,” 702, 704–5, 710–11; Benbow, “Birth of a Quotation,” 512, 514, 520; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites and Fielding Freed, “Birth of a Nation,” June 10, 2014.

his opportunistic college friend” rather than “a proactive host.” He thought the film “a bit unfair” given Wilson seemed “more guilty of incompetence than malice” and it unwise to spread the popular misquote any further given the evidence. He and the team remained in contact with updates on how the revision was handling the controversy.⁴⁵ The team determined that the most definitive statement that could be made was: “what he thought of the film, he did not say.” That the “movie’s producers capitalized on the White House connection” gave room for visitors to think about the various ways this process might work. The team also decided to use *Birth*’s title cards quoting Wilson as a visual example of Wilson’s implied endorsement. By not crediting where Griffith pulled the quote, he implied the president offered his historical assessment for his use. The caption to the title card used in *Legacy* revealed it was “an excerpt from Wilson’s 1902 *A History of the American People*.” Additionally, one approach offered to docents was framing the “lightning” statement as a manufactured celebrity endorsement made possible by the screening and lack of public condemnation that appeared to sanction the message of the film.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and Birth,” 710–11; Quotes from John Clark, email message to Robin Waites, “Birth of a Nation,” June 2, 2014; John Clark, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “WWFH 2014 Trends PowerPoint,” January 26, 2015; Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites and Jennifer Taylor, “Birth of a Nation,” June 9, 2014.

⁴⁶ Mimi White argues Griffith’s use of Wilson quotes was to grant historical authority to the film’s racially biased narratives, such as the rise of the Klan, that risked being construed as “invention.” White, “The Birth of a Nation: History as Pretext,” 217; Jennifer Taylor, email message to John Clark, “WWFH 2014 Trends PowerPoint,” January 28, 2015; Taylor, email message to Waites and Freed, “Birth of a Nation”; Galens et al., “WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG,” 3; Blackwell et al., “WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG FF SB,” 3; Taylor, “Jen’s First Revision of Legacy,” 4–5; Taylor and Freed, “Jen’s Second Revision FF Edits,” 4–6; Taylor et al., “Third Revision of Legacy,” 4; Quotes from the following: “WilsonReconstruction-2 Jenny’s Comment” (Historic Columbia, October 8, 2014), 3–4; Freed, Sherrer, and Taylor, “WilsonReconstruction30Oct,” 3; Sherrer, Taylor, and Waites, “WilsonReconstruction28Nov,” 4; Fielding Freed, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “Revised WW,” March 9, 2015; Fielding Freed, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “Revised WW,” March 10, 2015; Lee Ann Kornegay, email message to Interpretative Team, “Revised WW,” March 10, 2015.

While the WWFH directly confronted Wilson's endorsement of *Birth*, Historic Columbia rejected letting the endorsement question drive the interpretation. Rather, the organization relocated the discussion of Wilson and *Birth* back to Columbia and Reconstruction. Honing this interpretation resulted in fleeting suggestions that *Birth* be dropped entirely. Two interpretative team members began to wonder if Wilson's relationship with *Birth*, the whole purpose of the exhibit film, was reaching its goals. Did visitors even care? Docents reported that some visitors had no frame of reference for *Birth*, and those that did, rarely had seen it. Scholars might associate Wilson with the film but visitors thought of world war, the 19th Amendment, the Federal Reserve and segregation. *Birth* met the museum's goal to present new and challenging information, but the never-ending revisions suggested the material was being forced. One team member feared "overwhelmingly placing all our eggs in *The Birth of a Nation* basket." Maybe less *Birth* was the answer.⁴⁷ In the end, looking at *Birth* through a localized lens offered a new approach.

RELIVING THE PAST AND NATIONALIZING COLUMBIA'S RECONSTRUCTION HISTORY

In 1977, Marjorie Brown King told Wilson expert Arthur Link that she witnessed the president lost in thought during the screening of *Birth* and that he left without commenting. His wandering mind could have been caused by the recent death of his wife, the stress of WWI, or the potential problems the film might cause. Or it may be a

⁴⁷ Sarah Blackwell, email message to Interpretative Team, "WW Script First Draft," October 16, 2014; Lee Ann Kornegay, email message to Robin Waites, John Sherrer, and Fielding Freed, "WW Script First Draft," October 12, 2014; Storm, interview; Freed, email message to Waites and Taylor, "Birth of a Nation"; Taylor, email message to Waites and Freed, "Birth of a Nation"; Galens et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG," 3; Blackwell et al., "WilsonReconstruction-2 JMS JTs JQ CG FF SB," 4.

fabrication to protect a long-deceased president in the post-civil rights era. Similarly, friend and physician Cary Grayson, who took excellent care of Wilson memorabilia, donated a crumpled program of the screening to Wilson's presidential library. The memory and material culture, if true, suggests two scenarios. He disapproved of the film or over-identified with it.⁴⁸ Either way, did he think of his teenage home in Columbia? And did his fellow Columbians have the same reaction?

Griffith placed the action in *Birth* in the fictional South Carolina community of Piedmont. But once the viewer dismisses the mythical South Carolina, the film not only exposes Columbia but also nationalizes South Carolina's white memory of Reconstruction. Evidence of historical South Carolina emerges, most clearly in the scene within Columbia's State House. Rather than solely focus on Wilson's maybe endorsement, *Legacy* used the State House scene to ask visitors to consider if while watching *Birth*, "would Wilson have recalled his years in Columbia?" This scene was one of the localized and regional connections binding Wilson, South Carolina, the nation and Reconstruction together that the first interpretation of *Legacy* underplayed.⁴⁹ Griffith's derogatory representations of black representatives eating chicken, not wearing shoes, or drinking alcohol were in the original version but not placed in the context of Wilson's memory, Lost Cause memory and place. In fact, a team member suggested cutting some

⁴⁸ Ambrosius, "Woodrow Wilson and Birth," 704; Berg, *Wilson*, 349; Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation," 514–28.

⁴⁹ Taylor began to analyze *Birth*'s connections to Columbia and South Carolina via her blog *Reconstructing Reconstruction* at <https://reconstructingreconstruction.wordpress.com/Taylor>, email message to Waites and Freed, "Birth of a Nation"; Taylor, "Legacy Fielding Edit," 1.

of the negative imagery but the majority of the team wanted to keep the local representations.⁵⁰

The State House scene opened with Griffith's "historical facsimile" title card that informs the audience they are witnessing an authentic representation of the legislature based on a picture from *The State* newspaper. Griffith's depiction contrasted against the *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* image of the dignified, newspaper reading legislature awaiting results during the disputed 1876 election used in the WWFH exhibit demonstrate the director's ability to stretch historical realities to mythical proportions. Docents could choose to highlight this effective contrasting tool on the tour.⁵¹

Dixon did indeed strive for historical accuracy in the construction of the State House set, but not its human occupants. Dixon wrote *The State* publisher Ambrose Gonzales in Columbia asking for a local contact who could provide photographs of the House of Representatives chamber and serve as a fact-checker for the set. Gonzales, who had a decade long feud with Dixon over the play version of *The Clansman*, pushed the request off on a young journalist, Sam Latimer. Latimer hailed from York County, a community that inspired Dixon's novels and the fictional Piedmont setting of *Birth*. Dixon visited family there frequently. In her WPA *State Guide*, Louise Jones DuBose promoted the York-*Clansman* connection and also claimed Dixon drew on the history of the Columbia Klan trials. Supposedly, klansman Dr. Rufus Bratton, whom federal

⁵⁰ Taylor, "Jen's First Revision of Legacy," 3-4; Taylor and Freed, "Jen's Second Revision FF Edits," 3-4; Taylor et al., "Third Revision of Legacy," 3-4; Blackwell, email message to Interpretative Team, "WW Script First Draft."

⁵¹ Taylor et al., "Third Revision of Legacy," 4; Taylor, email message to Kornegay, "Kornegay Shared a Video"; Quote from Taylor, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link"; "Detail from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* April 21, 1877," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014). A thumbnail of this image can be found at the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007678068/>; White, "The Birth of a Nation: History as Pretext," 218.

officials “kidnapped” from Canada to stand trial, was a character prototype for *The Clansman*. Set designers in Los Angeles erected the chamber using Columbia photographer George V. Hennies’ shots from thirteen angles. Although researchers in Columbia verified the authenticity, only the 1871 speaker stand was authentic. The chamber was contemporary. In 1871, the State House was just a year old and remained unfinished with a cheap tin roof. *Leslie’s* image with its granite walls, curtains, and gaslight fixtures offers evidence of the mistake.⁵²

Other manifestations of Columbia surface in *Birth*, even if they were too much for inclusion in the exhibit film. Griffith dislocates the Cameron family plantation, the location of much of the main action of the film, to an urban space. The front of the Cameron “Big House” is accessible by a sidewalk decorated with a streetlamp and leading toward a church. A community bonfire is held on this same street. Behind the façade of the front porch and parlor, the audience occasionally is shown a cotton field and slave quarters; but otherwise, the setting suggests an urban space.⁵³ This mise-en-scène likely invited residents of Columbia and perhaps the entire state to envision the city in their reading of the film. When watching Gen. William T. Sherman’s fiery destruction and the sacking of the Cameron home, South Carolinians most likely recalled the burning of Columbia on February 17, 1865. Griffith blamed guerillas. Columbians condemned Sherman even though burning cotton and the effects of liquor provided fuel for winds

⁵² Terry Lipscomb, “D.W. Griffith’s ‘Historical Facsimile’: How the South Carolina State House Became a Movie Set,” *Caroliniana Columns*, Spring 2002, 1, 3–4; Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of South Carolina, *South Carolina*, 38–41, 254, 426; Moore, “South Carolina Views Birth,” 339, 346; Taylor, email message to Waites and Freed, “Birth of a Nation.”

⁵³ Anna Everett, *Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001), 89; Amy Louise Wood, “With the Roar of Thunder: The Birth of a Nation,” in *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 147.

that ultimately destroyed a third of the city.⁵⁴ A more subtle allusion to Columbia, the center of state and federal power for South Carolina, is Griffith's incorporation of a strong federal presence in Piedmont. Troops declined significantly after the passage of the 1868 state constitution. By late summer, the army maintained only three posts in the state: Columbia, Charleston and Aiken. The frequent reoccurrence of federal troops, which could represent the Eighth Infantry stationed in Columbia, hails one of these three cities. Additionally, the short-lived Freedmen's Bureau, also featured, placed its last headquarters before it was abolished in 1869 in Columbia.⁵⁵

The local connection to *Birth* that likely created the most emotional response from white audiences would have come from reading the Klan as the Red Shirts. Griffith's film offered a widely understood white supremacist narrative that would resonate with audiences and be easily understood. Given the Klan spread across the South and into popular media of the Reconstruction era, the group offered a straightforward symbol recognized by millions of Americans as the nation attempted to negotiate whiteness and middle class values during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Birth*, black children frightened by two young white pranksters inspire Ben Cameron to create the Reconstruction-era terrorist group. Historically, the Klan first appeared in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1866. By 1868, the group infiltrated South Carolina, most notably in the

⁵⁴ Susan Courtney, *Hollywood Fantasies of Miscegenation: Spectacular Narratives of Gender and Race, 1903-1967* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 69–70; Allen Wallace, "Columbia Unveils Marker Commemorating 1865 Burning of City," *ColaDaily.com*, February 17, 2015, <http://coladaily.com/2015/02/17/columbia-unveils-marker-commemorating-1865-burning-of-city/>; Jeff Wilkinson, "Who Was Really Responsible for the Burning of Columbia in 1865?," *The State*, February 7, 2015, <http://www.thestate.com/2015/02/07/3959380/who-was-really-responsible-for.html>.

⁵⁵ Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 50, 65, footnote 15; Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 397; "Records of the Field Offices for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1872," 3, <http://www.archives.gov/research/microfilm/m1910.pdf>.

upstate and York region. In the early 1870s, the group disbanded after federal legislation and trials, which rarely rendered convictions, made an example of the state.⁵⁶ In *Birth*'s closing scene, the Klan protects the ballot box. But anyone who knew local Reconstruction history, certainly Dixon, would be aware that the state's Democratic Party was supported by the terrorism of the Red Shirts, not the Klan, leading to the toppling of Republican-ruled Reconstruction in 1876 by using intimidation at the ballot box. *Birth*'s Klan narrative would have made greater sense to South Carolinians as a symbolic homage to the Red Shirts. To tell an authentic history of Reconstruction's end in South Carolina and establish who the Red Shirts were and their significance proved too complex for national consumption.

White southerners, who at times rejected the play version of *The Clansman* because it did not speak as effectively to Lost Cause ideology or have a documentary feel, embraced *Birth*. Columbians so hated both Dixon and the play when it premiered in 1905 that locals attempted to mob a member of the cast and hissed at Dixon. *The Clansman* and Dixon's presumption he spoke for the South was the root of Gonzales' telegraph and press war with Dixon, part of a larger attack by the state's press. Gonzales called the play a "fairy tale." It glorified reprehensible acts of Klan violence, but most egregious, the group had disappeared five years before "the men who wore red shirts in broad light of day and the women who blessed them redeemed South Carolina from Negro rule." Gonzales cautioned against surrendering this legacy "for a tinsel setting to a sensational drama!"⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Edgar, *South Carolina*, 398, 400–401.

⁵⁷ Wood, "Roar of Thunder," 150; Moore, "South Carolina Views Birth," quote from 339, 339-341; Lipscomb, "D.W. Griffith's 'Historical Facsimile,'" 1, 3.

Despite objections to the play, white southern audiences had an intense connection to Griffith's melodrama. It better represented their manufactured historical version of the past and anxieties about the black vote, crime, and sexuality than *The Clansman* had. *The State's* review cited the State House scene as evidence for authenticity and praised Griffith's work for tempering Dixon's more racist novels. White South Carolina approved of *Birth*, many without reservations. Some saw it repeatedly. Others kept their viewing quiet, understanding the film's racial implications. For those of Dixon and Griffith's generation who did not remember Reconstruction but had followed the white supremacy campaign of Governor Ben Tillman, historian James Hammond Moore called *Birth* "an unparalleled emotional experience. It was Christmas morning, circus day, and victory for the home team over its arch rival all rolled into one." Audiences at times suffered from "overidentification" with the characters. In Spartanburg, the first showing of *Birth* in South Carolina, former Confederates and men who once donned "gray uniforms, white sheets, and red shirts wept, yelled, whooped, cheered" and shot the screen to protect white, virginal Flora Cameron from the black rapist Gus.⁵⁸ In the first six months of 1916, *Birth* played in seven more cities across the state. Railroads offered reduced rates for rural residents. Local papers heavily promoted the film, its accuracy and localized connections. Rock Hill extended the engagement two days. The film returned to the state in 1921, and two years later, the picture finally came "home" to York. Those residents, so drawn to *Birth* and their sometimes visitor Dixon, skipped a night of sleep to take the train to Charlotte in 1915.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Wood, "Roar of Thunder," 153, 165–67; Lipscomb, "D.W. Griffith's 'Historical Facsimile,'" 4; Moore, "South Carolina Views Birth," quotes from 337–338, 346–347.

⁵⁹ Moore, "South Carolina Views Birth," 344–46.

South Carolinians likely read the spectacle of Griffith's Klan as a glorification of the Red Shirts' role in overturning Reconstruction in 1876. Did Woodrow Wilson also think of South Carolina? These questions, though unanswerable, gave visitors a way to tackle the complicated and interwoven history of Wilson, South Carolina and Reconstruction. As such, the docent script's last revision acknowledged *Birth's* South Carolina setting had been downplayed evaluations of the film and may "be just as important to why we show it in the house as Wilson's connection to the film." The film was important not just for its "artistic merits," which helped perpetuate an inaccurate history, because it "captures the state's Reconstruction memory and nationalizes it."⁶⁰

REBIRTH OF A PROBLEM

A new interview with DJ Spooky helped resolve issues with clarity and corrected an imbalance in black representation that emerged during *Legacy's* revision process. The original version featured DJ Spooky and clips from his *Rebirth of a Nation (Rebirth)*, but the hip-hop infused re-edit of *Birth* confused audiences or failed to engage them. Without it, the new version reduced black representation to Griffith's negative depictions of corrupt and inept politicians in the State House. The team grappled with modifying DJ Spooky's portion or cutting it and focusing on a new subject, such as the black community's fight against *Birth*, segregating federal offices, or Wilson himself. Length was a serious concern but inclusivity was not optional. Staff who had worked with USC Media Arts faculty on projects related to black representation explored options.

⁶⁰ Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 26.

Fortunately an opportunity for an interview with DJ Spooky to elucidate his work emerged. It saved the material that was almost excised for its complexity.⁶¹

Given his mother was a feminist historian and his father a lawyer who worked with Angela Davis, Paul Miller, aka DJ Spooky, expected a career in the Foreign Service. In the 1990s, the teenager's love of music merged with history. A good DJ scoured music and thrift stores for "rare, cool stuff" to be different, and good sampling required research. He eventually expanded his search from musical archives to repositories of history and film. He wanted artists to see a "living archive" rather than a "dead space." Although he sounded like a historian, he understood his work to be different. An academic's archive, which required citation, differed from the DJ's archive of quoting by sampling. Yet, like the historians described by Carolyn Steedman in *Dust*, he suffered from "archival fever." He never felt his editing art form was finished but liked "the idea of the unfinished." And like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, DJ Spooky saw power symbolized and expressed in the archive. He pulled from it a reflection of America's white supremacy and prepared to "turn the tables" on it.⁶²

DJ Spooky, that Subliminal Kid, traveled the United States and the world showing *Rebirth* for a decade. In January 2015, his film brought him to the Nickelodeon Theater in Columbia for a screening and director talkback with the audience. It was the first of six films in the theater's month-long "Burn to Shine" program, part of the city's larger *Burning of Columbia* commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Sherman's arrival. The

⁶¹ Robin Waites, email message to Fielding Freed, John Sherrer, and Jennifer Taylor, "WWFH Script," November 20, 2014; Freed, email message to Waites and Taylor, "Birth of a Nation"; Freed, email message to Waites, "WWFH Script"; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Fielding Freed, "Paul Miller Pic," January 28, 2015.

⁶² DJ Spooky, "Rebirth of a Nation Talk Back" (Burn to Shine, Nickelodeon Theatre, January 19, 2015); Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Rutgers University Press, 2002), 2, 17–18.

event and Historic Columbia's interview offered much needed context for *Legacy's* revision needs about *Rebirth's* origin and significance and DJ Spooky's methodology. He found *Birth* after developing an interest in visual sampling, using historical films as a basic building block. When he put images of the KKK on screen during a couple of club shows, the audience stopped dancing to stare. He was partly inspired by the disputed 2000 presidential election and the correlation between modern day blue and red states with the Union and Confederacy. *Birth* provided "a fantasy" of Reconstruction, where blacks oppressed whites, accepted as fact by white Americans. Because the art of sampling is "open-ended," DJ Spooky reimagined the fantasy for modern audiences, who he hoped largely lacked the same taste in racist tropes and Civil War memory as their predecessors a century ago. His added music and geometric shapes around various characters allowed him to highlight white supremacy, power and class dynamics. He created electronic and ambient sounds based on blues riffs, writing music out note for note, sampling it, and re-editing it back into the film. Editing was both thematic and practical. At a little over three hours in length and silent, *Birth* generates fatigue quickly for twenty-first century viewers. Watching the entire film is "hell," DJ Spooky recalled. So, like he would with a song, he sampled the hook of the film, reducing it to one hour. Fond of the combat scenes, he kept those and cut much of Griffith's romanticism. Like early releases of *Birth*, *Rebirth* frequently played with DJ Spooky's live musical accompaniment from his laptop and sometimes a small orchestra. He placed the relevance of his work not just at the centennial of *Birth* and the sesquicentennial of the Burning of Columbia but in its scheduling on Martin Luther King, Jr. day as police

brutality and black incarceration debates were increasing. At that time #BlackLivesMatter was in its infancy.⁶³

The interpretative team was pleased with the DJ Spooky edits, as were several docents. Two volunteers praised DJ Spooky's inclusion. One thought it one of the best and most important changes. Another appreciated placing Wilson and *Birth* "in the context of the time" where Wilson was "moderate in his racial views." But this was not actually a point the artist made. In his interview excerpt, he argued *Birth* was a "racist" film that used "fear" to generate a "no holds bar indictment of the idea of black political progress." But he encouraged understanding the context of time and place, saying, "Wilson at the time would have been facing the suffragist movement . . . agitation from people returning from WWI . . . economic upheaval." *Rebirth* was "holding up a mirror to society and showing them some things still need to change." Two public historians giving tours thought DJ Spooky was giving context to the dilemmas facing Wilson, not the defense "Wilson optimists" read.⁶⁴ DJ Spooky's interpretation of the Wilsonian era during his audience talkback at the Nickelodeon supports this interpretation. He

⁶³ Andrea Mock, "Nick Theatre Holds Historic Film Screening," *WLTX News*, January 20, 2015, <http://www.wltx.com/story/entertainment/2015/01/20/nick-theatre-holds-historic-film-screening/22089755/>; "Burning of Columbia - Events Gallery," 2014, <http://burningofcolumbia.com/events/gallery/>; "DJ Spooky, Recasting 'Birth of a Nation,'" *Weekend Edition Sunday* (National Public Radio, October 17, 2004), <http://www.npr.org/2004/10/17/4112682/dj-spooky-recasting-birth-of-a-nation>; Spooky, "Rebirth Talk Back"; Moore, "South Carolina Views Birth," 344; Timing prevented the team from asking DJ Spooky to situate his work within a much longer story of black dissent against *Birth*. Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor and Fielding Freed, "DJ Spooky," January 2, 2015; Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites, "DJ Spooky," January 7, 2015; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Fielding Freed, "DJ Spooky," January 7, 2015; Robin Waites, email message to Lee Ann Kornegay, "DJS," January 14, 2015; Lee Ann Kornegay, email message to Robin Waites, "DJS," January 14, 2015; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites and Lee Ann Kornegay, "DJS," January 15, 2015.

⁶⁴ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Lee, interview; Morgan, interview; Doe, interview; Taylor, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link"; Waites, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, "WW Drop Box Link"; Taylor, email message to Kornegay, "Kornegay Shared a Video"; Lee Ann Kornegay, *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction*, digital video exhibit, documentary (Historic Columbia, 2015).

understood the film occurring in a time period with a “series of upheavals,” those listed in the clip but also prohibition, organized crime, suppression of black rights and the “appropriation of black culture.” He pointed to jazz’s popularity and the use of blackface, commonplace in the theater and early film, as evidence of this appropriation. One hundred years later, DJ Spooky appropriated white supremacy from its loudest proponent. And his historical memory of Reconstruction, Woodrow Wilson and *Birth* provides a strong counterpoint to the white memory of these same subjects. The president who screened *Birth* at the White House was the son of Confederate sympathizers. The Supreme Court viewed and essentially sanctioned the film. DJ Spooky speculated that there were “different Americas.”⁶⁵

The history of film and activism required to discuss *Birth*, *Rebirth*, and black representation effectively guaranteed a pithy exhibit film would suffer from issues of continuity and clarity. A long-standing debate existed between critics who valued the cinematic and technical importance and *Birth*’s detractors who argued its racist message and popularity made it source material for the southern interpretation of history many Americans learned. *Birth* was the visual culmination of Dixon’s literary attacks on people of color and damaged race relations and black morale. With a greater fervor than ever, activists such as DuBois and the NAACP contested the film. They joined forces with the black press to coordinate and promote protests and encouraged critical thinking about *Birth*. The press proved vigilant in its decades-long protests of *Birth* at home and abroad, building on its campaigns against the racist roles black actors were forced to play when

⁶⁵ Spooky, “Rebirth Talk Back.”

not pushed out by white actors in blackface.⁶⁶ The war also was fought by black filmmakers, although *Birth* was but one front on which black filmmakers worked to create positive depictions of black people and life. DJ Spooky's *Rebirth* was a contemporary cinematic response that began with directors such as Oscar Micheaux. Micheaux's 1920 film *Within our Gates* (*Gates*) promoted national reconciliation but with an urban black courtship between southern migrant and heroine Sylvia Landry and Dr. Vivian, a cosmopolitan northern veteran. This reconciliation included a call for full citizenship in light of the violent black American experience. *Gates* presented a multitude of diverse black characters that were both complex and shaped by region. This was a difficult task given Micheaux's films needed to be financially competitive with mainstream cinema while simultaneously correcting black misrepresentation that caused emotional trauma, violence and political exclusion.⁶⁷

Micheaux had entered the interpretative conversation during the third session in the first training program aimed to introduce docents to elements of the exhibit. One activity asked docents to evaluate four stills, three from *Birth* and one from *Gates*. Two stills facilitated discussion of false claims perpetuated by *Birth*. But, to dispel the myth of the black rapist and the notion there were no contemporary objections to *Birth*, a still of Sylvia being attacked by her white father and a *Birth* still of the Klan saving Elsie Stoneman from a forced marriage and miscegenation with mulatto Lieutenant Governor Silas Lynch became prompts in a comparative exercise.⁶⁸ In some ways, this practice

⁶⁶ Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 83–84; Josh Glick, “Mixed Messages: D.W. Griffith and the Black Press, 1916-1931,” *Film History*, Indiana University Press, 23, no. 2 (2011): 174, 180–86; Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 27, 240–44; Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and Birth,” 702; Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, 3–5, 8.

⁶⁷ Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, 189, 220, 226–27, 230–31, 234–37, 239–44, 277.

⁶⁸ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “WWFH Session 3,” December 15, 2013.

borrowed a technique from Micheaux. Mirroring the media and a segregated nation, one tactic used by the director was to segregate the same event, juxtaposing an imagined white encounter with a more truthful black rendition of the event. Micheaux employed it in response *Birth's* depictions of black men's assaults on white women. Dixon created and Griffith perpetuated a fantasy to conceal the unspoken truth, by whites at least, that biracial children were the product of white exploitation of black women. Micheaux shattered this fantasy via the incestuous attack on the mulatto daughter in a flashback scene set in the South, the site of Sylvia's and black America's suffering.⁶⁹

Consultants suggested including black cinematic responses to *Birth* such as Micheaux's in the first version of *Legacy*.⁷⁰ While it was not incorporated, *Legacy's* revision reignited this discussion. A sentence was proposed in the new narration: "Black filmmakers and actors also created their own films to challenge Griffith's interpretation, although they never captured white America's interest as Griffith's film did." *Gates* not only contradicted lynching and rape myths but most importantly offered positive images of blacks during Reconstruction, especially a reoccurring theme at the WWFH of black women's role in supporting education.⁷¹ But *Gates'* inclusion resulted in issues with continuity and clarity even as it attempted to resolve black representational issues in *Legacy*. Because the narration did not name Micheaux's film, the director's portrait and a newspaper advertising the film potentially confused viewers. Three new *Rebirth* scenes with graphics and music edits that more clearly conveyed DJ Spooky's style were

⁶⁹ Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies*, 228–30, 238–41; Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 68–80; Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation," 525.

⁷⁰ Taylor, email message to Sherrer and Waites, "Room 15 Video Voiceover"; Taylor, "Legacy Jen's Edits," 2; Cook, "Legacy DAC Edits," 2.

⁷¹ Taylor, "Legacy Fielding Edit," 2.

suggested for the revision: “The Franchise,” the KKK disposing of Gus’s body, or a concluding scene with the KKK marching victoriously through town set to ominous music depicting the plight of black Americans. But *Legacy* kept the original clip of Union soldiers burning the Cameron home during the Civil War. That the selection was not Reconstruction era concerned only one team member since the scene expressed continuity with the *Burning of Columbia* B-roll of DJ Spooky.⁷²

With the new script and interviews, Kornegay edited the final version of *Legacy*. Historic Columbia liked the new version from its inception with its new design elements for film archival footage, helpful text and captions that allowed visitors to digest more information, and B-roll of visitors in the home. Still, Kornegay ultimately revised the work three more times to reduce length, remove repetitious images, address small clarity issues with the primary source films, and correct minor, stylistic concerns. Reducing the length of the DJ Spooky interview gave space to slow the commentary down so visitors could have moments to digest and process. For example, the audience needed time to consider if Wilson thought about Columbia when screening *Birth*.⁷³

⁷² Kornegay, email message to Waites, “DJS”; Waites, email message to Taylor and Freed, “DJ Spooky”; Waites, email message to Kornegay, “DJS”; Taylor, email message to Waites and Kornegay, “DJS”; Waites, email message to Freed, Sherrer, and Taylor, “WWFH Script”; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Fielding Freed, John Sherrer, and Robin Waites, “WWFH Script,” November 20, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Fielding Freed et al., “WWFH Script Update,” November 28, 2014; Taylor, “Jen’s First Revision of Legacy,” 4; Taylor and Freed, “Jen’s Second Revision FF Edits,” 5; Taylor et al., “Third Revision of Legacy,” 5; Taylor, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link”; Taylor, email message to Kornegay, “Kornegay Shared a Video”; Freed, email message to Interpretative Team and Kornegay, “HC Wilson Video Input.”

⁷³ Lee Ann Kornegay, email message to Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link,” March 5, 2015; Freed sent two emails on the thread on the same day. Freed, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link”; Waites, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link”; Taylor, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “WW Drop Box Link”; Quint, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “Revised WW”; Freed, email message to Kornegay and Interpretative Team, “Revised WW,” March 9, 2015; Freed, email message to Interpretative Team and Kornegay, “HC Wilson Video Input”; Taylor, email message to Kornegay, “Kornegay Shared a Video”; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Kornegay Shared a Video.”

The substantial revisions warranted an introduction to prepare the guides. Fourteen months after opening, Historic Columbia debuted the second version of *Legacy* for staff and docents in April 2015 during a demonstration of the tour's evolution. An email invited docents to discuss the new interpretation and explained the changes and new themes: Wilson's career and *Birth*, both its history, critics and connections to South Carolina. Historic Columbia hoped the exhibit film alleviated docent concerns about contextualizing these critical subjects.⁷⁴

5.3 RACISM IN DEGREES: INTERPRETING WILSON AND WHITE SUPREMACY

The concerns docents had with *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction (Legacy)* illuminate that the interpretation's limit for docents was the assumption that Wilson was a white supremacist. Cognizant that Wilson's racial views and discriminatory policies would need to be addressed up front, early script versions noted Wilson was a "product of his time and place." The script presented Wilson as a "complicated figure" who was "considered moderate on race at the time but would be viewed as racist today" yet "won a Nobel Prize" and "eventually endorsed suffrage for women."⁷⁵ Historian Joel Williamson identified three southern views towards race: liberal, conservative, and radical. The most optimistic about Reconstruction and black

⁷⁴ Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites, "Final WWFH Video Rollout," March 26, 2015; Fielding Freed, email message to Heather Bacon-Rogers and Interpretative Team, "New and Improved WWFH Video," April 2, 2015; Heather Bacon-Rogers, email message to Interpretative Team, "New and Improved WWFH Video," April 2, 2015; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Heather Bacon-Rogers and Interpretative Team, "New and Improved WWFH Video," April 2, 2015; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Heather Bacon-Rogers and Interpretative Team, "New and Improved WWFH Video," April 2, 2015.

⁷⁵ Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 13; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 11; The previous scripts had these elements as talking points. They became full sentences for this script. Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 12; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Adult Tour," December 23, 2013.

progress was the southern white liberal intellectual, a rarity during Wilson's academic height due to a less developed college system in the South. Conservatives, like Wilson and Griffith, assumed that white supremacy was permanent and built on the Dunning School's concepts of racial superiority and black inferiority, the key reason Reconstruction failed. While Wilson believed black progress was possible in the *unforeseeable* future, Dixon was a radical white supremacist who believed emancipation was a step backward.⁷⁶

Docents could admit Wilson was a "mixed" figure with successes and failures. Docents admired his progressivism, success in fighting WWI and advocacy for the League of Nations.⁷⁷ Most docents also embraced that Augusta and Columbia made an impact on Tommy but also resisted indicting Wilson as a racist and perpetuator of white supremacy. Wilson expert Ken Clements asked docents to consider how, despite living in a community largely governed by African-Americans, Wilson came to consider blacks "an ignorant and inferior race." How did his experiences in Columbia shape those racist opinions and his policies and why did Wilson never reach the "extreme" displayed by his political contemporaries? Many volunteers were well-versed in South Carolina history and could use figures like Ben Tillman or Cotton Ed Smith to substantiate their claim that Wilson was "moderate" or a "product of the time."⁷⁸ Historian and exhibit consultant Thomas Brown, speaking to the fluidity of memory in his training lecture, unintentionally

⁷⁶ O'Brien, "Woodward and the Burden," 590; "A New Beginning, 1892-1945," 84-85; Benbow, "Birth of a Quotation," 524-25.

⁷⁷ Westcott, "Docent Survey"; Hogan, "Docent Survey"; Clark, Second Interview.

⁷⁸ Morgan, interview; John Clark, First Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016; Clark, Second Interview; Doe, interview; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Docent H Tour Review" (Columbia, SC, March 12, 2014), Historic Columbia; Ann Posner, "Docent H Tour Review" (Columbia, SC, March 12, 2014), Historic Columbia; Kendrick A. Clements, "Discussion Questions about Woodrow Wilson in Columbia," December 2013, Historic Columbia Collection; Fielding Freed, email message to Robin Waites, "WWFH Materials for Ken and Tom," December 4, 2013.

reinforced this idea when he noted Smith, who had opposed federal anti-lynching legislation, celebrated his senatorial primary victory in a red shirt in front of Hampton's state house statue declaring that "we conquered in '76, and we conquered in '38."⁷⁹

Some docents had no issues making the connection between Wilson, Columbia, and his racial views, even though several of them had not known or thought of Wilson as a southerner or how his upbringing influenced his racial ideology. Clark thought people in general did not recognize Wilson as southern, but the WWFH made him a southerner, especially by illuminating the Wilsons that continued to live and were buried in Columbia and highlighting this was the only home his father owned. Until giving tours, two docents who knew he lived in the South still associated him New Jersey. For another docent, Wilson was not southern because his parents were not southerners. One docent knew nothing of Wilson's upbringing or the segregating of federal offices before moving to Columbia and conducting tours. Until training, another docent had not "really thought about his racial opinions" despite knowing he was born and raised in the South. He was "not a saint on a pedestal, which I think a lot of southerners have thought that he was." Living in Reconstruction era Columbia, docents argued, would influence his life and his views on race relations for the rest of his life. One suggested he used the experience to rationalize segregation as being good. Maria Schneider thought there was no debate that "he was prejudiced and that African American advancement economically and in civil rights was not his priority."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Brown, "Main Points for Training of WWFH Volunteers"; Freed, email message to Waites, "Ken and Tom."

⁸⁰ Clark, Second Interview; Holly Westcott, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 26, 2016; Westcott, "Docent Survey"; Morgan, interview; Margie Richardson, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016; Doe, interview; Cyndy Storm, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016; Maria Schneider, "Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor's Dissertation," 2016.

When biographer A. Scott Berg came to Columbia, he said “the Columbia years were definitely a turning point in Woodrow Wilson’s life” and were “extremely formative intellectually, socially, spiritually.”⁸¹ But docents disagreed about how much living in the South in his youth shaped Wilson, particularly his racial views. They turned this ambiguity into an invitation for visitors to join them in thinking critically about this question. When Kathy Hogan asked visitors their thoughts, they had no problem making the leap. Although she believed “we are the product of our upbringing, the product of our experiences,” she, along with another docent, “had some reservations” about assuming how time and place might have impacted a young Tommy since he “left no memoir or other indication of what this time may have meant to him.” That Historic Columbia avoided assumptions in favor of “asking visitors to come to their own conclusions” alleviated these concerns. Three volunteers believed the South had to influence Wilson because he was “an impressionable teenager.” Two of them incorporated this into their tours. Pris Stickney accepted Reconstruction “certainly didn’t make” Wilson “a more enlightened person” and had “a feeling he was a little bit more of a racist for that period than maybe others were.” But rather than say his parents, the people of his time and his environment were racist, she encouraged visitors to explore these connections on their own. Cyndy Storm framed the idea with how small Tommy’s Presbyterian world was. She imaged family dinners, discussion about the seminary with a serious Presbyterian father, and local news. Docent Doe envisioned this world differently. While uncomfortable with attributing Wilson’s racial views to his upbringing on the tour, Doe personally wondered what “things he might have heard at home” given the Confederate

⁸¹ Welch, “The Pounding Heart of Woodrow Wilson.”

leanings of his father. It was “so disconcerting. And of course he greatly admired his father.”⁸²

Another question which docents expressed a range of responses was how much blame Wilson deserved for increased federal segregation during his administration. Three docents pointed to the power of southern Democrats, who Wilson appointed to cabinet positions and worked with in Congress. Southern cabinet members were the chief architects of segregation: Secretary of the Treasury and Wilson’s son-in-law William McAdoo, Postmaster-General Albert Burleson, and Josephus Daniels. Conceding many black workers lost their positions, Storm argued these southern congressmen wanted these individuals out of management positions and “pushing brooms.” Clark viewed McAdoo and Burleson segregating their departments as a byproduct of Wilson delegating decision making to departments to focus on the big picture. Similar to his “passive” support of *Birth*, Wilson’s capitulation to segregationists was one of “active omission” or “inaction.”⁸³ But Wilson, believing segregation a moderate position to avoid racial friction in these departments, knew about his cabinet head’s policies. Segregation in the nation’s capital where the black community had made unparalleled gains united black activists and white allies. They vigorously protested via public meetings, letter writing, petitions, and the press. One docent called it “difficult” to apologize, explain, or perform a good deed that can “make up for” Wilson allowing segregation in integrated federal offices. The docent had only recently come to terms with Wilson’s racial views because of the tour. The docent confessed, “I suppose I should have assumed that.” Given the

⁸² Clark, First Interview; Hogan, “Docent Survey”; Hogan, interview; Storm, interview; Doe, interview; Pris Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016.

⁸³ Storm, interview; Clark, First Interview; Doe, interview; Wolgemuth, “Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation,” 158–59.

docents' interpretation of the role of southern politicians, the script contextualized the flaws of Wilson's administration alongside his southern cabinet.⁸⁴ But one public historian sensed explicit claims made Historic Columbia somewhat uncomfortable and the conservatism stemmed from a lack of "definitive evidence." Lee wanted the site to "just own" the ties between Wilson's scholarship, presidential actions and time in Columbia during Reconstruction and "just go for" explicit claims. Similar to new, more radical currents in HHM interpretation, Lee argued historians are often required to craft interpretations without definitive evidence. The WWFH joins a growing list of museums that explore the importance of place and ask a variety of questions without clear answers. Guests understand ambiguity more than HHMs will concede but the debate continues over how much conjecture is appropriate.⁸⁵

Clark, a retired political scientist, was the most vocal about the danger of diminishing Wilson's achievements to overemphasize the deficiencies in his racial ideology. Clark could not reduce Wilson to the second version of *Legacy's* "insufficient" and "fairly modest list" of policies: the League of Nations, Federal Reserve System, signing the Nineteenth Amendment, and increased segregation. Clark argued people missed the "nuances" in the rush to portray presidents as "perfect or scoundrels." Clark likened the interpretation to how slaveholding had tarnished the image of the early Republic's Virginian presidents. Even Franklin Roosevelt commanded a segregated military and interred Japanese Americans. Wilson did "not move the country forward in

⁸⁴ Doe, interview; Wolgemuth, "Woodrow Wilson and Federal Segregation," 163–68, 170; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 27; Taylor, "WWFH Script," June 13, 2014, 28–29.

⁸⁵ Lee, interview; The authors argue that "speculative" and "subjective" traits when combined with the professionalized tour make for good museum practice. The blending of the historical record with "presumed life" can create a "relatable experience." Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 34–37, 86, 108.

better race relations,” Clark argued. But with “a good heart in many ways,” Wilson attempted to “move the world forward” with self-determination and his peace plans. All white leaders were racist, but Wilson the progressive “was nowhere near” those “horrible right wing racists” and “rabid” segregationists like Tillman or Smith who defended lynching. Clark wanted Wilson’s actions placed in context with previous and subsequent presidents of the era and national trends among white Americans. Clark refused to buy into the myth of southern exceptionalism, exclaiming: “American society was horribly racist. Not just the South. It was worst.” Clark wished Wilson had been more progressive and proactive, but even Wilson entertained Booker T. Washington while leading Princeton, a move that earned him derision. There are “valid reasons why people think he was a good president.” Wilson was “a mixed bag” like other notable presidents.⁸⁶

The problem was one of intention. *Legacy* was never envisioned as a highlight reel of Wilson’s accomplishments but rather meant to explain the public perception of his “endorsement” of *Birth* and “the film’s role in the popular myth making of Reconstruction.” There were fears that *Legacy*’s revision could revert to “the presidential shrine interpretation.” In addition to wanting Wilson’s successes presented as part of *Legacy*, docents requested a biographical time-line or other physical representation to trace Wilson’s academic and political career. Jean Morgan thought this would help connect Wilson to Dixon and those visitors who do not benefit from aural learning or think chronologically. Holly Westcott understood it was a museum of Reconstruction but

⁸⁶ Clark, First Interview; Clark, Second Interview; For a discussion of southern exceptionalism, see essays in the following two anthologies, particularly Larry Griffin’s “Why Was the South a Problem to America?” and Lassiter and Crespino’s introductory essay. Larry J. Griffin and Don Harrison Doyle, eds., *The South as an American Problem* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds., *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

thought the period got far more coverage than “the life and career of the President whom it represents.” She envisioned “a shelf of the books that he wrote” accompanying something like a timeline.⁸⁷

Docents may have been reluctant to delve too deeply into Wilson’s white supremacy on their tours, but they had much to contemplate and plenty to say after a controversy in November 2015 at Princeton surrounding Wilson’s memory. The campus’ Black Justice League (BJL) led a campaign that culminated with a walkout of 200 students and a list of demands. It drew national attention to the complexity of national figures and racism in America, reminding the nation the way institutions simultaneously remember white men and forget white supremacy is open to scrutiny. At Princeton, students took what historians have long known about Wilson and the contradictions of his progressivism out of the classroom and placed it directly into their protest. Only months prior, Randy Newman, professor of legal history at Harvard, wrote an op-ed piece making a similar call to “expunge” Wilson’s name in the wake of the Charleston Massacre that led to the removal of the Confederate flag from the State House in Columbia. In calls like that of the BJL to rename buildings and awards that honor Wilson, questions emerged as to whether these campaigns risked erasing the memory, both good and bad, of controversial figures.⁸⁸ Morgan attributed “the intersection of

⁸⁷ Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Reminder”; Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Reminder”; Freed, email message to Ann Posner and Jennifer Taylor, “Reminder”; Freed, email message to Waites and Taylor, “Birth of a Nation”; Taylor, email message to Waites and Freed, “Birth of a Nation”; Morgan, interview; Holly Westcott, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “March Results,” April 30, 2015.

⁸⁸ Randy Barnett, “Expunging Woodrow Wilson from Official Places of Honor,” *The Washington Post*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2015/06/25/expunging-woodrow-wilson-from-official-places-of-honor/>; Jennifer Schuessler, “Woodrow Wilson’s Legacy Gets Complicated,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 2015, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/30/arts/woodrow-wilsons-legacy-gets-complicated.html>; Andy Newman, “At Princeton, Woodrow Wilson, a Heralded Alum, Is Recast as an Intolerant One,” *The New York Times*, November 22, 2015, sec. N.Y. Region, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/23/nyregion/at->

attacks” on Wilson to him being “caught in the cross-hairs” of the black community, who indict him as a racist for screening *Birth*, and of the right, who condemn all progressives. Another docent equated the Princeton debate with those objecting to Clemson University’s close ties to Benjamin Tillman. The docent worried about an “overreaction to change everything” but understood the complaint. Wilson had an opportunity to make changes but “went a little backwards.” Black voters supported him and expected change.⁸⁹

Docents rarely addressed the controversy because visitors did not bring the subject up, although guides were prepared for the discussion. Historic Columbia continued to explore the complexity of the Wilson family’s time in the South within the context of the national debate about Wilson. A workshop addressed current events and Joseph Wilson’s Democratic and Confederate leanings. A few guests referenced the controversy as an “aside” after *Legacy*.⁹⁰ One docent did not quell visitor conversations if the controversy came up but did not introduce it because she felt the students’ requests were immature. But two docents exploited the controversy on their tours. They believed museums were designed for conversations about relevant current events, one calling the WWFH “a great opportunity to talk about flaws” of historical figures. Some visitors knew about the controversy but primarily dismissed Wilson and his actions as a “product of his times.” Others wanted more information. Bacon-Rogers pulled up a *Washington Post* article on her phone for well-informed nurses who were surprised they knew nothing

princeton-addressing-a-racist-legacy-and-seeking-to-remove-woodrow-wilsons-name.html; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor and John Sherrer, “Coming to Terms with Woodrow Wilson’s White Supremacy and the Difficulty of Discussing America’s Racist Past in Public Spaces,” December 2015.

⁸⁹ Morgan, interview; Doe, interview.

⁹⁰ Storm, interview; Gunter, interview; Doe, interview; Betsy Kleinfelder, email message to Jennifer Taylor et al., “Woodrow Wilson Controversy,” December 9, 2015.

about the controversy. The women launched a great conversation about public perception of historical figures and left with a passion to find out more about trends in museum communities and public arenas concerning famous figures.⁹¹

WWFH docents who favored a head on approach to the Wilson controversy attempted to meet more recent calls by public historians to confront contentious history. The more radical HHM can embrace the value of conjecture, which opens an opportunity to discuss events and stories about historical figures that illuminate human flaws. By challenging traditional heroic narratives, HHMs can make men like Wilson more relatable to visitors, who also make mistakes and are intellectually capable of discussing human complexity.⁹² But several WWFH docents dismissed or warned against using contemporary values to evaluate people of the past or not contextualizing the attitudes of the time period. Hogan broached the Princeton students' protest on her tours thinking they had a valid concern worthy of discussion but cautioned there was no white name on a building not stained by slavery or segregation. Stickney firmly opposed "trying to rewrite history" to the point "we're going to lose all of our history."⁹³ But this exclusive attitude is indicative of a century of whitening public history institutions and its history. The rush to exempt Wilson by contextualizing his racism in degrees compared to his contemporaries misses that Wilson was protested in his time and his memory continues to be contested. Still, the interpretative approach Historic Columbia has taken with Reconstruction and Wilson memory marks its exceptionalism given many organizations are reticent in initiating or joining these kinds of conversations. Public historian Modupe

⁹¹ Stickney, interview; Bacon-Rogers, "Docent Survey"; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁹² Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 108, 111, 140.

⁹³ Storm, interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview.

Labode recently argued that controversial monuments and memorials to flawed historical figures have to be evaluated on an individual basis and with the input of local and state history institutions. Only then can institutions consider common strategies for dealing with flawed history: “alteration, reinterpretation, creating new monuments, removal, and doing nothing.”⁹⁴

5.4 BUT WHAT ABOUT *GONE WITH THE WIND*?: CONCLUSIONS AND THE ACT OF LETTING GO

The second version of *Legacy* did not debut until April 2015. As such, for over a year the tour’s conclusion remained a conundrum for the both the interpretative team and docents.⁹⁵ The key issue was succinctly conveying the “big themes” or “big ideas” to audiences that proved too fatigued from the tour and exhibit film to respond to engagement questions or interpreted them as rhetorical. Because of this fatigue, the revised docent tour script removed references to the abstract concepts of the Lost Cause and national reconciliation, although docents could broach the subjects at their discretion. The script also converted a “big theme” engagement question into a definitive concluding statement on memory that ended the tour positively. It reminded visitors the WWFH was “a site of healing,” initially dedicated to “the first strong Southern president since Reconstruction at a time when the South was viewed as having a negative impact on the nation in the 1930s. Today the home helps heal old wounds and address the myths of

⁹⁴ The qualitative evidence is lacking in determining whether alteration or reinterpretation with written contextualization makes a difference in the way people think about monuments and memorialization. Most public historians and preservationists oppose removal although “some protesters suggest memorials be placed in less prominent locations or in museums.” Modupe Labode, “Reconsideration of Memorials and Monuments,” *AASLH Blogs*, November 30, 2016, <http://blogs.aaslh.org/reconsideration-of-memorials-and-monuments/>.

⁹⁵ Daniella Cook, “Tour Observation,” 3; Clark, “Docent Survey”; Taylor, “Docent J Tour Review.”

Reconstruction that became accepted as truth.”⁹⁶ The challenge for Bacon-Rogers was that there were “a lot of conclusions you’re asking people to draw on their own.” To leave that “lasting impression” for tired visitors, Lee chose two big ideas: Reconstruction was not a southern phenomenon and why people are afraid to confront Reconstruction.⁹⁷ This was the danger the conclusion posed in asking visitors to think critically about how Reconstruction-era Columbia impacted Wilson’s presidency. No definitive answers could be provided because there were too many questions: Did Wilson look to his post-Civil War experience in framing his understanding of WWI and the League of Nations? Did the equality brought by Reconstruction influence Wilson’s decision to allow federal offices to be segregated? Did Wilson and his European counterparts’ racial attitudes determine which peoples deserved national sovereignty in the wake of WWI?⁹⁸

The difficulty in ending the tour represented the struggle in discussing contentious issues surrounding Reconstruction and memory in general. Above the mantel in the final bedroom a partial quote from Wilson’s essay on Reconstruction encapsulated this problem as well: “*Reconstruction is still revolutionary matter. Those who delve in it find it like a banked fire, still hot and fiery within, for all it has lain under the ashes a whole generation.*”⁹⁹ Hogan best explained why the narrative of the home felt unresolved. Personally, she wanted more on how the return of a southerner to the executive branch helped “bridge the divide” created by the Civil War and promoted nationalism. Given

⁹⁶ Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 13–14; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 11; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 12; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 23; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 27; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” June 13, 2014, 28–29.

⁹⁷ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Lee, interview.

⁹⁸ Doe, interview; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 13–14; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 11; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 12; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 23; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 27.

⁹⁹ Wilson, “Reconstruction of the Southern States,” 369.

Reconstruction was a civil rights revolution that failed with Jim Crow, she asked “Who was it a reconciliation for? It certainly wasn’t a reconciliation for African Americans. Because then they wound up moving to the North, the Great Migration. You can’t tell that whole story.” She even saw the possibility of linking WWI with the Great Migration. “It’s such a big complicated story. You have to stop it somewhere.” Just where to stop it was difficult for some docents who saw this much larger picture. One in fact took their conclusion all the way to the 1963 March on Washington during an early evaluation.¹⁰⁰

And it was true. Cinematic, presidential, Reconstruction, and Great Migration history was woven together in a complicated tapestry. *Birth* sparked controversy and challenges but its even more popular successor *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, 1939) crept into the interpretation of Reconstruction memory. If the South was “a media colony, an elsewhere for the American majority’s amusement or negative example,” *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*) and its nostalgic Old South fascinated the colonizers most.¹⁰¹ This white fantasy and its “idealized race relations” not only stalled racial progress in the nation but bred a segregated tourist industry where visitors hoped “to see the Dixie they witnessed on film” with “blacks working in the cotton fields next to grand, white-columned mansions.”¹⁰² Storm believed HHM narratives about “rich people” and the notion that “this is how people in *GWTW* lived” still drives much of the tourism of Northerners and a large number of tourists who do want to see slave labor.¹⁰³ The familiarity of visitors with *GWTW* convinced several docents it should be included as part of the discussion on

¹⁰⁰ Hogan, interview; Posner, “Docent B Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent B Tour Review”; Taylor, “Docent I Tour Review.”

¹⁰¹ Kirby, *Media-Made Dixie*, 162.

¹⁰² Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 93–96; McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie*, 44, 46–47.

¹⁰³ Storm, interview.

Reconstruction memory. Jennifer Gunter, who has nostalgic but conflicting attitudes toward the book and film, gave a tour to a woman who both professed her love for the film and defended its realism. Because *GWTW* was “a part of that genre that lives on,” Gunter thought it warranted inclusion in the exhibit film. It revived “all of those same tropes,” such as the “scary black man” and had a global impact that surpassed *Birth*. People in Japan reenact *GWTW*.¹⁰⁴ Halie Brazier, who until recently watched *GWTW* annually, agreed visitor familiarity with themes or plots made it a useful interpretative tool, especially given *Birth* was less known. Docents even disagreed on whether *Birth* or *GWTW* was worse. Brazier found *GWTW*'s “detrimental” Lost Cause narrative “quite cringe worthy” and “bad enough;” but, it was “moderate” compared to *Birth*, which was “way more overtly racist and awful” and “much more visceral.”¹⁰⁵ But Morgan and an artist on her tour disagreed. *GWTW* was “so offensive” yet *Birth* was “singled out as being the most prejudiced piece of film-making ever committed to celluloid.”¹⁰⁶ *GWTW* is an example of how complicated interpretations veer down important rabbit holes but not all can be included in the narrative.

The memory of Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson created long term problems for the WWFH. Contextualizing it precisely and concisely both in the transition into the memory bedroom and for the conclusion of the tour were major interpretative issues. But

¹⁰⁴ Gunter, interview; *GWTW* is popular in Japan. For example, tourists flocked to a rice field in Japan recreating an iconic image of Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara. genderedjapan, “Takarazuka Revue Does *Gone With the Wind*,” *Gendered Japan*, February 9, 2014, <https://genderedjapan.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/takarazuka-revue-does-gone-with-the-wind/>; *Grown with the Wind: Tourists Wowed by Japanese Rice Art*, BBC News, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33579367>.

¹⁰⁵ Brazier, interview; Alyssa Rosenberg, “Why We Should Keep Reading ‘Gone with the Wind,’” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 2015, sec. Act Four, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/act-four/wp/2015/07/01/why-we-should-keep-reading-gone-with-the-wind/?utm_term=.6056225e0c4f.

¹⁰⁶ Morgan, interview.

Wilson's presidency, both its successes and flaws, also proved difficult material for docents. Despite its strengths, the exhibit film *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson and Reconstruction* was the most controversial element of the tour, culminating in a revision within the first year of the reopening. The chief complaint among docents was that it misrepresented Wilson's opinion of *Birth of a Nation* and diminished his accomplishments while emphasizing the failings of his racial ideology. This issue was not unique to WWFH docents. A docent at Wilson's D.C. home also confessed upon provocation that Wilson was a product of the South but the term "racist" was misleading.¹⁰⁷ No exhibit film or scripted conclusion could ever address everyone's concerns. But the multiple revisions and debates in service to achieving the best interpretation possible and contemporary questions about Wilson's racist legacy proved instrumental in demonstrating to docents how to have conversations with visitors about the legacy of Wilson and Reconstruction.

¹⁰⁷ Alex Toegel, "Tour of the President Woodrow Wilson House."

CHAPTER 6

ENGAGING RECONSTRUCTION AS A CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY VISITORS

Historic Columbia designed the Woodrow Wilson Family Home (WWFH) to convey a narrative about the importance of time and place. The biracial space the Wilsons and their employees occupied became a lens to explore the biracial democracy created by Reconstruction. This approach sought to correct the historical amnesia surrounding Reconstruction. Visitor evaluations and docent oral histories demonstrate the vast majority of visitors approved of and learned from the reinterpretation, primarily because they knew so little about Reconstruction. A significant portion changed their thinking and gained a new appreciation for others. However, some constructive criticism emerged about the number of artifacts, timing, and amount of Woodrow Wilson information on the tour. Regardless, evaluation data and docent experiences prove the majority of museum goers are ready to engage with Reconstruction history and are open to a modern thematic historic house museum.

The tour opens with a simple question to ignite visitors thinking about Reconstruction: “When I say the word *Reconstruction* what comes to mind?” The inquiry was a best practice in interpretative questioning because it allowed for a variety of answers, asked the visitor to draw on their own knowledge and personal experience, opened opportunities for dialogue among visitors, and provided useful information to the docent, namely the visitors’ working knowledge about the period. Many visitors could

locate Reconstruction as the period following the Civil War, but docents most frequently heard the term “carpetbagger.” This was part of the larger negative feelings visitors had about the period. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) in Wyoming experienced a similar collision between visitor memory and popular culture during its reinterpretation effort. Out-of-town visitors and locals were evaluated to determine what reinterpretation content would interest them. Nearly half associated “Buffalo Bill” Cody with his Wild West Show even though the show was not mentioned by evaluators. Non-residents offered more specifics about the show from popular culture, even if inaccurate. Locals, whose views of Cody were more negative, focused on his relationship with the community and the West. The WWFH’s introductory exchange established Reconstruction as the subject visitors would “walk away with” after the tour. Visitor replies set the stage for the docent to explain that the tour provided “a better understanding of this misunderstood period when the South rebuilt itself economically, socially and physically.”¹ This precise language conveyed the wide reach of Reconstruction in the post-war South and planted the seed for a conversation about memory, where visitors learned neither history nor their own education were immune from bias. WWFH visitors stepped onto the porch not as “blank slates” but with an “entry narrative” composed of their own experiences and memories “like baggage.” The WWFH tried to unpack some of that.²

¹ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 140–41, 147, 149; Benfield et al., “An ‘Honest Visionary’ and ‘Dishonest Scallywag,’” 58–59, 61–62, 70; Taylor, “Tour 02 04 14,” 4; Taylor, “Tour 02 06 14,” 4; Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 4; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 4; Wright, email message to Waites, “Feedback on the WWFH Tour”; Some guides found the question worked better for them in the first large exhibit space in the formal parlor. Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014,” May 14, 2014; Brazier, interview.

² Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, 101; Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 52.

Similar to the Buffalo Bill reinterpretation, region certainly played a role in how visitors thought about Reconstruction, if they thought about it all, and how they answered the question. Docents could generally identify Northerners because their memory was different from southerners who might argue the “North really just ruined us.” Weekend docent Jennifer Gunter reminded visitors to consider southerners for whom “perhaps this was a great time” and to be prepared for new information. This sometimes “freak[ed] them out” and sparked a “challenge,” but she confessed she liked “to pull them over to the dark side of the truth.”³ Northerners also revealed themselves by making connections with Klan and segregation material, often overturning the myth of southern exceptionalism in their own minds. Volunteer Jean Morgan saw the museum’s interpretation come “to life for the visitor” when it converged with “their personal experience.” One Indiana family told her a town in their state was “Klan Central.” Visitors on volunteer Cyndy Storm’s tours related to the Klan narrative because they knew something about the group, lived in a Klan stronghold like Indiana, or had been in a Sundown town. She had a law enforcement agent that knew “all about the KKK” and a plot to blow up a church because the FBI had infiltrated the klaverns in Delaware.⁴ Docents reported non-southerners began to see de facto Jim Crow segregation in their own communities, realizing segregation was “not just a southern phenomenon.” Weekend docent Casey Lee found mid-Westerners frequently had “A-ha!” moments.⁵

³ Gunter, interview.

⁴ Jean Morgan, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “WWFH,” May 4, 2015; Storm, interview.

⁵ Lee, interview; Storm, interview; For a discussion of Southern exceptionalism, see essays in the following two anthologies, particularly Larry Griffin’s “Why Was the South a Problem to America?” and Lassiter and Crespino’s introductory essay. Griffin and Doyle, *The South as an American Problem*; Lassiter and Crespino, *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*.

Most visitors simply knew nothing about the period. Volunteer Kathy Hogan was surprised by the number of visitors with “no preconceived understanding of Reconstruction.” She wondered if “as students of” Reconstruction’s historiography” that “we are over-estimating how controversial others may find this information.” “Sometimes,” she thought, “we overthink what people learned in school because we remember what we learned in school because of our professions but they don’t remember.” Volunteer John Clark concurred, “It’s just not on their radar,” especially if they are from someplace like Ohio.⁶ Time and again, the docents heard, ““I had no idea”” or some variation. Most visitors were “no more acquainted with Reconstruction” than the retired Virginian Jean Morgan had been. Perhaps it was being white southerners, region or age. The visitors from California, coming in for Ft. Jackson boot camp graduation, or those from the upper mid-West had thought little about the era. Mostly, Reconstruction was “news to them.”⁷ Although John Falk argued prior interest and knowledge were vital predictors of what and how much knowledge a visitor walked away with, evaluations of WWFH visitors refuted this. Without any real knowledge of Reconstruction, most visitors walked away from the tour thinking it was not only excellent, but learning a great deal of new information. These results confirm a previous study that found prior knowledge and interest had little direct effect on what exhibits fascinated visitors. What mattered most was cognitive accessibility, and to a lesser degree a pleasant emotional

⁶ First quote from Kathy Hogan, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “March Results,” April 30, 2015; Second quote from Hogan, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

⁷ Docent Doe, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Katie Menne, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Gunter, interview; Priscilla Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016; Jean Morgan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 25, 2016.

response. Visitors were more likely to enjoy and find interest in an exhibit if they understood the content.⁸

6.1 THE EVALUATION

Evaluations presented in *Visitor Studies* matched aspects of the one produced by WWFH but also pointed to a few missed opportunities. Consultant Annie Wright looked to other institutions' evaluations for inspiration. She adapted the first question on rating the overall quality of the museum from the Smithsonian Institution. A 2013 National Endowment of the Arts's visitor survey for the exhibit ArtBeat inspired a multiple-response question on the visitor's individual experience. A Meeting Effectiveness Inventory survey question motivated a timing question. Historic Columbia shared the survey with the docents so they knew how they would be measured and evaluated by visitors. A well-designed evaluation considers timing, from processing results to the burden placed on visitors and staff. Wright cut a lengthier evaluation draft with redundant questions driven by tourism and marketing and about visitor geographical data. Docents administered the final Survey Monkey evaluation on a tablet at the end of the tour but paper options were also offered on two clipboards. Historic Columbia stressed this data would provide "vital feedback on reception" and help "tweak" the tour, but docents used their discretion in judging time constraints for offering the survey. One effective method for soliciting evaluations was for the docent to retreat to the sleeping porch after the last bedroom's closing statement. Guests could join, self-explore the last exhibits and/or fill

⁸ Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 27; Tove I. Dahl et al., "Is Our Fascination With Museum Displays More About What We Think or How We Feel?," *Visitor Studies* 16, no. 2 (July 2013): 163, 175–76.

out evaluations. This created a space for questions, propelled the tour towards its conclusion, and avoided hovering over evaluators.⁹

Wright constructed the WWFH visitor evaluation to “capture” audience engagement and the information the interpretative team thought the audience should receive. However, this approach did not analyze unintended results alongside intended ones, qualities making for the best “face-to-face interpretation” evaluations at heritage sites. A stellar evaluation can generate data about all three visitor responses to interpretation: *cognitive* related to learning and processing information, *affective* reflecting attitude and emotions, and *behavioral* actions. The WWFH evaluation measured some aspects of all three responses, such as behavioral responses to the guide, but especially cognitive responses about changing one’s thinking and gaining empathy for different people, the latter also an affective response. The WWFH evaluation was also similar to one designed to measure emotional response and prior knowledge: being “thought provoking,” whether information was new, and being bored. The full extent and range of how visitors responded to the reinterpretation of the WWFH might have been better assessed had more answers included a range. For example, on the “face-to-face” evaluation, visitors marked their response in a seven space range between two opposing statements, such as the presentations were enjoyable/unenjoyable. Given the conversational quality to much of the tour, the WWFH evaluation may have benefited from borrowing the range-based statement “made me want to talk about what I heard.”

⁹ Annie Wright, “Draft: WWFH Visitor Survey,” January 14, 2014, Historic Columbia Collection; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “Draft of Visitor Survey for WWFH,” January 14, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Visitor Evaluations,” March 27, 2014; Betty Weiler and Sam H. Ham, “Development of a Research Instrument for Evaluating the Visitor Outcomes of Face-to-Face Interpretation,” *Visitor Studies* 13, no. 2 (July 2010): 192.

Likewise, incorporating a different evaluation's ranking on a one to five scale whether the content "made me angry" could have helped staff determine how much of the interpretation violated visitors' preconceived notions of Reconstruction and the Lost Cause.¹⁰

6.2 THE RESULTS

Nearly 3000 people came to the WWFH within its first year of opening. Eighty-five percent of them were adults. A quarter of visitors, or 648 individuals, submitted evaluations. In December 2014 evaluations hit their highest completion rate at forty-eight percent. Nor was this an anomaly. The previous month evaluations hit forty-five percent. However, attendance was declining following the honeymoon period of the reopening and because some visitors were drawn to Historic Columbia's other historic house museums (HHM) that offered Christmas tours. The worst month on record for capturing evaluations was August 2014 with eighteen percent. Not all questions were answered on every evaluation so percentages for particular questions reflect the total numbers answered for each question. For example, 643 answered the first question, over 600 answered the first four questions, but the remaining questions save the comments generated 548-593 responses.¹¹

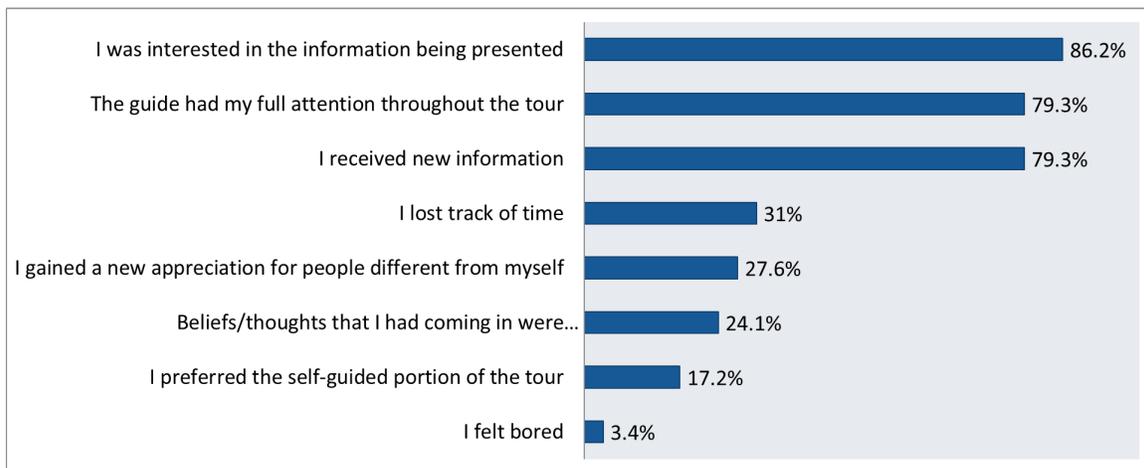
¹⁰ Wright, "Draft: WWFH Visitor Survey"; Weiler and Ham, "Outcomes of Face-to-Face Interpretation," 188–91, 193–94, 204; Dahl et al., "Our Fascination with Museum Displays," 164.

¹¹ The analysis of data is from February through December 2014. In January 2015, Historic Columbia had a year-in-review meeting about the WWFH. The meeting highlighted evaluation data about the exhibit and tour's strengths and weaknesses, misleading and inaccurate data, statistics by gender, age, and race and finally the most consistent criticism and lingering questions appearing in the comments section. At that time, there had been 2952 total visitors, 2549 of them adults. I created the "Trends" presentation using monthly Survey Monkey data. I also ran demographic profiles in Survey Monkey of the data by race and ethnicity, gender, and decade of birth from the 1920s forward. Taylor, "WWFH Trends," slide 3; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "November 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update" (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, December 2014), slide 3; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "December 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update" (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, January 2015), slide 3; Davidson and Sibley, "Audiences at the 'New' Museum," 182.

Evaluations showed the reinterpretation and museum was well-received by and engaging for visitors. The WWFH's strength rested with the docents and their handling of the information in an engaging and respectful way. Feedback for opening day showed a positive response from visitors from the beginning and mirrored evaluation trends for the year with one exception. The staggering of docents for a self-guided opening reduced visitors' perceptions of the guides when compared to the regular semi-guided tour. Twenty-nine visitor surveys revealed eighty-two percent of visitors thought the overall quality of the WWFH was excellent. Sixty-six percent felt fully engaged throughout the entire tour while all others were engaged at many points. Visitors were also ready to dive into sensitive or controversial issues, with ninety-three percent feeling these topics were handled extremely well by the museum and seven percent finding no controversy in material discussed. Eighty-six percent were interested in the information being presented and an astounding seventy-nine percent received new information and focused their full attention on the tour. Just shy of a third lost track of time and only three percent were bored. Nearly a quarter of those evaluated gained a new appreciation for people different from them and changed beliefs they held before the experience.¹² But after opening day, evaluations demonstrated mixed results on visitor reception to twenty-first century HHM exhibit elements: limited artifacts, panels, question-driven conversations, and interactives.

¹² Annie Wright, "WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings," PowerPoint (Columbia, S.C.: Historic Columbia, March 10, 2014), slides 2-5, Historic Columbia Collection.

Table 6.1 Opening Day Responses to the Question “During My Tour of the WWFH Exhibition Today”¹³



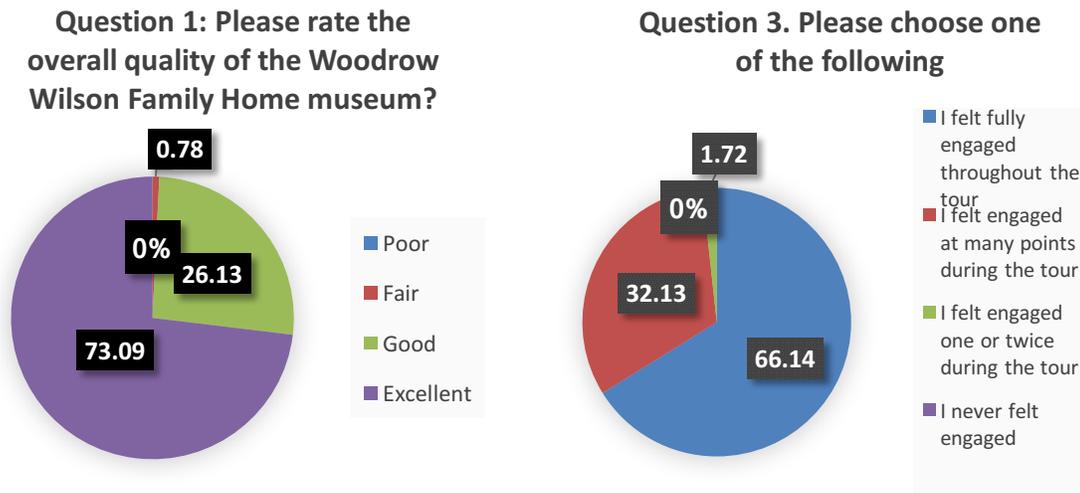
Nearly everyone who visited the WWFH approved of the overall quality and were engaged. Of 643 respondents, 470 found the “overall quality” excellent with a quarter marking good. Five individuals, less than one percent, selected fair. No one checked poor just as no one reported being disengaged. Two-thirds of 638 respondents were fully engaged throughout the tour and the rest felt engaged at many points. Occasionally the results fluctuated. In July 2014, for example, “good” responses increased and “excellent” responses decreased compared with previous months but were back on track the next month. One anomaly manifested itself in December when there was a spike for both full engagement and those engaged once or twice on the tour. The four visitors reporting limited engagement comprised nearly a third of all visitors in 2014 that felt engaged once or twice. Half of those four also found the tour “fair,” “good,” and were bored. And three marked the handling of sensitive issues “somewhat well.” Nonetheless, all “strongly

¹³ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 3.

agreed” or “agreed” their docent fulfilled the five docent criteria evaluated for question six discussed later.¹⁴

Table 6.2 Visitor Evaluation Question 1

Table 6.3 Visitor Evaluation Questions3



Nearly a quarter of the 324 evaluation comments relayed the high quality of the museum and tour and the positive experience it yielded, reinforcing numerical data from the questions. Sixteen visitors “enjoyed” the tour, five of them very much so. Two docents corroborated visitors’ enjoyment. Clark temporarily played devil’s advocate, acknowledging “People don’t want to hurt your feelings. He then acquiesced, “But people feel that way. I think it’s merited. If I go on a tour and find things I don’t expect to see, I enjoy it more.”¹⁵ Evaluation comments mirrored this data and borrowed the language of the evaluation. Fourteen described the tour or museum as excellent, eleven as

¹⁴ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 4-5, 8; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “July 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, August 2014), slide 3; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “August 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, September 2014), slide 3; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 6.

¹⁵ Annie Wright, “April 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, May 2014), slide 13; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “June 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, July 2014), slide 11; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “September 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, October 2014), slide 12-13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11, 13; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Hogan, interview; Clark, Second Interview.

“great,” and one as “very good” and another as “engaging.” Twelve guests thought the tour well done to extremely well done. Three called the tour a “good presentation.” Six visitors described their visit as “an experience” often with positive adjectives such as “wonderful” and “good.” In general, five called it wonderful. Similarly, others wrote they “loved” the tour, thought the house “awesome,” and were glad they had taken the tour. The tour ranged from “neat,” “nice,” and “terrific” to “pretty cool.”¹⁶

The overwhelmingly positive reception of the home by visitors and their sustained engagement reflected the strength of docents, but other evaluation data reinforced that the docents were the most important component of the tour. Research suggests visitors have positive feelings toward heritage site staff as providers of help and information and toward a visit because of positive employee-visitor interactions. Cognitive and emotional interest theories suggest museum components, such as texts and objects, are more interesting when the visitor understands them. These components also become more enjoyable when they encourage positive emotions, especially when supplemented with “humor, remarkable stories, or surprise.” It is here the docent can be critical not only in providing the supplemental anecdotes but in nurturing a fleeting interest into an experience that connects with the visitors motives or values. For example, the Svalbard Museum Study revealed exhibit displays that docents told stories about fascinated Norwegian teenagers most, especially when featuring authentic-feeling content with large

¹⁶ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12-13; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH October Survey Monkey Results” (Historic Columbia, November 2014), slide 11-13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12-13; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 13.

or threatening animals and intense, foreign living conditions.¹⁷ WWFH docents had the full attention of 450 people, over two-thirds of evaluators on the tour. In fact, less than eight percent of evaluators, or fifty-one people, preferred self-guided portions of the tour. Visitors also ranked “what the tour guide told us” first in a question about the most interesting type of information. Docents consistently came in first every month, averaging over forty-five percent for 2014 and registering twice as high as the second place finisher, the panels.¹⁸

Nineteen visitors praised docents in the evaluation comments sections, some mirroring the language of the evaluation and others lavishing specific accolades. One visitor called their guide “the best of any I’ve encountered!” and another received “3 cheers!!!”¹⁹ The most common description was knowledgeable, which a third of the commenters reported. Visitors stressed their docents were both “extremely” educated or well informed. Two visitors also mentioned the docents were engaged. One visitor was “so glad I was able to take this tour with my host” and another one called their guide a “great communicator.” Additionally, docents were described as “excellent,” “interesting,” “absolutely fabulous,” “superb,” “wonderful,” “delightful,” “personable,” “nice” and “patient.”²⁰ Two visitors mentioned the superior quality of their docent, but several visitors left detailed commentary that spoke to why:

- “Engaged, informal, direct, knew her stuff!”

¹⁷ Dahl et al., “Our Fascination with Museum Displays,” 161–67; Ramon Palau-Saumell, Santiago Forgas-Coll, and Javier Sánchez-García, “The Role of Emotions in a Model of Behavioral Intentions of Visitors to the Gaudí Historic House Museums in Barcelona, Spain,” *Visitor Studies* 19, no. 2 (July 2016): 157.

¹⁸ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 4, 6, 10-11.

¹⁹ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 13; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

²⁰ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13-14; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” 12–13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, 12–13; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 13.

- “Very enthusiastic about sharing her knowledge and was eager to hear our opinions, insights, and observations. She fully answered each visitor’s questions and encouraged us to share our opinions.”
- Educated “us on the difference between the past and ‘history.’ In essence, he gave us knowledge about what actually happened which gave us a new perspective on our history. I have been inspired to do more research on the things I learned here today.”
- “She had to cover a great variety of material and did so confidently and clearly.”²¹

The fifth question, which generated 556 responses, asked whether the docent, panels, interactives, questions or artifacts was the “most interesting” source of information. The data illuminated the contradictions and varied preferences of visitors. After docents, the text and photographs in the panels were the second most popular form of information for visitors closely followed by artifacts at twenty-three and twenty-one percent respectively. But artifacts, panels, and interactives fluctuated dramatically, rising and dropping by half from month to month or seeing significant dips and growth varying from five to fifteen percent. However, these fluctuations also represented the “participatory power” of visitors, to allow content and interactives to “pull” them toward what they found interesting and “to retrieve” the interpretation. Docents were advised to pay particular attention to which questions generated responses, use their transition and room statements and individual engagement with guests to direct them to relevant panels, and give additional time with interactives if visitors showed interest. Docents corrected deficiencies in response to this question and others as data changed month to month, suggesting regular evaluation updates can rectify minor tour issues. Historic Columbia sent out monthly visitor survey results to docents beginning with the May 2014 results. When evaluation solicitation dropped, docents corrected it. They also worked to convert

²¹ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 14; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

acceptable results into the best categories, such as moving visitors from engaged at “many points” to “fully engaged.” Two docents spoke about how great receiving data was. Volunteer Pris Stickney appreciated knowing the visitor response was “generally very favorable” and the results reinforced Hogan’s best practices.²²

In the comments section of the evaluations, over twice as many visitors wanted more artifacts than those who liked the restrained use of objects. Six visitors positively mentioned the material culture. Two guests “appreciated how the home was not over crowded” with random artifacts, with one finding “it refreshing to be on a tour that focused more on substance of information than related artifacts.” One thought the placement of the Red Shirt in the drawer was “very effective” and other wrote the “physical construction of the home” beside the artifacts option as the most helpful information.²³ However, the most consistent criticism in the comments was wanting more artifacts or furnishings. Fourteen visitors wanted more objects, four of them looking for a traditional HHM staged or furnished for the Wilson’s. They “missed” the traditional HHM that had been “turned into a ‘modern’ museum presentation” or “museum-like experience.” One suggested “contain[ing] all the information in the separate rooms in 1

²² Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, 37; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Action Items”; Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 11; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Sarah Blackwell, email message to James Quint and Jennifer Taylor, “May Update - WWFH Visitors’ Data,” June 27, 2014; Waites, email message to Volunteers, “WWFH June Follow-Up”; In June, the education department placed me in charge of processing the evaluations for monthly reports. Jennifer Taylor, email message to Michael Jowers, “Survey Monkey Intern,” July 1, 2014; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, “August Survey Monkey Results,” September 5, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to James Quint, “October Survey Monkey Results,” December 3, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “October WWFH Results,” December 9, 2014; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 7; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, “March WWFH Results,” April 28, 2015; Stickney, email message to Waites, “WWFH”; Hogan, interview.

²³ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “May 2014 WWFH Visitor Survey Update” (PowerPoint, Historic Columbia, June 2014), slide 11-12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 7, 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

place” and “restore the furnishings & design original to the house.” This HHM nostalgia also manifested itself in the questions visitors asked docents about artifacts rather than Reconstruction on opening day and the first months after reopening. However, docents countered, despite this, visitors were more engaged at the WWFH than on their other house tours. Rather than a return to traditional design, other visitors simply wanted to see more “artifacts” or “period” pieces because rooms felt Spartan, to give “a better idea of how the Wilson’s lived and what their personalities were like,” and compensate for “too many text panels.” These preferences did not diminish the quality of the tour for three object-oriented visitors, who exclaimed it was a “great tour” and “so fantastic” and that they “enjoyed time here.”²⁴

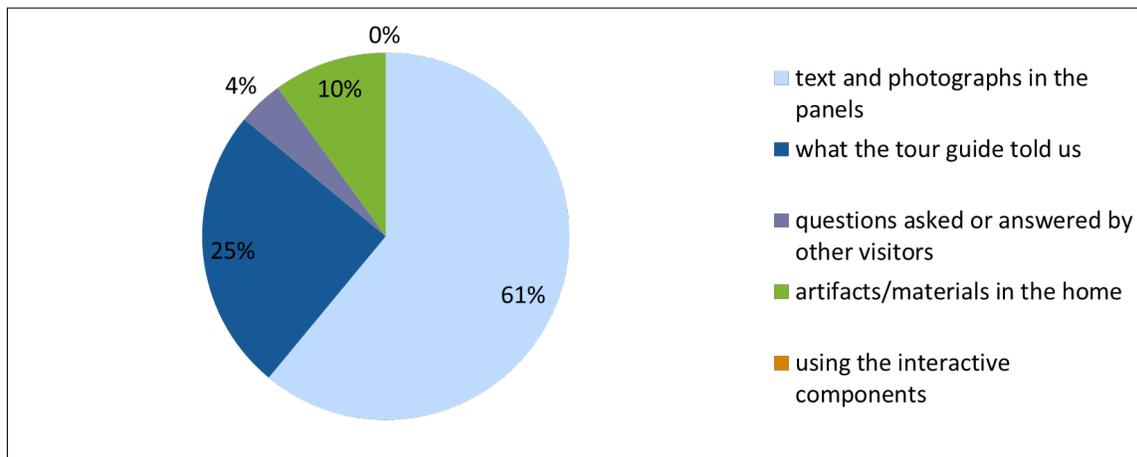
That a visitor wanted more objects to balance too many panels illuminated tensions of thirty-eight panels driving the interpretation rather than an abundance of objects. Tour & Program Coordinator Heather Bacon-Rogers feared the sheer number of panels and their college sophomore reading level would inundate the visitor and make the WWFH less welcoming to new socio-economic groups Historic Columbia hoped to draw. As a visitor, she would have been “miserable” with so much advanced reading and argued “for seventy-five percent it is a problem.” Docents had difficulty gauging how much time visitors wanted to spend with the panels but encouraged them to read panels even if docents were speaking.²⁵ Two of the three visitors who wanted more time felt the

²⁴ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 22; Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 6; Waites, email message to Cook et al., “WWFH Notes from Guides.”

²⁵ Heather Bacon-Rogers, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 4, 2016; Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016; John Clark, First Interview, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016.

tour’s pace was too fast to listen to the guide and read the panels before others moved on. Docent and visitor comments suggested measuring how much time visitors wanted would have been a helpful question on the visitor evaluation.²⁶ But the panels proved vital in the absence of the semi-guided tour. For example on opening day when docents only answered questions and directed visitors to interactives and information, evaluations showed just over sixty percent valued the text and photographs in the panels most. Only a

Table 6.4 Opening Day Responses to the Question What Type of Information Was Most Interesting to You?²⁷



quarter selected the tour guide and ten percent the material culture. Only three visitors mentioned the panels in evaluation comments, but one of them took a self-guided tour and felt the exhibit was “very well laid out and explained” on the panels.²⁸ While visitors could understand panel information without the guide, the evaluations showed that the docent was the most effective component of the tour. This reinforces one zoo study on conservation comprehension that indicated live presentations foremost followed by video

²⁶ Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11; Weiler and Ham, “Outcomes of Face-to-Face Interpretation,” 204.

²⁷ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 4.

²⁸ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 4; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 13; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

presentations were linked to the visitor lingering longer and remembering more than they did with no presentation and just signage. It is unclear whether this stems from the active engagement required of reading while presentations are more passive or because “the speaker’s affect, or emotional state” influences visitors.²⁹

Questions were the greatest weakness and interactives were not as popular as staff hoped when visitors were allowed to choose only one option for most interesting type of information. For two months straight no visitor selected the questions as the most interesting information, and the most consistent trend was three months with a paltry four percent approval. Even interactives, both hands-on reproductions and digitized technology, underperformed at just eight percent. However, the herculean task of increasing the popularity of engagement questions may have been rooted in the evaluation. Visitors completing paper copies sometimes took the initiative to mark more than one option, which the mobile device did not allow. In order to see whether other visitors valued information beyond the docent, including questions, Historic Columbia modified the survey in December so visitors could make multiple selections. Both questions and interactives, the two weakest categories, came in at ten percent, a two percent increase for interactives and a whopping six percent surge for the most challenging category of questions.³⁰ That these categories improved reflected evaluation comments made by visitors that praised the concept of the museum and presentation and how components worked together. Two visitors highlighted the blended interpretative

²⁹ Bonnie M. Perdue, Tara S. Stoinski, and Terry L. Maple, “Using Technology to Educate Zoo Visitors About Conservation,” *Visitor Studies* 15, no. 1 (January 2012): 23–24.

³⁰ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 4, 10-11; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, “August Survey Monkey Results”; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 7; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 7; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 7; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 7.

techniques of “tour guide + text + interactive exhibits/movie” with another remarking that “the mixture was just right.” Another called the “well thought out” exhibit and tour “an excellent way to spend a few hours on a rainy Saturday.”³¹

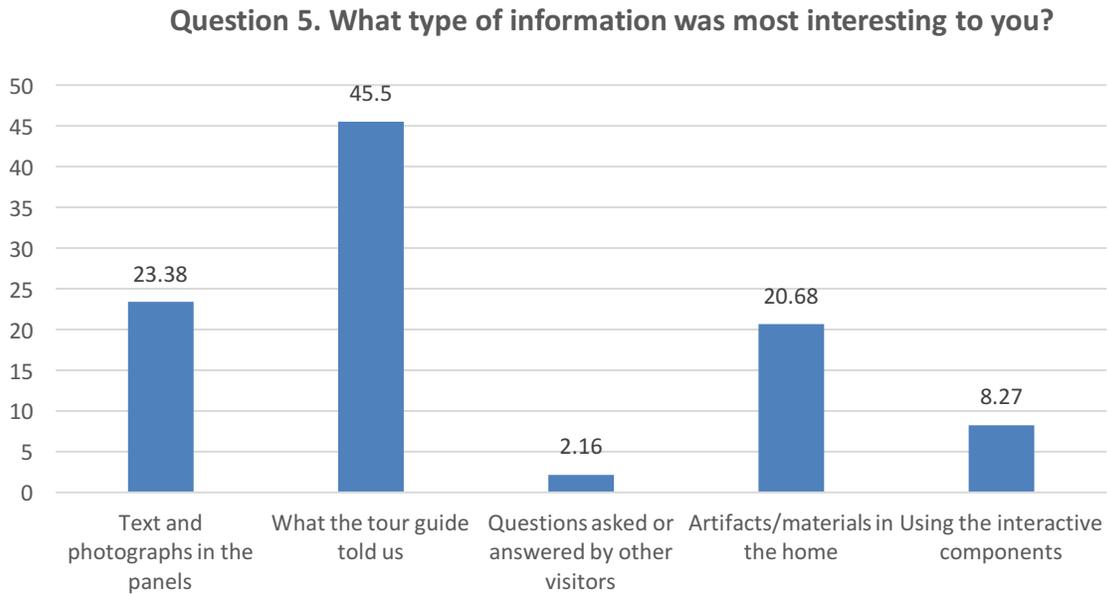
Docents, with some support from visitor comments, also demonstrated that questions appealed to visitors more than the first year’s evaluation indicated. Igniting conversations via questions is interpretively challenging. One of the five most common problems visitors have with museums are that these spaces do not inspire dialogue between friends and strangers surrounding content. Visitors, rather than being challenged, are passive voyeurs. The WWFH’s semi-guided presentation designed for questions and conversation reflected Nina Simon’s participatory five-stage “me-to-we” design, which is ideally suited to the HHMs guided, more social format. By the end of the WWFH tour, a skilled docent could guide members of the group into feeling like a “close-knit team,” where they have moved from consuming and asking questions about content to interacting with the docent and visitors socially about content and interests.³²

Docents admitted not all visitors like to ask questions. Some prefer to listen, or as Clark described “go look at this stuff and see what the nice man says.” But more often than not, he and other docents got questions. For Clark, the questions varied, sometimes about Wilson or the era and other times an object. Other times the identity of the visitors drove the question. He found “it varies so much according to who these people are, their age, intellectual curiosity or lack thereof, where they’re from.” Bacon-Rogers found groups that engaged and responded to questions were “fantastic.” For Hogan, the

³¹ Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 7, 12.

³² Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, iii–iv, 18, 26–28.

Table 6.5 Visitor Evaluation Question 5



best questions were about political parties, elections, the Klan, and Jim Crow’s rise, including its voting restrictions and poll taxes. For example, some visitors associated Jim Crow immediately after the Civil War. They learn people were allowed to vote temporarily and that Reconstruction’s failure allowed Jim Crow to be codified with the new state constitutions in the mid-1890s. Having a tour run long “because visitors keep asking questions, usually about issues of race and reconciliation” was “always rewarding” for Gunter, especially when “it is evident that their previous knowledge is being challenged.” Some visitors also listen. And for the quiet visitors, Storm sometimes wondered if it was a lack of interest, holding Lost Cause views, or trying to stifle their opposition to the interpretative approach. She had one tour where no one said anything, even after her calls for questions. “Maybe they were just tired” from vacationing, she hoped. Morgan liked the open-ended structure of the tour and its larger interpretative questions and believed visitors did too. But some visitors will never want to participate.

Reading those visitors, the ones debating about leaving the tour when it heads to the second floor, was important to Bacon-Rogers.³³

Visitor comments and docent testimony demonstrate certain interactives such as the digitized 1872 map of Columbia and the exhibit films garnered visitor interest but the family tree failed to engage audiences. Visitors mentioned interactives in general, one welcoming them as “ingenious and informative” and needing ample time for exploration. Others listed specific ones. The “favorite part” of one visitor’s “breath taking” experience was dressing up as the president using reproduction clothing located in a trunk in Tommy’s bedroom. Another called the map “superb.”³⁴ Several docents commented on the map’s popularity, with Bacon-Rogers calling it “one of the coolest things” Historic Columbia had “ever done.” The exhibit films provided additional interaction. But she cautioned technology cannot be solely relied on to show visitors the experience of living in the time period. Sometimes visitors agreed. On opening day, no one marked interactive components. But only one visitor ever commented on evaluations that the exhibit was too digitized.³⁵

Exhibit films resonated well with visitors and were the most popularly mentioned interactives, with eight comments.³⁶ One guest was drawn to the citizenship video “relating to current issues in our state” but two singled out the *Legacy of Woodrow*

³³ Storm, interview; Hogan, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Jennifer Gunter, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Doe, interview; Morgan, interview.

³⁴ Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

³⁵ Hogan, interview; Storm, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 4; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 11.

³⁶ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 6; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 7, 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

Wilson and Reconstruction (Legacy). According to docents, people attentively watched *Legacy* but responded in a variety of ways. Some remained quiet as they wound down along with the tour. Some were “kind of ready to go.” One visitor thought the length of the films was “just right,” which may have spoken to a trend docents experienced that both exhibit films provided a time to sit and process. Some visitors were “rejoicing” at the sight of the benches. While no docent spoke on record about visitors challenging the film’s interpretation, visitor commentary and physical reactions show degrees of acceptance and confusion about *Legacy*. Gunter had a nurse from Alabama who sought confirmation of and was genuinely shocked that the myth that some Klansmen were black was false. Gunter found a good indicator of the “psyche” of visitors was the scene from *Birth of a Nation* with the legislator eating fried chicken in the State House. She witnessed visitors “giggle” or “shake their heads” in sadness.³⁷

But there were criticisms of the exhibit films. Three visitors thought accommodations should be made for those hard of hearing. Two wanted captions and one suggested changing the voice on citizenship exhibit film from a child to an adult. Two docents concurred that the child’s voice, although appealing to children and school groups, posed problems. Clark, like many of his older guests, struggled to understand the high-pitched voice. Neither docent associated the voice with a fourteen year old Tommy. Lee admitted some of her fellow public history graduate students also had “a visceral reaction,” suggesting “maybe people aren’t paying attention” and it should be changed.

³⁷ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 6; Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 14; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12; Hogan, interview; Storm, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Lee, interview; Gunter, interview; Stickney, interview.

Clark also advocated for a “Tom Brokaw” or “Walter Cronkite” style narration understood by all listeners.³⁸ A presidential historian who visited the home called the exhibit film on citizenship that connected the Fourteenth Amendment to Jim Crow and modern issues “totally ahistorical” for conveying “a set of prepackaged, standard conclusions about rights with no indication of the historical struggles that gave rise to them or different forms they have taken over the years.” The use of images was “blatantly misleading.” There were “effective moments” in *Legacy* but it “trie[d] to do too much.”³⁹ Cecelia Moore, who reviewed the exhibit for the *Journal of American History*, disagreed. She argued the citizenship exhibit film “thoughtfully links Reconstruction debates with later struggles for women’s suffrage, the civil rights movement, and current arguments over equal rights and access in American life.” She continued that the “major theme” of the WWFH was “the ways Americans at national and local levels struggled to define themselves and the nation after the Civil War” and that these struggles “are directly related to later movements and to what is happening now.”⁴⁰

One interactive, the Wilson family tree in the dining room, fell flat with audiences. Seven docents revealed visitors rarely interacted it.⁴¹ And the few that did required one docent to extend her time in the space for people to take turns. Volunteer Holly Westcott speculated an interest in genealogy motivated those visitors who did engage. Clark thought the interactive “neat” and usually demonstrated it to visitors by

³⁸ Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11; Clark, Second Interview; Lee, interview.

³⁹ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, email message to Hendrik Booraem, “Letter for AASLH Grant,” February 26, 2015; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11.

⁴⁰ Cecelia Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home: A Museum of Reconstruction in Columbia and Richland County,” *Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (June 2015): 192.

⁴¹ Gunter, interview; Westcott, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Morgan, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview.

highlighting matriarch Jessie Wilson and her birth in Carlisle, England. But most visitors only “fiddled” with it before losing interest. That the WWFH docents’ demonstration of the family tree and encouragement to explore did not result in prolonged visitor engagement speaks to the interactive’s design. Studies on active recruitment reveal that visitors spend significantly more time with interactive exhibits when invited and observed by personnel. Two docents blamed technology, that the touch screen was not responsive sometimes and the design and format were not user friendly. Another thought the lengthy text descriptions of family members deterred visitors because they were already reading a great deal on the panels. Bacon-Rogers said many of her guests were happy to get to the dining room with smaller text panels and reduced text, excepting the family tree. One sign of such relief was that guests were more drawn to the Victorian dress with military uniform features and the evolution of fashion. Only one visitor provided any insight into the family tree’s flaws on evaluations, suggesting it needed “color.”⁴²

The only interactive not assessed in the evaluation was a PowerPoint virtual tour of the second floor exhibits Historic Columbia offered for visitors who because of mobility or other factors did not wish to go upstairs. Docents welcomed the spring 2015 addition, but only three at the time of oral history interviews had guests who took

⁴² One study dealt with active recruitment as part of research on how long participants spent with an interactive math exhibit. The results suggested that when visitors are cued to an interactive and observed that they spend ten to 100% more time than uncued visitors. In another study of 128 families using a Laser Light Show activity in a Design Zone exhibition at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, those that were actively recruited spent on average over four minutes longer at the interactive and created six more laser patterns than visitors passively recruited through signage. Scott A. Pattison and Todd Shagott, “Participant Reactivity in Museum Research: The Effect of Cueing Visitors at an Interactive Exhibit,” *Visitor Studies* 18, no. 2 (July 2015): 216–18, 222–24, 226; Steven S. Yalowitz and Kerry Bronnenkant, “Timing and Tracking: Unlocking Visitor Behavior,” *Visitor Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2009): 58; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Morgan, interview; Gunter, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, Second Interview; Westcott, interview; Lee, interview; Storm, interview.

advantage of the option. Two of the docents reported the visitors enjoyed the opportunity to see the interpretation and felt they were still part of the tour.⁴³

The second evaluation question evaluated eight criteria of the tour experience, including the guide having the visitor's full attention, discussed earlier. The responses of 645 visitors, who were allowed to select all applicable options, overwhelmingly showed that they learned interesting new information and that a significant portion changed their perceptions. Eighty-eight and eighty-seven percent received new information and were interested in the information being presented respectively. In fact, only eight visitors felt bored and 116 lost track of time. Clark thought "people learn more, new information" at the WWFH "than they do in the other houses."⁴⁴ Docents already knew many visitors were learning about Reconstruction for the first time; but visitors' comments corroborate, month after month, what especially resonated with them was how much new, interesting history they were absorbing. Eight specifically labeled the tour as highly educational, and seven revealed they learned a great deal. Another visitor remarked it was an "experience that I will not find in any history books," and after thanking the site for the Reconstruction "education," wanted to buy "a DVD or pamphlet with the info" or online tour subscription. Of those that described their extensive learning experience, two visitors claimed the information "broadened" their perspective and knowledge.⁴⁵ Sixteen visitors

⁴³ Clark, Second Interview; Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview.

⁴⁴ Taylor, "WWFH Trends," slide 6-7; Clark, First Interview.

⁴⁵ Wright, "April 2014 Survey," slide 13; Taylor, "May 2014 Survey," slide 12; Taylor, "June 2014 Survey," slide 12; Taylor, "July 2014 Survey," slide 12; Taylor, "August 2014 Survey," slide 12; Taylor, "September 2014 Survey," October 2014, slide 12; Taylor, "October 2014 Survey," slide 12-13; Taylor, "December 2014 Survey," slide 12-13.

noted the tour and information was interesting.⁴⁶ Another dozen remarked on how very informative their experience was.⁴⁷

But what visitors were learning was not limited to Reconstruction. Nine addressed new insight they received on Woodrow Wilson and his influence. One visitor was “more use to thinking” of him “in terms of WWI and U.N.,” so the tour “gave a new concept” that encouraged the guest to “read more about Wilson to understand him better.” Another visitor had never associated him with the Nineteenth Amendment granting women suffrage. A few walked away with a diminished “respect” for the president. One visitor “was disappointed to find out that Wilson was so racist.”⁴⁸

Armed with new information, visitors walked away from the home thinking. Regardless of what people knew before entering the home, Stickney declared, “You have to think when you come out of that house.” Morgan appreciated “when visitors show that the tour has made them think” or ask “insightful questions” or express “alternate viewpoints,” such as why *Gone with the Wind* is not regarded as negatively as *The Birth of a Nation*. Visitors also made her think. In what she felt was a more politically charged time, she personally liked the “give and take” of “different interpretations or viewpoints that are suggested by this house.” The WWFH modeled behavior of how “to reasonably

⁴⁶ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 13; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11-12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 13.

⁴⁷ Nine of those twelve used the language “very informative.” Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 11-12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12-13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12-13.

⁴⁸ Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 13; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

and rationally discuss points of view” that “we have lost or are losing.” Docents may choose not to talk about contemporary politics, but Hogan concurred they can facilitate discussion of politics in the past.⁴⁹

The large number of visitors with “open-minds” was the most pleasant surprise for docents.⁵⁰ Hogan argued schools “can only do so much” to change thinking. The WWFH addressed older people, who were open to the interpretation and were not limited by what they learned school. But these open minds were the product of a lack of information not misinformation. Stickney saw people thinking and commenting “I’ve never heard that before.” She “opened their eyes” but not because she was changing preconceived notions. Margie too “felt most satisfied” when groups verbalized she “had opened their eyes to an era in American history of which they knew little or nothing.” Clark observed non-southerners and younger people “have almost a blank page when it comes to Reconstruction” and “just a blip.” They received “a large amount of information” they did not know. If anything, giving an unusual but pleasant tour to more than a dozen bikers taught weekend docent Halie Brazier to overcome her own bias about who constitutes an open-minded visitor.⁵¹

Quite striking, the second evaluation question revealed one quarter of visitors had their beliefs or thoughts challenged or changed and gained appreciation for people not like themselves. These marks are especially important given ninety percent of visitors were white and the exhibit was equally devoted to the black experience during

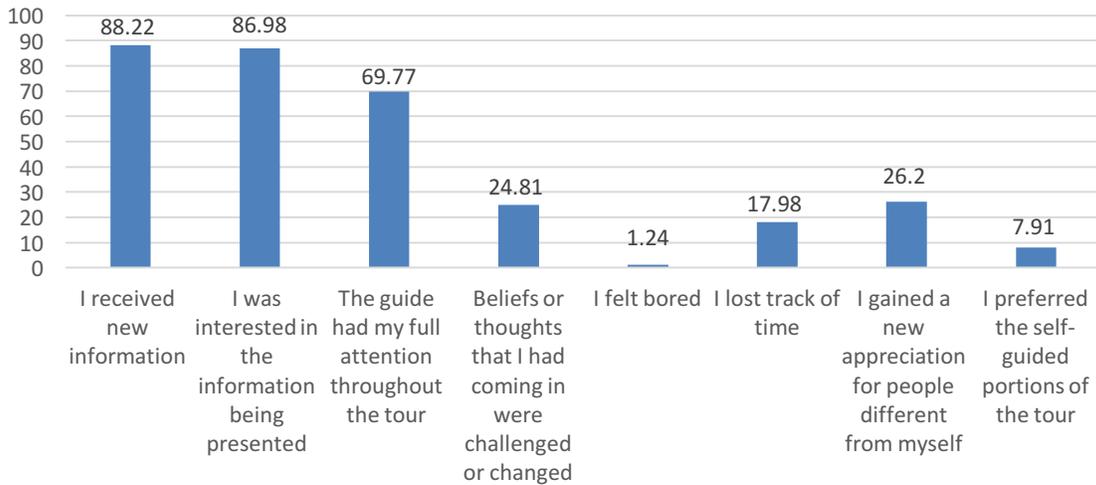
⁴⁹ Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Stickney, interview; Morgan, “Docent Survey”; Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview.

⁵⁰ Clark, First Interview; Hogan, interview; Doe, interview; Stickney, interview. Both Doe and Stickney used the language “open” rather than open-minded.

⁵¹ Hogan, interview; Stickney, interview; Doe, “Docent Survey”; Clark, Second Interview; Brazier, interview.

Table 6.6 Visitor Evaluation Question 2

Question 2. Please rate your experience today by choosing any of the following that describe your visit. During my tour of the WWFH exhibition today . . .



Reconstruction. August was the strongest month for multiple categories, likely because the museum had been open six months so docents were seasoned and attendance, at 333 people, reached the heights of the well-attended early months of the reopening. Although guides having the full attention of visitor rose eight percent, those who had a new appreciation for different people swelled to thirty-five percent, ten percent above the average and the highest performance in that category to date. Those who had their beliefs challenged or changed rose three percent above average and seven percent from a previous month low to twenty-eight percent.⁵² By presenting multiple narratives and voices with complexity and tension that spanned Reconstruction through the Great War, the tour allowed visitors to contextual their experience within a larger, diverse story of America and come to understand themselves and others better.⁵³

⁵² Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 6-7; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 4.

⁵³ Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, iv; Luke, “The Museum: Where Civilizations Clash or Clash Civilizes?,” 24.

Evaluations and docent oral histories confirmed the tour is making small changes. Two docents claimed the tour was changing some visitors' "preconceptions," although to "a matter of degree" or "on a very small scale." This was why Bacon-Rogers "thoroughly enjoy[ed] giving tours" because it offered "the chance to change the views of many fellow South Carolinians and right the wrong of Lost Cause."⁵⁴ Lee also had some "A-ha!" or "light bulb moments" that were "great experiences" and made her "so happy." On one tour the visitor admitted she had never thought of the political parties shifting and how contemporary Republicans "harken back to Lincoln" when they are not that party anymore. She was given much to think about, especially in the concept that it is the "victor that writes the history." When those moments happened, Lee reflected with pride, "Oh, I've given you something and you're going to look at the world a little differently maybe." Gunter identified several cues as to when visitors have changed their thinking. Some asked for book recommendations. She suggested Eric Foner's *A Short History of Reconstruction* first and then usually W.E.B. DuBois' *Black Reconstruction*. Other visitors had a strong reactions to watching the 1926 commemorative Red Shirt parade in *Legacy* because "You can't deny that as a fact." Guests asked, "So this is the same guy [Wade Hampton III] that there's a statue of? Why?" Responding with "Well you tell me why" made for fruitful critical thinking and conversation, sometimes making the tour two hours long. The last sign she saw was visitors exiting the Red Shirt room "dazed" and not asking questions. She attributed this to her competency as a docent and visitors processing information. She explained, "To the ones that really pay attention and are open, you've just undone . . . who knows how many decades of education. . . This is

⁵⁴ Clark, First Interview; Bacon-Rogers, "Docent Survey."

what they've known their entire life and all of sudden you're telling them they were wrong, their parents were wrong, their teachers were wrong. That's a lot to grasp." She and another docent had many visitors change their views about Reconstruction, leaving horrified, some with thoughts of how "really messed up" white Americans across the nation were then.⁵⁵

Four docents discussed their fear of potential confrontation over the facts of Reconstruction and controversial elements of the tour and with visitors who were most likely familiar with the Lost Cause narrative. Brazier worried the guise of a Reconstruction museum under Wilson's name would promote pushback from "white supremacists," "heritage not hate" advocates, and southerners with strong ties to the Civil War era.⁵⁶ Staff also briefly wondered whether the Sons of the Confederate Veterans (SCV) would take issue with the WWFH and who else "might object" to the interpretation and "why." The SCV's successful campaign to derail a National Park Service study of Reconstruction in Beaufort, South Carolina just a decade earlier legitimized everyone's concerns. That campaign had been fueled by the rise of the heritage-not-hate movement, requirements Civil War battlefields address slavery, and a decade-long Confederate flag battle that resulted in its removal from the top of the State House dome in Columbia and placed in a lowly position on the grounds.⁵⁷ The WWFH

⁵⁵ Lee, interview; Gunter, "Docent Survey"; Gunter, interview; Storm, interview.

⁵⁶ Bacon-Rogers, "Docent Survey"; Brazier, interview; Hogan, interview; Doe, "Docent Survey."

⁵⁷ "WWFH Training Session Planning"; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor and Page Putnam Miller, "Reconstructing Memory: The Attempt to Designate Beaufort, South Carolina, the National Park Service's First Reconstruction Unit," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 7, no. 1 (March 2017): 39, 57; P. Charles Lunsford, a SCV member with links to more radical heritage groups with white supremacist ties, created the 1990s slogan "Heritage, Not Hate" with regards to symbols such as the Confederate flag. Heidi Beirich, "The Struggle for the Sons of Confederate Veterans: A Return to White Supremacy in the Early Twenty-First Century?," ed. Euan Hague, Edward H. Sebesta, and Heidi Beirich, *Neo-Confederacy: A Critical Introduction*, 2008, 286.

never witnessed the same backlash Beaufort and the NPS did, partly because of a reason Brazier cited. State and county appropriations emphasized the need for preserving the home and archeological research on the grounds. Hidden beneath Wilson's name, funding in the years leading up to the relaunch and afterward placed little emphasis on Reconstruction.⁵⁸

Evaluations corroborated that doцент fears of pushback were mostly unfounded. Nearly eighty-four percent of 628 respondents thought sensitive or controversial issues were treated extremely well. In August 2014, this statistic peaked at over ninety percent. Overall just one percent, or seven people, believed these issues were not handled well at all. And in a sign that Reconstruction may have less negative connotations than ever before, six percent of evaluation takers on average, and in September 2014 ten percent, did not feel there were any controversial issues raised. One visitor left a comment about the evaluation question, writing "Sorry we have to be so sensitive to so much."⁵⁹ This suggests a small but significant portion of visitors entered the museum believing

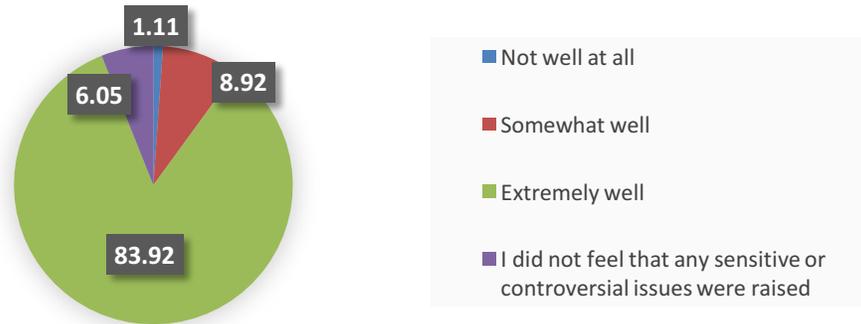
⁵⁸ In September 2007, the preservation firm conducting the study of the home, which included structural, archeological, and paint analysis, told the press the home had "so much to tell about Columbia and South Carolina during Reconstruction;" however, Historic Columbia's Executive Director Robin Waites said the organization would approach the WWFH "as the preservation of an historic Columbia home and landscape and as a look at Wilson as the president of the United States." Jeff Wilkinson, "Building Our City -- the Garden District - Wilson House Project to Cost \$2 Million," *State (Columbia, SC)*, September 15, 2007, Final edition, sec. Front, A1. The remaining sources had no mention of Reconstruction. Christina Lee Knauss, "Funds Sought to Assess, Repair S.C.'s Only Presidential Home," *State (Columbia, SC)*, January 30, 2005, Final edition, sec. Metro/Region, B1; "The State Briefly," *State (Columbia, SC)*, February 2, 2005, Final edition, sec. Metro/Region, B3; Gina Smith, "\$1.5 Million Needed to Restore House," *State (Columbia, SC)*, May 27, 2005, Final edition, sec. Metro/Region, B1; Gina Smith, "Saving a Part of History - Blue Cross Comes to Home's Rescue," *State (Columbia, SC)*, August 7, 2007, Final edition, sec. Front, A1; "Welcome, Tourists," *State (Columbia, SC)*, May 25, 2012, sec. Obituaries, 17; ; Sarita Chourey, "Haley Vetoes Money to Promote Wilson Home," *Bluffton Today (Bluffton, SC)*, July 5, 2015, BFT edition, sec. South Carolina, 7A; Cassie Cope, "State Boasts \$87 Million Surplus for Year," *State (Columbia, SC)*, August 21, 2015, sec. Front Page, 3.

⁵⁹ Taylor, "WWFH Trends," slide 4, 9; Taylor, "August 2014 Survey," slide 5; Taylor, "September 2014 Survey," October 2014, slide 5; Taylor, "October 2014 Survey," slide 13.

Reconstruction and issues of race, gender and violence were normative topics for discussion.

Table 6.7 Visitor Evaluation Question 4

Question 4. How were sensitive or controversial issues treated?



Most docents experienced some encounter with Lost Causers, but they were rare. The tour never caused any backlash in person for three docents. The lack of resistance surprised Hogan a bit, reminding her of the time she thought she could not teach history in South Carolina.⁶⁰ Three docents felt disappointed or expressed discomfort when visitors rejected the material. Katy Menne had a few visitors that either said something incredibly racist or came in with a closed mind. Bacon-Rogers walked away from a handful of tours thinking she failed to reach the group because they failed to “get the dynamic nature of the tour style that makes the WWFH such an interesting and different museum.” Lee was also disappointed when she could not change minds. She saw through the coded Lost Cause language that peppered visitors’ questions and statements. Some referenced had Abraham Lincoln lived that Reconstruction would not have been so hard on the South. Others responded to the violence of the Red Shirt campaign by noting Wade Hampton III was a great general. Sometimes she walked away from the tour

⁶⁰ Hogan, interview; Brazier, interview; Doe, interview.

“horrified” not wanting “to deal with this.” In those moments, the WWFH was her least favorite tour at Historic Columbia. She could not recall a Lost Cause visitor that she felt had totally changed their mind.⁶¹

Morgan’s quickest tour and most awkward encounter was with two female visitors, but she felt it had less to do with an opposition to Reconstruction and more with Wilson’s legacy. One woman politely explored the exhibit, but her companion wrote in a notebook throughout the tour and asked questions about the restoration funding. Other questions about whether a staff member was always present on site and whether visitors could visit the home unaccompanied concerned Morgan as a security threat. The note taker rushed ahead of Morgan to write down exhibit text. When they reached the politics bedroom, the woman asked Morgan why she gave tours. Something about the way the question was presented led Morgan to believe the woman was motivated by an “anti-progressive” ideology and desire to prove Historic Columbia was using government funds for a progressive political agenda. The woman had no desire to stay in the house once she realized “she wasn’t going to have unlimited time to take down the vicious propaganda she was going to find here or twist it how she wanted to.”⁶²

Docents handled quasi-hecklers in a variety of ways depending on the tour. Two docents looked for changes in people’s attitudes, but age was also an indicator of how to approach. Clark noticed resistance in southerners in their facial reactions and body language but rarely got “pushback from the old southern white guard” or as he jokingly referred to them, the “old men my age.” The physical reaction of what he called garden

⁶¹ Menne, “Docent Survey”; Bacon-Rogers, “Docent Survey”; Lee, interview.

⁶² Morgan, interview; The interpretative team discussed details of the encounter via email immediately following Morgan’s tour. Fielding Freed, email message to Interpretative Team, “Follow Up Call from Jean Morgan,” January 26, 2015.

club and Daughters of the Revolution type “folks” told him they were “not buying this.” They “don’t want to hear Wade Hampton, that the Red Shirts were terrorists.” But as “older southern people,” they “grew up to learn nice manners” and with the “southern characteristic” not to challenge or take issue with something. “What they say to each other when they leave is different,” Clark reminded. When these groups did “throw out some fact,” he sometimes responded with a simple, “That’s interesting. I’ve never heard that.” Stickney simply refused to argue with the one male visitor who would not consider any change in interpretation and was not going to see anything good about Reconstruction. His wife told her not to worry about it and ignore him because he would never change. But some comments Clark could not “let pass” and would ask “Where do you get that?” or open a dialogue with larger groups. His and other retired volunteers’ advantage over younger, paid interpretative staff was knowing how aging white visitors thought. He understood the mindset of the Wilson family and a certain portion of South Carolinians and museum goers. Learning the attitudes of the Wilson family did not surprise him. He continued, “I grew up Presbyterian. And I’m not a contemporary of Woodrow Wilson but I am a descendent of people like those folks. And I know how they think.” Maria Schneider knew from her own education that older people sometimes had a difficult time discussing Reconstruction. She used precise language, such as “myths of Reconstruction” and “errors were taught” to address people like herself.⁶³

Other docents established authority through their confidence in the facts. “Surefooted” in her “knowledge,” Jennifer Gunter refused to let a couple talk over her. She was “never antagonistic because that doesn’t do anything” but she rarely allowed that

⁶³ Clark, First Interview; Clark, Second Interview; Schneider, “Docent Survey”; Stickney, interview.

behavior. Beyond that, her strategy was “try to lay out some basic facts” and then “challenge them to read and come back and have discussion.” Bacon-Rogers used the layout of the exhibit to counter her one “absolute Lost Cause” case, who tried to argue politicians were uneducated. When he made other false claims and cited his education, she foreshadowed where that issue would be addressed on the tour. Guests often commented to her that they learned something different and had to come to grips with that misinformation, but unlike him, they realized they had been taught by biased books. Her philosophy was: “Here is what I know. Whatever you take from that is up to you.” She felt like other visitors were afraid she would lose her temper as he tried to provoke a response; but, she had “the facts on my side” while he had “what he learned in high school fifty years earlier.” For her, it was not “a conflict at all” because she knew she impacted him and possibly others in the group. She thought the exchange might have “actually enhanced their tour to hear someone who believes this Lost Cause narrative.” By the end of the tour, he said he may not agree with everything but “he had a lot to think about.”⁶⁴

Other docents experienced mild micro-aggressions. Weekend docent Erin Holmes had a tour with a grandparent and his family who insisted on calling the Civil War “the War of Northern Aggression” throughout the tour. Another docent’s only run-on with an “old guard” was more “attitude” rather than overt challenges. In their discussion of the election of 1876 and Democrats’ efforts to retake the state, he asked why there would have been more Republicans than southerners, which he substituted for white Democrats. The docent explained to him that the majority of Republicans were African American and

⁶⁴ Gunter, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview.

thought he wanted to respond. He also questioned the use of “Tommy” even though it was explained in the tour introduction. Still, she determined, “I was lucky I guess.” Despite no pushback, the docent argued, because Reconstruction was such a “touchy” subject for southerners, that it was essential docents “know how to answer challenging questions, questions that challenge the theme of this house, that challenge the interpretation of Reconstruction that we have or of Woodrow Wilson. You have to keep your cool.”⁶⁵

There were some unique demographic trends worth mentioning but none that were extraordinary, save Millennials, who provided both exceptional and inconsistent feedback. John Falk, a leading scholar on visitor motivations, promoted five small “i” identities that drive visitation: Explorer, Facilitator, Experience Seeker, Professional/Hobbyist, and Recharger. He argued these small identities are more important than demographic big “I” Identities for museum visitors. Critics argued Falk’s identities are indeed important but “reductionist” given how diverse people’s motivations. Demographic factors, including age still matter. The response from Millennials at the WWFH reflected complex identity requires complex approaches and may not be explained solely by Falk’s small identities.⁶⁶

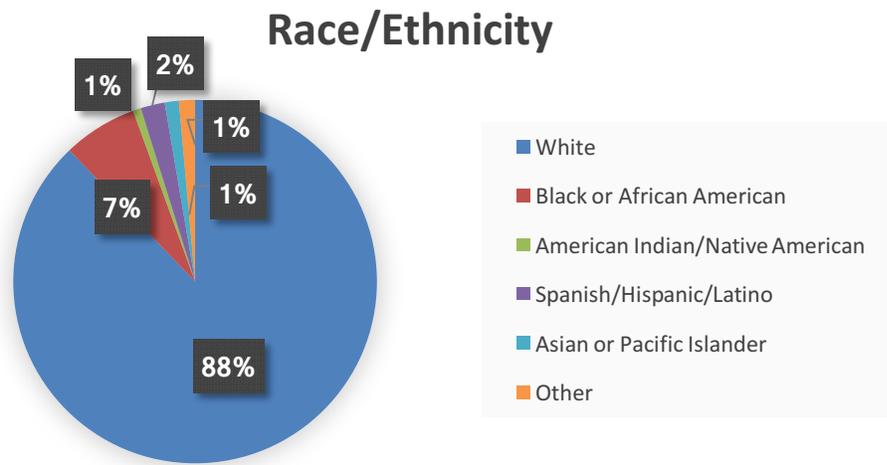
There were no major surprises in responses between men and women. Although fifty-seven evaluators declined to answer, sixty-six percent of respondents identified as female and thirty-eight percent male. Women were thus more likely to complete an evaluation and, in line with larger museum attendance trends, likely the most frequent

⁶⁵ Erin Holmes, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016; Doe, interview.

⁶⁶ Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 23, 29, 64; Dawson and Jensen, “Towards A Contextual Turn,” 128, 131–34, 136–38, 159; Stylianou-Lambert, “Re-Conceptualizing Museum Audiences,” 134–35; Davidson and Sibley, “Audiences at the ‘New’ Museum,” 178.

visitors. Women were slightly more diverse, prone to rank the tour as excellent, feel sensitive issues were handled well, and prefer the guide. Men had a tendency to be more interested in the information and panels and gain a new appreciation for people unlike themselves.⁶⁷

Table 6.8 Visitor Evaluation Question 9



Although the WWFH was visited primarily by whites, non-whites and people of color had positive responses to the site, and in some cases, their evaluation selections were higher than average. Three percent more black respondents than average gained a new appreciation for people unlike themselves. All four Native American and twelve Hispanic/Latino visitors found the tour excellent. The latter were also all fully engaged and believed the site handled sensitive issues extremely well. All Native American visitors and all seven Asian/Pacific Islanders responded they received new information and were interested in it. Generation Xers born in the 1970s were the most racially diverse, with nearly eighteen and half percent black, two and half percent Native

⁶⁷ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 13-15, 17; Six in ten museum visitors are women. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 28.

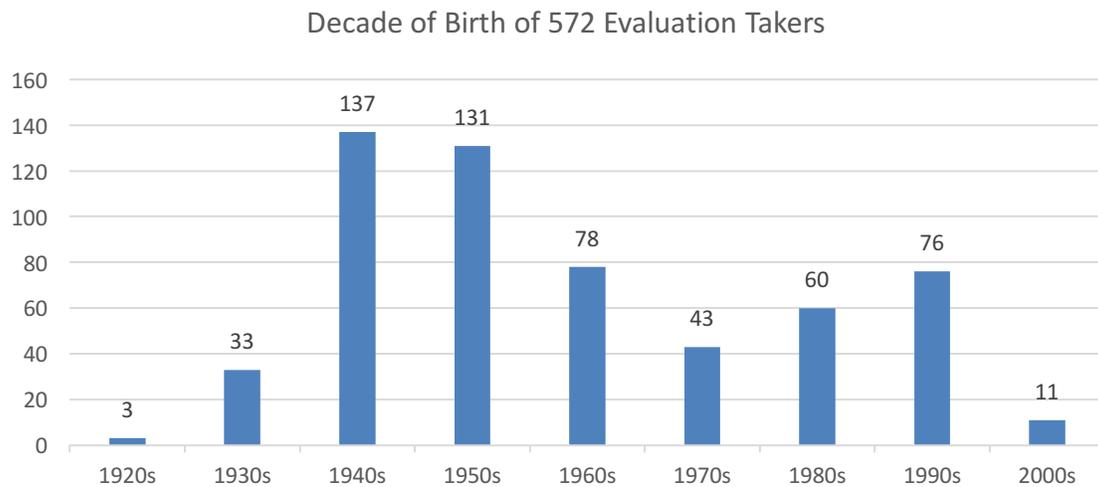
American, over five percent Hispanic/Latino, and nearly eight percent Asian/Pacific Islanders.⁶⁸

Older audiences were more likely to attend and embrace the interpretative style, except for the interactives. But Millennials rivaled last generation baby boomers and first Generation Xers in attendance and desired a different interpretative experience than previous generations. The three visitors born in the 1920s all learned new information, were interested in that information, and thought race was handled extremely well. Likewise evaluators born between 1920 and 1949 were all engaged with the material at many points and for the duration of the tour. In fact, over thirty-one percent of 137 visitors born in the 1940s had their beliefs changed and gained new appreciation of others, around six percent above average. But of the thirty-three people born in the 1930s, only one liked the interactives. However, twenty percent of Millennials found the interactives most interesting, twelve percent higher than the average. Sixteen percent of Millennials born in the 1990s thought no sensitive issues were raised. They also found the questions more interesting than most visitors but were far less impressed with the tour and guides than average evaluators. Only thirty-six percent of 1980s Millennials found the guide most interesting and just over thirty-five percent of 1990s Millennials were fully engaged. Late Millennials and the oldest members of a yet to be determined new generation often rejected the traditional elements of a guided tour and highlighted new

⁶⁸ Fifteen percent of evaluations were left blank in the section asking racial and ethnic identity, making it the least answered question. Some non-white visitors chose to identify as white as well on the evaluations. Taylor, "WWFH Trends," slide 3, 16-20; For the purposes of classification, the Greatest Generation includes those born in the 1930s through 1946, when Baby-boomers begin. Generation X is considered 1965-1984, but those born late to this generation may find themselves as the oldest Millennials, which begins in 1982 and ends in 2004. Philip Bump, "Here Is When Each Generation Begins and Ends, According to Facts," *The Atlantic*, March 25, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/>.

trends. Well over a third preferred the self-guided portions. And even though a little over half found the tour excellent, all were interested in the information. Most astonishing, sixty-four percent gained a new appreciation for people different from themselves, an impressive thirty-eight percent above average.⁶⁹

Table 6.9 Evaluator Demographics by Decade of Birth



November 2014 turned out to be an exceptional month to evaluate Millennials born in the 1990s because exhibit team consultant Thomas Brown required his college U.S. history students to visit the site. That month based on evaluations alone twenty-seven 1990s Millennials, or just over a fifth of 152 adult visitors, visited the WWFH, with an astounding eighteen of those born 1993-1995. The average trends in Millennials feelings toward the docent and guided tour held, but in other evaluation areas, the generation was remarkably inconsistent. That month “the guide had my full attention” dropped sixteen percent, and those who preferred the self-guided portion rose five and

⁶⁹ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 19-20; For the purposes of classification, the Greatest Generation includes those born in the 1930s through 1946, when Baby-boomers begin. Generation X is considered 1965-1984, but those born late to this generation may find themselves as the oldest Millennials, which begins in 1982 and ends in 2004. Bump, “Here Is When Each Generation Begins and Ends, According to Facts.”

half percent. But some results were contradictory. Some expressed boredom. Others liked the interactives. When it came to sensitive issues, Millennials constituted four of the five visitors who did not think there were any and four of seven who marked “somewhat well.”⁷⁰

Docents had theories as to Millennials’ overall ambivalence and varied evaluations. Two docents argued younger audiences entered the home more as open slates. However, they disagreed as to whether this was because students had more exposure to Reconstruction and the Lost Cause than older generations or because they were not learning anything in school. Bacon-Rogers said, “I don’t know we are impacting them. For people thirty-five and older, I think it is having a significant impact . . . For young people this is not controversial . . . We’re not shocking the younger audience. We are shocking that older audience . . . in a good way . . . It’s shocking them into thinking about race every day, into thinking about privilege.” The impact for Millennials was on a small scale as far as changing opinions or “reiterating what they already knew and seeing the museum dedicated to that.” But Clark got the impression younger people were not learning much in schools, and those that were no longer learned the interpretation he received that “Ku Klux and Klan and Red Shirts did a good thing.”⁷¹ But Holmes attributed the Millennials’ “most pedantic complaints,” including tour length and interest in material, and their reluctance “to actually give a specific reason” to attention span. Being “forced” to come may be a factor too. A USC student provided Lee her quickest tour. He was ready to get out and wanted no more than two sentence explanations.⁷²

⁷⁰ Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 4-5, 8.

⁷¹ Bacon-Rogers, interview; Clark, First Interview.

⁷² Holmes, “Docent Survey”; Lee, interview.

Three hundred and twenty four people, exactly half of all evaluators, left comments about their experience.⁷³ Many comments were brief, but a substantial number of visitors described the strengths and weaknesses of the tour and exhibit not illuminated fully by the evaluation questions. As for the strengths, they responded positively to the Reconstruction interpretation and the architectural restoration. A few even reflected on their own ancestry and the role family might have played in the historical events of Reconstruction.

In general, four visitors expressed appreciation for “preserving history,” to provide “the opportunity to reflect and remember the past.”⁷⁴ Over a dozen visitors commented on the “preservation” efforts and restoration of the home. The most important attraction for visitors to historic or heritage buildings is the building itself, which arouses emotion. In one study of two HHMs, “the perception of the building” was one factor in visitors feeling “happy, pleasant, and stimulated.”⁷⁵ Five remarked on the WWFH’s beauty. One of them had seen the home over two decades prior and called it “beautifully reformed and finished.” Two visitors understood the period better because of the restoration, including the “historical events” of “Woodrow Wilson’s adolescence” and how the house and architecture “reflected changes in the 1870’s.” One visitor called the kitchen frame outlined by the accessibility ramp “brilliant!”⁷⁶

⁷³ Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 3.

⁷⁴ Quote from Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12-13; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

⁷⁵ Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, and Sánchez-García, “The Role of Emotions in a Model of Behavioral Intentions of Visitors to the Gaudí Historic House Museums in Barcelona, Spain,” 158–59, 168.

⁷⁶ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 6; Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12-13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 13; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” 12–13.

But thirteen commenters specifically mentioned the Reconstruction history or the importance of a museum devoted to the Reconstruction time period.⁷⁷ Some simply described the focus as “unique” and “fantastic.” Others went into greater detail. One called it “a very impressive museum, dealing with a complicated and emotionally conflicted time in an intelligent, thoughtful manner.” Another claimed it was “important to have this house tell the story of Reconstruction along with Wilson story.” One saw lingering legacies, noting the period “continues to shape who we are as Americans today.” One visitor was “happy” less artifacts allowed Reconstruction to take center stage. Others thought about the interpretation in light of other presidential homes. One wrote the reinterpretation was a “nice way” to avoid “a presidential shrine” while “tackling a difficult subject in the south.” Another encouraged the home to stick with its “outstanding” interpretation. The visitor had toured Wilson’s presidential library in Virginia and said “you stand up well against Wilson birthplace considering your size in comparison.” The tour inspired another visitor to seek out the other Wilson HHMs “to set the whole picture.” Visitors were surprised and wanted to learn more Reconstruction. One confessed, “I never knew reconstruction was such a progressive period.” One thought, “I need to find some good books to continue my thoughts of the time period.” Another said the tour “made me hungry for Reconstruction History.”⁷⁸

Some docents understood there was a divide between what scholars and the public knew. Brazier explained, “I don’t think the interpretation is radical for historians but for

⁷⁷ These citations are for general references. Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

⁷⁸ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 14; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 12.

the general public it's quite different."⁷⁹ Historian Rik Booraem, who levied the most specific criticism of the exhibit films, demonstrated the divide between what historians expected and what the public could absorb. In addition to and as part of those film critiques, he marked that sensitive or controversial issues were treated "somewhat well." He rather enjoyed the tour, guide and material, writing the combination of "Wilson's boyhood life and family with the issues of Reconstruction" was "well handled." For him, "the basic formula" beginning with "personal/social religious dimensions" that expanded into "national/public issues" felt "intuitively right" but he would "stress" religion more and make sure the Reconstruction politics was "clearer."⁸⁰ According to Director of Cultural Resources John Sherrer, this evaluation juxtaposed with "more laudatory ones" offered by general visitors illustrated the scholarly divide and the need to treat the general public as critical thinkers, not just historians.⁸¹ Exhibit reviewer Cecelia Moore seemed to understand this divide as well. She conceded, "As a historian, I wanted more information and more complexity. I can imagine that some visitors want more furniture, period china and crystal, and fewer words."⁸²

But perhaps most importantly, some visitors, like many of the WWFH docents, began to think about their own family history and memory and recognize the site as a source of pride for the state. "Being here" and learning about the state's Reconstruction history had one visitor "thinking about my own ancestors living here during that time & what experience they must have had as white people." Another guest thankful for the

⁷⁹ Hogan, interview; Brazier, interview.

⁸⁰ Booraem asked for his evaluation data from his visit on July 29, 2015 to complete a review letter for an American Association for State and Local History award. He spoke with me about his evaluation so I knew which one was his. Taylor, email message to Hendrik Booraem, "Letter for AASLH Grant"; Taylor, "July 2014 Survey," slide 11.

⁸¹ John Sherrer, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "July WWFH Survey Results," August 14, 2014.

⁸² Moore, "Woodrow Wilson Family Home," 192.

experience reflected: “My grandchildren have ancestors who were living here & they were black people. So within my own family we have two sides of what life was like then. And we all have a bit more to learn.” Four visitors took pleasure in the site’s presence in the community. One called it their “favorite historic home tour in South Carolina!” Others wrote they were “very proud to have this museum in Columbia” and the “museum fulfills a real need in the community, state and nation.” But one visitor hailed the WWFH as a “gem lost and tucked away in Columbia.”⁸³

The tour may have motivated four visitors to draw smiley faces on their evaluations, but that did not diminish the criticism, both constructive and aggressive, the museum received.⁸⁴ Beyond artifacts or furnishings, the second most recorded criticism in the comments sections was wanting more information about Wilson’s presidency and family life. A handful of others deemed the exhibit too political, some specifically criticizing the citizenship film for an issue not yet discussed, a brief visual reference to the LGBTQ movement.

Although some spoke of the effective ways “historical figures” were woven with the time period, the dual narrative and movement between Wilson and Reconstruction left some visitors wanting more information and with unresolved questions. One visitor commented that narrative “lacked flow and jumped around” from the two subjects.⁸⁵ Focusing on two themes translated to unfinished narratives for visitors. A handful of visitors walked away needing a precise definition of Reconstruction or feeling the end of Reconstruction panel was unclear. Five visitors expressed a desire to learn more about

⁸³ Wright, “WWFH Visitor Survey Preliminary Findings,” slide 6; Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12.

⁸⁴ Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12.

⁸⁵ Taylor, “May 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12.

Wilson's time as president, both his accomplishments and controversies. Two docents heard similar requests on their tours. Wanting to hear about both Wilson's political successes and faults was not surprising given docents received a range of responses from visitors about Wilson. Some visitors did not like Wilson. But others loved him or claimed him as their "favorite president." Some were simply on a mission to visit every presidential house they could. With regards to the "Wilsonites" or presidential home tourists, Brazier feared giving "inadequate" answers about Wilson's adult life or that some visitors might see the last room and final exhibit film as a weakness for lacking a thorough assessment of Wilson's life. But it was never a problem for her, speculating perhaps because "that's not really what the house is about." In an opposite but similar respect, she was concerned Reconstruction enthusiasts might overlook the home because "it's overshadowed by a famous name" having little public association with Reconstruction. But evaluations demonstrated that no presidential house hunter left openly disgruntled. Two visitors in fact commented that they understood the time limitations prevented more Wilson coverage. One of them suggested offering two tours with one more in depth on Wilson. Other visitors called for "primary material" or "take-away tips" for the questions they still had or to fill gaps. One wanted "any direct insight into how Wilson's time in Columbia or nearby Augusta influenced his later social or political thinking." Other visitors wanted more on why Wilson "incorporate[d] racial segregation into the federal civil service," his "stance on reconstruction," and how the political parties switched. The three visitors who wanted an expansion on the Wilson

family in Columbia varied from more pictures to “research done on black servants’ relations with the Wilson Family.”⁸⁶

Only four people dismissed the tour as too “political” or “politically correct,” three on the evaluations and one in the press. They ranged in age from a millennial to a baby boomer. Despite a “nice” building, interesting artifacts, and being engaged with and finding the guide competent, one visitor took issue with the interpretation. The visitor marked sensitive or controversial issues were not handled well at all and in the comments section wrote: “Negative. Disappointing. An unfortunate social experiment. Waste of an opportunity to have something good. The museum house deserves a finer tour, and the people who visit deserve better, too.” Two visitors specifically cited the citizenship film and incorrectly argued citizenship granted by the Fourteenth Amendment had no correlation to LGBTQ issues. One believed the use of an image connected to Proposition 8 in California was unnecessary for the tour and another was “a little surprised” such a “fabulous tour” alluded to the gay marriage debate in California. The visitor questioned whether it was “really needed for children + teens?” She primarily took issue with the inclusion of material not related to South Carolina. The visitor rightly concluded there was no connection to Wilson but also claimed no relation to Reconstruction. The visitor wrote: “I was offended. It is taking "Political Corrections" a little too far! And slipping in stuff that doesn't need to be. I am not homophobic! My nephew is gay + I love him dearly! But get a grip on your presentations!”⁸⁷ “Sorely disappointed” that the museum

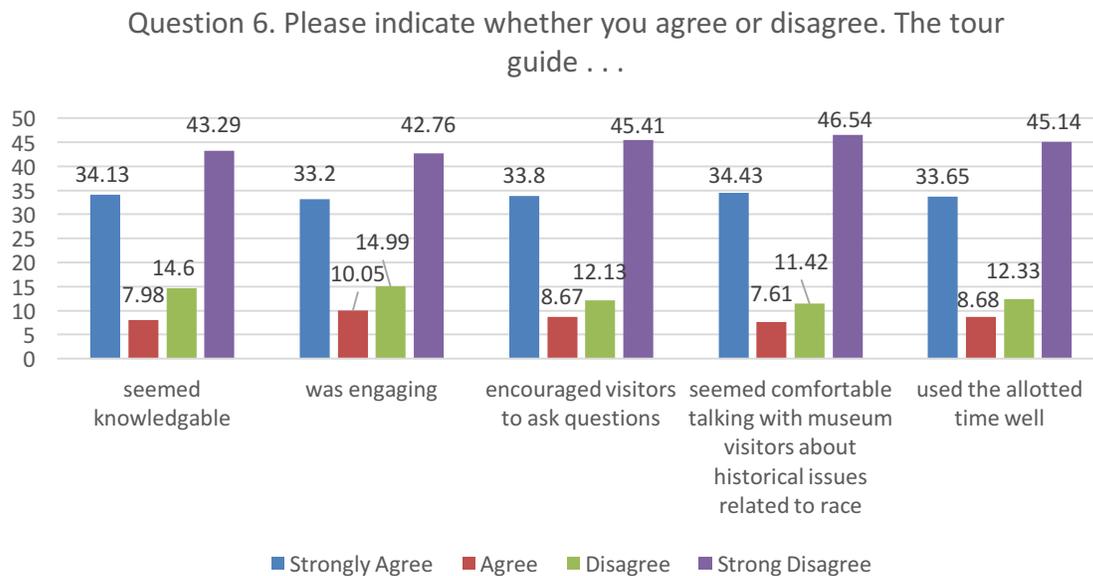
⁸⁶ Menne, “Docent Survey”; Bacon-Rogers, “Docent Survey”; Storm, interview; Westcott, email message to Taylor, “March Results”; Scott, “Docent Survey”; Brazier, interview; Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 21-22; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 11.

⁸⁷ Annie Wright, email message to Robin Waites, “Visitor Feedback,” March 10, 2014; Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 11; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 6,

was “not about” Wilson, one visitor wrote a letter to the editor published in *The State* newspaper upset the interpretation was “an excuse to glorify the days of Reconstruction following the War Between the States, which were probably the darkest days that this state has ever experienced.” Not even the “beautifully restored” home with “a few household items that did actually belong to the Wilson family” could compensate.⁸⁸

Although the evaluations provided a plethora of rich data for Historic Columbia, there were a few problems, both with its formatting and administering. One issue has been discussed with regards to the number of selections available on question five about interesting information. The most glaring problem was the wording of sixth question on the evaluation, which created an anomaly on stellar evaluations that came back with “strongly disagree” across the board on this question. Visitors were asked to mark

Table 6.10 Visitor Evaluation Question 6



11; Michael Jowers, email message to Jennifer Taylor and James Quint, “Mailed in WW Survey,” June 30, 2014; Michael Jowers, email message to Sarah Blackwell, “Tour Comment,” April 25, 2014; “The Building Is Nice” (Woodrow Wilson Family Home Visitor Survey, June 2014), Historic Columbia Collection.

⁸⁸ Henry Ham, “Monday Letters: Visit to Wilson House Disappointing,” *State (Columbia, SC)*, September 15, 2014, <http://www.thestate.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article13882340.html>.

strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree for five statements about the tour guide. But the majority of the 593 respondents answering in the first six months marked disagree options. This occurred even when the docent was ranked as providing the most interesting information. The placement of “strongly disagree” as the first option when the question prompt listed agree first, and likely the question’s appearance near the end of the evaluation, led to respondent error. In mid-August, a revised question debuted with the reordering of answers from agree to disagree and matching the question word order. September marked the full first month options were switched.⁸⁹ Through the end of the year, save one month, one hundred percent of all 185 respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” across the board that guides were knowledgeable, engaging, comfortable talking about race as well as encouraged questions and used time well. Strongly agree never dropped below seventy-one percent in any category.⁹⁰

Two other evaluation issues manifested themselves among docents. First, docents felt awkward or bad for asking guests to complete tour evaluations as an especially long tour formally ended. Three docents wondered if the evaluations accounted for disgruntled guests and the tour was as effective as the evaluations suggested. Two docents considered the possibility some visitors avoided confrontation on the evaluations out of politeness

⁸⁹ The issue of incorrect selection was first recognized in June evaluations. Evaluations with strongly disagree or disagree were positive across the board on all other questions. James Quint received glowing remarks on a group tour evaluation but “strongly disagreed” was marked in all categories of his performance. Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor and Fielding Freed, “June Survey Results,” July 21, 2014; Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 8; I identified four surveys that I believed had been filled out incorrectly. Jennifer Taylor, email message to WWFH Docents, “July Survey Results,” August 20, 2014; Taylor, “WWFH Trends,” slide 12.

⁹⁰ Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH September 2014 Survey Monkey Stats” (Historic Columbia, October 2014), 7–8; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” 7–8; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH November 2014 Survey Monkey Stats” (Historic Columbia, December 2014), 7–8; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH December 2014 Survey Monkey Stats” (Historic Columbia, January 2015), 7–8; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 8-9; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 8-9; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 8-9; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 8-9.

and suggested some visitors need more time to process, although one docent disagreed that politeness was a factor. Clark speculated visitors might be more comfortable receiving a card with the link to the online survey they could take home. He argued, “I’d suspect you get more honest answers.” That evaluations were so “extremely positive” made him wonder if people in “the privacy of their own homes after they have thought about it” would have responded the same. That one of the three overtly negative evaluations was mailed in a membership envelope to Historic Columbia by a white, sixty-three year old female post-visit made Clark’s question a valid one. With regards to constructive comments and advice, he argued “it’s tougher for southerners to do that because that is a part of our culture. Even if southerners are quite willing to stab people in the back, face-to-face they believe more in civility and politeness.” Brazier also thought in some cases those who objected “just didn’t express that.” She laughed at the thought of hearing criticism. She continued, “I would have just gone off and cried if somebody said ‘I don’t like this tour.’ I would have blamed myself instead of the tour itself.”⁹¹

Two docents predicted the greatest issue for the WWFH in the future was promoting the importance of the site and generating visitor interest across the nation.⁹² Eight visitors revealed they would return in the future. Two promised to bring others, one intending to return with her son and another with her husband to “spend more time!”⁹³ Four visitors would recommend the tour to others.⁹⁴ Evaluations did not measure whether

⁹¹ Scott, email message to Taylor, “March Results”; Clark, Second Interview; Storm, interview; Brazier, interview; Hogan, interview; Jowers, email message to Taylor and Quint, “Mailed in WW Survey”; “The Building Is Nice.”

⁹² Storm, interview; Doe, interview.

⁹³ Wright, “April 2014 Survey,” slide 13; Taylor, “July 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “September 2014 Survey,” October 2014, slide 12-13; Taylor, “October 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12; Lee, interview.

⁹⁴ Taylor, “June 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “August 2014 Survey,” slide 12; Taylor, “November 2014 Survey,” December 2014, slide 12; Taylor, “December 2014 Survey,” slide 13.

visitors planned to return or what the visitor might tell someone about their visit. And scholarship is limited on return visitation and site recommendation and divided on exactly how much a positive experience with docents, the WWFH's greatest strength, stimulates return visits. A study of visitors at two HHMs who did not take a guided tour revealed one factor in visitors developing a positive feelings toward a visit was "positive interactions with employees." In response, visitors claimed they would return or recommend the site. But in one Florida atmospheric study with 500 visitors to a zoo, museum, performing arts center, or aquarium, the ambient qualities and design of these spaces and not staff sparked the desire to return or recommend.⁹⁵ Whether the WWFH can maintain its relevancy with visitors remains to be seen. However, evaluations and docent oral histories demonstrate the home's revolutionary approach was well-received by audiences in the first year. Docents facilitating the visitor's journey through a twenty-first century exhibit filled with abundant panels but limited objects and a dual narrative introducing new information was vital to visitor reception. The WWFH's strengths rested with the docents and their presenting new information in an engaging, respectful and helpful way. This allowed docents to hold the full attention of over two-thirds of evaluators and engage nearly every visitor. And as a result, over four-fifths of evaluators thought the handling of sensitive issues were handled extremely well. These results prove that HHMs need not shy away from subjects that are controversial nor exclude tragic moments. Arousing negative emotions such as anger, fear and sadness promotes interest because they are vivid and easier to remember, particularly if positive emotions

⁹⁵ Weiler and Ham, "Outcomes of Face-to-Face Interpretation," 204; Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll, and Sánchez-García, "The Role of Emotions in a Model of Behavioral Intentions of Visitors to the Gaudí Historic House Museums in Barcelona, Spain," 157, 162–64, 168; Forrest, "Museum Atmospherics," 211.

eventually “supplant the negative” ones. Take for example the traveling exhibit *Goose Bumps: The Science of Fear*, designed to be an “emotionally arousing experience” for visitors. Facing common fears from bugs to falling appeared to improve visitors’ short-term and long-term understanding of fear and promote reflection on their experience, phobias and fears both personally and with their loved ones.⁹⁶ If exposure to everyday fears elicits such a response, a crash course in the resilience displayed and tragedy experienced during Reconstruction may forever change the way the visitor to the WWFH remembers and talks about the most misunderstood period in American history.

⁹⁶ Dahl et al., “Our Fascination with Museum Displays,” 167; John H. Falk and Katie L. Gillespie, “Investigating the Role of Emotion in Science Center Visitor Learning,” *Visitor Studies* 12, no. 2 (September 2009): 112–14, 118–19, 122–27.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: ON THE EDGE OF RECONSTRUCTING RECONSTRUCTION

If the story of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home's (WWFH) origins and reinterpretation could be represented by one artifact, it would be the birth bed where Janet Wilson gave birth to her son Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Once the most treasured item in the WWFH's collection, its curation in the final space of the home on Reconstruction and Wilson memory represents the struggles the historic house museum (HHM) had in crafting the reinterpretation, some of which endured after its reopening in February 2014. The bed was the centerpiece of the Wilson shrine when it opened in 1933 and held significant sway eighty years later.

With \$1000 remaining in appropriated state funds, the Wilson home procured its most prized artifact in 1930, just in time for the memorial home's dedication during the American Legion's state convention. Alice Wilson McElroy, the president's niece, negotiated the final donation. The McElroy's, just returning from Japan after serving several years as missionaries, needed the funds to educate their children. Alice threw in

the bureau, which is still on display next to the bed, because she felt so ashamed taking the money.¹

The birth bed represents the challenges of doing away with the old and striving for something new. One docent was attached to the object, just as some had been to the original interpretation. The docent opened their narrative in the final room with a personal anecdote about visiting Wilson's presidential library and saying "that's my bed."² Historic Columbia loaned the bed to Staunton while the WWFH was closed, and an image of the bed continues to appear in the printed history of *The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum*.³

However, more docents argued the bed was out of place in the new Reconstruction museum. Volunteer Jean Morgan thought the item was better suited for the presidential library, which could place it in the manse where Wilson was born. Weekend docent Halie Brazier called it "cool to see" but that it "wasn't really meaningful." Tour and Program Coordinator Heather Bacon-Rogers suggested moving it or reorienting the tour to begin with Tommy's bedroom and then the master suite to discuss family. One docent simply mentioned it in passing as a physical tie to Wilson.⁴ The exhibit review in the *Journal of American History (JAH)* called the bed the "most glaring inconsistency" in the home. The review continued, "It dominates the room, yet

¹ "Woodrow Wilson Bed Acquired for Memorial; Put in Room War President Occupied Here," *The State*, April 14, 1930, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, 14 April 1930-24 April 1932, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Hereinafter cited as SCL, USC; "Minutes of the Woodrow Wilson Home Purchase Fund Committee, 6 March-11 May" 1929, 17, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, Records, 4 Feb. 1929-13 Mar. 1929, SCL, USC; "Woodrow Wilson Home Bed-Room" 1956, 1, 4, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, Records, 1952-29 December 1956 and 1956, SCL, USC; Mrs. Henry Cappellmann, "Wilson Home Committee Meeting Notes," May 11, 1929, 2, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, 16 April 1929-28 June 1929, SCL, USC.

² Posner, "Docent H Tour Review."

³ Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 6.

⁴ Morgan, interview; Brazier, interview; Bacon-Rogers, interview; Westcott, interview.

remains mostly uncurated, while arrayed around it are displays about carpetbaggers, *Birth of a Nation*, and Wilson's presidency."⁵

The review reflected the battle the interpretative team had incorporating the birth bed into the script. The connection emphasized was that as a "beloved Southern president" Wilson inspired the preservationists to save the home in 1928. The script framed the bed as the museum's "most endearing and enduring connection to Wilson" and was believed to have been used in the home. Temporarily the script tried to use the artifact "lovingly purchased in homage to the president" to tell "us something of these early preservationists as well." These women inherited their role from a previous generation of preservationist women and carried on their traditions. But to contextualize this so late in the tour was considered too daunting.⁶

The HHM movement and professionalization of the field was sparked by Civil War era women reformers and grew steadily after the war. Fairs and exhibitions offered women a space to craft exhibits and relic rooms that could use history to improve the public sphere. Domestic interiors, such as colonial or New England kitchens, promoted organizational skills or quality cooking and healthy meals for the working-class. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, preserving HHMs was immensely popular. New organizations included the Ladies' Hermitage Association and the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities (APVA). The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), formed by Mary Lockwood in 1890, were among the most ambitious, possessing 250 HHMs by 1941. In 1912, the year of Wilson's election, DAR opened the

⁵ Moore, "Woodrow Wilson Family Home," 192.

⁶ Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 13; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 11; Taylor, "Adult Tour 01 10 14," 18; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 23.

Orchard House Museum amid the surge of new immigration, which brought labor into the community that had strong ties to its English ancestry. The physical decay of Louisa May Alcott's "Anglo-Saxon" home represented the changes modernity wrought and its rehabilitation would help Americanize the immigrant. The smaller and exclusive Colonial Dames sometimes "clashed" with DAR over preservation. These women-led organizations tended to celebrate men as they saved properties across the nation, some not always presidential and a few rather diverse: the Alamo, the Cliff Dwellers, the House of Seven Gables in Salem, and the Frederick Douglass home in Washington D.C. preserved by the National Association of Colored Women. In the post-WWI era, when the WWFH was saved, HHMs became a "patriotic medium" and more "museum men" got involved in a slow process of professionalization. But women had always been the "traditional guardians" of shrines.⁷

These same women's clubs and war memorial organizations joined the ranks of American Legion Auxiliary in the saving and fundraising for Columbia's Wilson home. Thirteen chapters of DAR submitted resolutions and eight chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). The UDC, among a plethora of other sites, opened its mecca in 1945, Robert E. Lee's birthplace Stratford Hall. Other noteworthy women's organizations in the state that helped included the United States Daughters of 1812, the Junior League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the League of Women Voters, and the Colonial Dames. The process resembled in many respects that of DAR's Orchard House, including the unity clubwomen displayed. While these women had been divided by suffrage in 1912 making the unity vital, by the time women saved the Wilson home

⁷ West, *Domesticating History*, xi, 36, 39-48, 51, 53-54, 56, 65, 67, 93-94, 101, 124.

they still continued to grapple with the decline of the “cult of domesticity” and rise of the “new woman.”⁸

The failure to interpret the birth bed adequately demonstrates not all interpretative strategies succeed when a HHM undertakes a massive reinterpretation. Letting go of a shrine, of objects, of historical memory, and presidential perfection is not easy. In May 2015, *The Public Historian* devoted an entire issue to “Reimagining the Historic House Museum” and an “unorthodox” turn in the movement that was “excavating” new histories and producing “active, breathing spaces.” These reinventions had not permeated public history literature because administrators often place financial solvency over publishing about new tactics. Jennifer Scott, former Vice Director and Director of Research at Weeksville Heritage Center (WHC) in Brooklyn, argued the question was not whether there were too many HHMs “but rather, are they useful?” For Lisa Lopez, HHMs were more like “mausoleums . . . petrified and lifeless” in their guided presentations of daily routines, “the domiciliary equivalent of sticking a pin through an insect and calling it an exhibition.” WHC and others radicalized, choosing not to “reinforce exclusive histories of wealthy, white men and elite individuals” but “create inclusive approaches and interpretations, which challenge biased systems of power and narrow histories.”⁹

The WWFH followed paths some of the HHMs featured took and in other ways deviated. The WWFH, WHC and the home of Matilda Joslyn Gage, a more progressive and lesser known contemporary of Susan B. Anthony, were not “not object-rich” or

⁸“Full Text of Resolutions Adopted By 95 Various Organizations in South Carolina As to the Proposal That the Woodrow Wilson Home in Columbia Be Preserved” October 1928, 3–5, 10, 12–16, 18–21, Woodrow Wilson Memorial MS vol. bd., 1928, SCL, USC; “Similar Resolutions Have Been Passed by the Following Organizations since the Preceding Ones Were Made Up” 1928, 1, Woodrow Wilson Memorial 2 MSS, 1928 and 16 Jan. 1929, SCL, USC; West, *Domesticating History*, xi, 55–56, 67–68, 72, 133.

⁹ Lisa Junkin Lopez, “Introduction, Open House: Reimagining the Historic House Museum,” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 10–11; Scott, “Reimagining Freedom,” 74, 88.

vignette focused. They eschewed the “elegant period rooms” born in the early twentieth century as an attempt to connect to highbrow and large museums focusing on decorative arts and elaborate exhibits. These sites of “forgotten” history in the twenty-first century were capable of addressing “the trauma inflicted by social and political invisibility.”¹⁰ Like the WWFH, WHC told “a needed counterculture narrative” about a free black community first founded in 1838 a decade after New York eradicated slavery. Both sites commemorate the creation of schools, churches and other institutions by their respective black communities through “creativity, entrepreneurship, and self-sufficiency” in the post-emancipation era. These sites tackle continued oppression after liberation rather than focus on one of these “two extremes” that dominate the historic representation of black communities. They both juxtapose questions about freedom with “unfreedom.” WWFH weekend docent Jennifer Gunter was “fascinated with the idea of freedom.” In thinking about the concept of emancipation, she asked, “Some men in Washington D.C. say you’re free. What do you do? What’s next? . . . How do you be free? What does that entail?” Both sites share slavery as the visitors’ “default reference point,” which create patterns of assumption that free individuals were enslaved. But the WHC was able to counter the HHM model of “elite architecture” and convey the “normalcy” of freed peoples’ daily lives better than a presidential home ever could. Yet, both stressed that people built and maintained routines to their lives surrounded by “families, jobs, procuring food, leisure” that counter the traditional “aberrant” narrative of enslavement, poverty, and criminalization.¹¹ Where the WWFH only implies it, Gage informs its

¹⁰ Lopez, “Open House,” 10; Sarah Pharaon et al., “Safe Containers for Dangerous Memories,” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 62–63, 71, trauma quote from 67; Scott, “Reimagining Freedom,” 75, 77; West, *Domesticating History*, xii, 47–48, 95.

¹¹ Scott, “Reimagining Freedom,” 75, 77–78, 82; Gunter, interview.

visitors of two rules: “Check your dogma at the door” and “Think for yourself.” This is a wise warning for a site that comes out swinging with “a dialogical model” centered first on reproductive rights, which was part of a decision to use Gage’s ideas and writings about social justice rather than a traditional lens of domesticity. With dialogue as the driver of the interpretation, the “volunteer facilitators” at Gage’s home also resemble WWFH docents.¹²

Highlighting the interpretative techniques used to unpack dangerous memories in these HHMs illuminates some the WWFH’s shortcomings. Gage’s Home and the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice in Durham, North Carolina masterfully broach conversations about the LGBTQ community through innovative interpretations. The WWFH briefly linked Reconstruction’s Fourteenth Amendment to issues of citizenship related to the LGBTQ community in an exhibit film; yet, the image of a protest sign for Proposition 8 provoked backlash from a handful of visitors who refused to frame LGBTQ rights within the perimeters of this amendment or thought it unrelated to South Carolina. Conversely, Gage’s home ingeniously managed to create a dialogue about transsexuality. A single image of the parlor L. Frank Baum married Gage’s daughter in was placed in the same parlor, the only restored room in the home. Gage helped inspire the *Oz* series, which had a transgendered character. The Murray Center presents the “classic hero narrative” through Murray’s achievements as a writer, educator, lawyer, feminist, poet and the first black female Episcopal priest. Her representation as a queer woman of color “feels like a revolutionary act” and heals wounds through her philosophy that the lived experience is not defined by one social

¹² Pharaon et al., “Safe Containers,” 62–64.

construct. For example, the *Pauli Murray Project Working Zone* Venn diagram visually expresses intersectional overlap. Rather than “creating a museum” with a traditional guided tour of period rooms, the center functions more as “a safe space” for discussing Murray’s story and contemporary issues, via an intersectional historic home.¹³

7.1 THE POLITICAL ROAD TO RECONSTRUCTION IN THE HHM

HHMs engaging political and social issues as part of a new turn in the HHM movement is not new. The message is. For Patricia West, who traced the first century of HHMs, these homes were always political, shaped first by the period politics of their origin and then the “public role” they performed, such as patriotism, loyalty and good citizenship. Sometimes founders hid the politics of the house beneath a “creation myth” of “shrines” and “romantic patriotism;” but even the creation of the HHM movement itself was political because both conservative and activist women “enmeshed in the ‘cult of domesticity’” were highly visible practicing “domestic religion” as applied to the HHM in the male public sphere. This made HHMs “documents of political history.”¹⁴

The Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association (MVLA) saving Washington’s residence, which created the model for the HHM movement, demonstrated the politics of preservation. Regionalism and the threat of disunion in the antebellum period were guiding forces. Memory making has long roots in South Carolina, and it was her daughter Ann Pamela Cunningham who saved the home. The chance that capitalists from the North might convert the hallowed ground into a resort, symbolizing “a cultural and economic (if not military) assault on the South” was too much to bare. But as Northern women’s support and fundraising grew, Cunningham moved away from southern honor

¹³ Pharaon et al., “Safe Containers,” 62–64, 66–69.

¹⁴ West, *Domesticating History*, xi–xii, 1–2, 37, 43–45, 102, 159–160.

and postulated the work of women could alleviate sectional tension caused by events such as the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the caning of Charles Sumner by South Carolinian Preston Brooks. Although some Northern fundraisers demanded assurances slave labor would not be used at Mount Vernon, Edward Everett, who raised a quarter of the purchase price giving 137 speeches on “The Character of Washington,” successfully campaigned within the context of the moderation needed to avoid Civil War. Cunningham, with political and ““womanly persuasion”” wooed John Washington by playing on regional tension and blaming criticism on his high purchase price as speculators playing abolitionists. Furthermore, she ultimately convinced him a MVLA purchase rather than one by Virginia or the federal government was reputable. She and the MVLA crafted a reputation that transcended politics and procured Mount Vernon when neither state nor nation could.¹⁵

The crusade for Monticello, although fashioned as Mount Vernon 2.0, surprisingly had strong connections to Woodrow Wilson. Maude Littleton campaigned before Congress twice to rescue Monticello from the Levy family’s private ownership, which trumped patriotism and desecrated a sacred space. She secured endorsements for her testimony from then governor but soon-to-be president Woodrow Wilson, DAR, and New York governor Franklin Roosevelt. Wilson’s Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan eventually convinced his fellow Democrat Jefferson Levy that selling would commemorate and protect a fragile Democratic coalition built by Wilson. Wilson’s election in 1912 as the first southerner and Democrat since the Civil War marked the

¹⁵ Cunningham was born in 1816 in Laurens County. Kate Egner, “Ann Pamela Cunningham,” *The Digital Encyclopedia of George Washington*, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.mountvernon.org/digital-encyclopedia/article/ann-pamela-cunningham/>; West, *Domesticating History*, xi, 6-11, 13-14, 16, 18-28, 29, 37.

return of the South and powerful southern congressmen to national politics and a nationally reconciled Democratic party. Key to this process was eliminating “the last vestiges of white sympathy for Reconstruction” via the Dunning School and films such as *Birth of a Nation* (*Birth*) that when combined with southern tourism and monument building became what Karen Cox called a “Culture of Reconciliation.” Littleton’s rhetoric, like that of MVLA and APVA, was reconciliationist yet situated within the threat northern cultural encroachment posed. Thus, Monticello was but “another dimension of the post-Reconstruction effort to recover the Old South.” A group of New York lawyers and businessmen turned “museum men” formed the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation (TJMF) and purchased the home in 1923. The organization was highly visible at the 1924 Democratic Convention and divided over their support for Wilson’s son-in-law and segregationist William Gibbs McAdoo, Al Smith, and TJMF charter member John W. Davis, who received the nomination.¹⁶

Annette Gordon-Reed once asked a question about Sally Hemings’ relationship with Thomas Jefferson so profound her answer became the catalyst that spurred Monticello toward an inclusive narrative that includes Jefferson-Hemings descendants. In the wake of racially charged events in 2015 engulfing the nation, she wondered “What If Reconstruction Hadn’t Failed?” Freed people may have become landowners and gained “a status recognized since the country’s origins as a foundation for personal independence.” Black suffrage might not have been “cut off through official shenanigans and outright violence.” Black and white students might have been educated together. And “what if American historians during the aftermath of Reconstruction had not been white

¹⁶ Grantham, “Southern Historiography,” 267; West, *Domesticating History*, 99–105, 107–109, 112–113, quotes 104; Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie*, 1–2, 131–32.

supremacists?” Maybe these same students would have learned “another narrative about black people’s place in America.” Reconstruction would never have become a “tragedy” that harmed “the good and innocent white people of the South.” Furthermore, Gordon-Reed argued, D.W. Griffith would never have visually presented literary and historic Lost Cause interpretations in *Birth*, such as the State House scene of black legislators “with their bare feet up on their desks during sessions, eating chicken and watermelon while taking the occasional swig of alcohol.” Instead, the Dunning School “echoed his sentiments,” substituting “faux scholarly detachment for the director’s cinematic pyrotechnics on the race question.” This led to “disfranchisement, Jim Crow, and, for extremists, lynching.” Sadly the ripple effect of these losses reverberated in the struggles for equality today.¹⁷ What if HHMs had not been born of this same ideology? It might not have taken 150 years to present an interpretation that offered what *JAH* reviewer Cecelia Moore called a picture of Reconstruction’s “promise and opportunity” instead of the narrative of “defeat and despair” given by the victors of the political and cultural battle to destroy Reconstruction. Visitors to the WWFH see the era as “still open to possibility” and can imagine a different outcome where the Klan did not win with violence and Jim Crow never existed. This was a far “different picture” of Reconstruction than most visitors would “recall from high school history class.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Annette Gordon-Reed, “What If Reconstruction Hadn’t Failed?,” *The Atlantic*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/what-if-reconstruction-hadnt-failed/412219/>; The seminal work detailing the Hemings family relationship with Thomas Jefferson, including the offspring he produced with Sally is Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*, 1st ed (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co, 2008); Thomas Jefferson Foundation, “Plantation & Slavery,” *Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello*, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery>; Thomas Jefferson Foundation, “Landscape of Slavery: Mulberry Row at Monticello,” *Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello*, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://www.monticello.org/mulberry-row>.

¹⁸ Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 191–92.

But even if HHMs ignored Reconstruction's promise, their focus was destined to change over time. Some women would lose control over their movements to "museum men" and ambitious projects sponsored by corporations. These corporations entering the game built working villages or recreated communities such as Plymouth Plantation. Political and civil rights issues brought the federal government into the HHM preservation business. The National Park Service (NPS), formed in 1916 during Wilson's administration, grew substantially under Franklin Roosevelt's tenure. The agency pledged to find places, identified through "broad themes," that were of "national significance." Of interest was a George Washington Carver memorial to ease racial tension and draw more southern Democrats into the New Deal coalition. Carver's transition out of poverty sent a powerful message in such troubled times for the administration: A. Philip Randolph's threatened strikes, the mistreatment of black soldiers, the Double V Campaign, and louder voices from black activists groups, including those who recognized New Deal policies hurt black sharecroppers and domestic workers. A corporation seeking greater profits from black consumers purchased Booker T. Washington's birthplace in late 1945. When the opportunity arose for the NPS to acquire the site, they rejected it. Imagining a future yet unplanned site at Tuskegee, the NPS cited the birthplace's lack of "integrity," or physical remains of Washington's life. The NPS took over the birthplace in 1957 in a moderate, accommodationist nod to black history. They replaced a "nice" slave cabin with a more accurate one reflective of the poor conditions Washington remembered. Not long before, the NPS rejected Frederick

Douglass' home because his role as abolitionist was not of ““outstanding national significance.”” It would finally join the NPS in 1962.¹⁹

Beyond the NPS, Roosevelt had strong connections to HHMs and public history. He maintained a relationship with Monticello, giving its Independence Day address during the 1936 election year, seeking historical support from Jefferson's philosophy for his Supreme Court packing plan, and inquiring about absorbing the home into the NPS. The New Deal deployed unemployed architects and historians to evaluate deteriorating historic structures and editors such as Louise Jones DuBose to write state WPA guidebooks. In May 1929, FDR donated money to saving the Wilson home in Columbia, wishing “very much that I could make it more.” When formal planning began in early 1930 for a dedication ceremony, local preservationists considered asking him first ahead of Josephus Daniels to make the principal address. Roosevelt was not present for Columbia's dedication but did dedicate the restored birthplace in Staunton in May 1941 as a ““new shrine of freedom.””²⁰

Even as the NPS embraced social history and revisionism, it floundered in its efforts to commemorate Reconstruction. Only the Nicodemus, Kansas National Historical Site interpreting a freedmen's town established as Reconstruction eroded and the Andrew Johnson National Historical Site in Greeneville, Tennessee presented a partial narrative.²¹

¹⁹ West, *Domesticating History*, xii, 50, 129-130, 136-139, 143, 145, 153-157; National Park Service, “Cedar Hill: Frederick Douglass's Home in Anacostia,” *Frederick Douglass National Historic Site*, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/places.htm>.

²⁰ West, *Domesticating History*, 117, 119–20, 129; Franklin D. Roosevelt, “From Governor Roosevelt,” *The State*, May 30, 1929, American Legion Auxiliary Scrapbook, 1925-1929, Jennie Clarkson Dreher Papers, SCL, USC; “Feb 5, 1930” February 5, 1930, 1, Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home, 14 April 1930-24 April 1932, SCL, USC; Brown, *Presidential Library and Museum*, 21.

²¹ National Park Service, “Guided Tours,” *Andrew Johnson National Historic Site Tennessee*, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/anjo/planyourvisit/guidedtours.htm>; National Park Service, “History and Culture,” *Andrew Johnson National Historic Site Tennessee*, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/anjo/learn/historyculture/index.htm>; National Park Service, “Go To Kansas,”

Reconstruction historians Kate Masur and Greg Downs argued at NPS sites, “as in popular movies and novels, it proved far easier to talk about the Civil War than to grapple with what came next.”²² At the turn of the twenty-first century, Beaufort, South Carolina, the “birthplace” of Reconstruction with its Port Royal Experiment begun during the Civil War, was posed to become the first Reconstruction unit in the NPS. The initiative had widespread support from locals, historical and educational institutions, scholars, politicians, and many within the NPS. But several factors worked in tandem to allow a 2003 campaign by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) to derail Congressional and NPS efforts: the historical memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction; recurring Confederate flag debates that eventually culminated in its removal from the State House dome in 2000; and changes to interpretation at Civil War battlefields requiring slavery’s inclusion. Ultimately Representative Joe Wilson, a member of the SCV, would abandon his own bill to conduct a NPS Reconstruction theme study after a massive SCV letter writing campaign.²³

Those close to the Beaufort project did not forget about it, continuing conversations until a new opportunity arose.²⁴ The NPS initiated the “National Historic

Nicodemus National Historic Site Kansas, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nico/index.htm>; National Park Service, “The Five Historic Buildings,” *Nicodemus National Historic Site Kansas*, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.nps.gov/nico/planyourvisit/the-five-historic-buildings.htm>; *Theme Study to Identify Sites of Cold*

War; Study Sites in Beaufort, SC; McLoughlin House in Oregon City; or, Boundary of Glen Canyon Recreation Area; and San Gabriel River Watershed Resource Study: Hearings on S. 452 S. 500 S. 601 S. 621 S. 630 H.R. 519 H.R. 733 H.R. 788, Before the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,

26 (2003), statement on behalf of the American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, and the National Coalition for History, ProQuest Congressional.

²² Downs and Masur, “The Perfect Spot for a Reckoning with Reconstruction.”

²³ For complete analysis of the effort to designate Beaufort a national Reconstruction monument, see Taylor and Miller, “Reconstructing Memory.”

²⁴ For a brief synopsis of how efforts continued, see Miller and Taylor, “Postscript to ‘Reconstructing Memory.’”

Landmark Theme Study on the U.S. Reconstruction Era, 1861-1898,” a yearlong theme study announced in May 2015 to find sites across the nation connected to one of America’s most transformational moments and designate them as nationally significant landmarks. The park service intentionally expanded the timeframe typically associated with Reconstruction to consider sites that emerged during the Civil War as slaves fled to Union lines and Jim Crow laws became entrenched. Masur and Downs, who served as editors for an essay anthology on Reconstruction disseminated in NPS shops later than year, wrote the report.²⁵ Nonetheless, Beaufort’s Representative James E. Clyburn, a Democrat who had also sponsored the original effort in 2003, worried that the “long overdue” story could meet “some resistance, maybe some significant resistance.” Clyburn, who taught history to high school students, believed not that Reconstruction was “poorly understood” but that it had “been intentionally misrepresented.”²⁶ In October 2016, Masur and Down took their findings and pleaded for President Barack Obama to honor the promise he made when the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) opened to confront the “uncomfortable” parts of American history. Designating Beaufort the country’s first national monument to Reconstruction would honor that “promise.”²⁷ Using the Antiquities Act, which allows presidents to protect by proclamation “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of

²⁵ Bruce Smith, “National Park Service Surveying Reconstruction Sites,” *Associated Press State Wire: South Carolina*, May 25, 2015, sec. News, NewsBank; Smith, “Reconstruction History Long Ignored”; Quote from Schuessler, “Taking Another Look”; David Lauderdale, “It’s Been a Long March to Tell a Local Story That Helped Reconstruct America,” *Beaufort Gazette (Beaufort, SC)*, June 12, 2015, http://www.islandpacket.com/2015/06/12/3791466_its-been-a-long-march-to-tell.html?rh=1.

²⁶ Schuessler, “Taking Another Look.”

²⁷ Downs and Masur, “The Perfect Spot for a Reckoning with Reconstruction.”

historic or scientific interest,” Obama issued the executive order January 12, 2017 shortly before he left office.²⁸

Although few know Beaufort’s foundational role in Reconstruction, the other major problem, of course, is that white violence and national complicity was always center to an accurate telling of Reconstruction. Americans, especially white ones, have yet to come to terms with this. As Masur and Downs reminded readers, commemorating Reconstruction meant “remembering how frequently white Americans resorted to violence and corruption to disenfranchise black voters and passed discriminatory laws to block African American economic and social equality, while the U.S. government stood by passively.” Of all the Reconstruction sites in the South, Beaufort had the richest history, interpretation, and number of sites to tell this story before the violence ended the period of reform. The Beaufort story had everything, because it was conquered early in the war and thus began reconstructing itself before any Reconstruction plan was established. Harriet Tubman led a raid freeing enslaved people on plantations not yet under Union control. Robert Smalls bought his master’s house and became a local, state and national politician during Reconstruction and for two decades after its demise ended most black politicians’ careers. But his exploits stealing the *CSS Planter* and giving it to the Navy in 1862 is what most Americans know about him, if anything. These more well-known figures and their endeavors have even been featured on Comedy Central’s *Drunk History*, but often the lens is the Civil War more than Reconstruction. Other stories of the

²⁸ Dumain, “Just Under the Wire, Obama Establishes National Monument to Reconstruction Era in Beaufort County.”

first education systems and free black communities will only be illuminated by well-supported commemorative efforts.²⁹

JAH exhibit reviewer Cecelia Moore noted the WWFH was “ahead of the trend” in Reconstruction commemoration. It will be several years before the Beaufort monument gets off the ground.³⁰ In the meantime, the WWFH remains the first Reconstruction museum in the nation and offers a blueprint as to the challenges and rich rewards that will accompany commemorating Reconstruction in Beaufort and elsewhere. The WWFH reimagined the HHM when it converted its most important artifact, the home, into a twenty-first century museum. Panels, limited objects, and interactive exhibits disseminated modern academic scholarship about Reconstruction to audiences who, unbeknownst to them, largely thought about Reconstruction the way that academia interpreted it a century ago. That was if visitors thought about it all. As Moore pointed out the semi-guided tours by trained volunteers and paid staff was “an important feature” to keep visitors following the narrative. And in commending everyone’s work, she also correctly imagined “that there were a number of difficult conversations among curators, board members, and volunteers—some of whom must have an emotional stake in the previous, non-Reconstruction-based interpretation of the house.”³¹ Indeed, those docents who did not reject the new interpretation and conducted tours came to terms with their own exposure and indoctrination to the Lost Cause. Although mandatory language and

²⁹ Downs and Masur, “The Perfect Spot for a Reckoning with Reconstruction”; “Robert Smalls Steals the CSS Planter,” *Comedy Central Drunk History*, July 29, 2014, <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/qnx9yw/drunken-history-robert-smalls-steals-the-css-planter>; “Harriet Tubman: Superspy,” *Comedy Central Drunk History*, September 22, 2015, <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/qnx9yw/drunken-history-robert-smalls-steals-the-css-planter>.

³⁰ Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 189; Miller and Taylor, “Postscript to ‘Reconstructing Memory.’”

³¹ Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 190, quote 192.

cultural sensitivity training was well-received, this was the first exposure for many docents to concepts such as “white privilege” and coded and inclusive language. Weekend staff embraced this aspect of training while some of the older, white volunteers expressed ambivalence about or opposed it. The training also proved docents need not be professional public historians but that paid docents, often public history graduate students, and well-educated volunteers, primarily with careers in education or humanities, were best suited to convey the complex and narrative rich tour.

Lauren Safranek, who published her review in the special *Public Historian* HHM issue, believed the pantries created “one of the most memorable and poignant sections” of the tour. Even though information was lacking in this space about employees, the space produced a “textured” experience driven by the “home as an artifact” that highlighted the “larger experiences in Columbia during Reconstruction.” Her assessment reflects an interpretation produced by numerous debates between docents and staff about how best to represent the lives of domestic workers. The *Downton Abbey* effect was one manifestation of the interpretative tension between class and race. While these dialogues and the architectural richness of the space shaped the popular interpretation, the sexual exploitation of women of color was a vital topic too taboo for the WWFH. This violence was part of larger political violence and domestic terrorism experienced during Reconstruction. It was also integral to discussions and debates during the Wilsonian era, including themes in *Birth* and in the unsubstantiated reasons offered for many lynchings of the period. However docents excelled in producing a compelling narrative of domestic terrorism in the Red Shirt bedroom. They described it as the strongest space in the home and the one in which they felt their most confident because of the overwhelming evidence

in the space. Moore thought the WWFH did “an admirable job” helping visitors understand the political complexity of how conservative forces resisted federal changes and used violence to intimidate black voters.³² Some docents pushed further, using the narrative to question their own privilege as white docents discussing violence.

The tour and docents faced significant challenges in effectively discussing white supremacy, especially when associated with a well-memorialized figure, with primarily white audiences. The final bedroom was simultaneously the greatest interpretative conundrum and the most productive space for changing historical memory. Time constraints, visitor fatigue, difficulties discussing racialized violence, the complexity of concepts such as the Lost Cause, and the complicated intersection of history and media required to discuss *Birth* converged to present unique challenges and imperfect solutions. Where Moore embraced the rhetorical question of how Reconstruction “might have influenced the world view of the future president,” Safranek believed the WWFH’s greatest flaw was no “clear connection between Tommy Wilson and Reconstruction.” Given the dual narrative, its “absence” was “too big to ignore” even if “reliable documentation” was lacking. She left with questions unanswered about the Wilson family’s politics during Reconstruction and how his teenage experience shaped his politics and leadership. The case and exhibit film on the legacy of *Birth* hinted at this but left the visitor “in the dark” with “too much unsaid.”³³

But both reviewers understood the reinterpretation was daring given institutional size, available artifacts, and diverse exhibit elements. For Safranek, the exhibit presented

³² Lauren Safranek, “Historic House Museum Review: Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 122–23; Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 191.

³³ Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 190; Safranek, “Open House,” 122.

“provocative ideas” and was “trying to accomplish laudable and worthy interpretative goals.” Moore called the attempt to convey the promise, “nuance and complexity” of Reconstruction “a bold undertaking” and a “mostly successful endeavor.” But Safranek found the “dueling messages” of a dual narrative “an imperfect method.” The character of Tommy Wilson gave the home and curators “a safety net” to present “a strong and positive stance” on South Carolina’s Reconstruction history and provided “guard against the potential for visitors to reject completely” an unexpected experience. But she worried that a Wilson home and Reconstruction museum occupying one space, essentially two different museums, was a “dilemma” that could potentially “confuse and cloud visitor expectations,” especially those that came expecting a period home or extensive Wilson family history. Plus, the dual approach only worked well in the pantries. Moore disagreed. Sure, “the total effect” felt “a little like a bait and switch.” But visitors who came knowingly to a presidential site and “presumably” expected to learn about Wilson’s youth and “genteel white southern society” still received that narrative. In exchange, they also had “to consider uncomfortable information about how the nation has somewhat failed to live up to its promise.” Furthermore, the study used the dual narrative well. Not only did the space illuminate “the state of Presbyterian thought” and the role the Wilson men played but that religion “informed public debates about race and rights as well.”³⁴ Two docents appreciated that the WWFH examined a topic about which no one or no site ever talked. Having never seen Reconstruction discussed elsewhere, volunteer Cyndy Storm liked that it was done in the only house occupied by a president in South Carolina. Brazier thought it was “cool” not only because she learned a great deal but grew up

³⁴ Safranek, “Open House,” 120, 123; Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 192.

thinking “Ugh. Reconstruction.” After a good chuckle she explained, it was “just violent, and it was crappy,” a “wasteland in between” the Civil War and Gilded Age that she loved. And the problem was not just that she thought Reconstruction was “boring” growing up but that there was no real discussion around it.³⁵ Visitors agreed. Seventy-three percent of those evaluated found the revolutionary exhibit with a dual narrative excellent, with twenty-six percent responding good. The evaluations also indicated the seventy-five minute tour impacted greatly visitors’ understanding of the Reconstruction era. Twenty-six percent of respondents “gained a new appreciation of people different from themselves” while a quarter of them had their thoughts or beliefs changed.³⁶

The WWFH changed what visitors and docents knew about Reconstruction and, to some degree, themselves. This will ripple into the community as these individuals continue conversations with friends, family, and acquaintances. And national recognition of Beaufort could be the tipping point in correcting disparities between Reconstruction scholarship and public knowledge.

7.2 THE FUTURE (POLITICS) OF THE MUSEUM

Patricia West has called for “administrative history” to acknowledge the political tensions and historical context that shaped the evolution of HHMs. Professionals have both the “right” and “responsibility” to engage “new scholarship, new communities, and new agenda.” And hopefully, the context of those endeavors would be evaluated in the future.³⁷ The WWFH answered this call. Like all political HHMs, the WWFH was founded for political reasons. But the WWFH reinvented the “culture of reconciliation,”

³⁵ Storm, interview; Brazier, interview.

³⁶ Taylor, “WWFH Trends.”

³⁷ West, *Domesticating History*, 162.

using cultural tourism to change the memory of Reconstruction and narrative about the reconciliationist president, Wilson. But what of contemporary reconciliation? Do HHMs, and in particular the WWFH, facilitate or impede reconciliation? The Gage home and Pauli Center mentioned earlier are part of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a global network nearly 200 strong in over four dozen countries. Similar to the Wilson home, these two homes and fellow coalition site the Centro Cultural y Museum de la Memoria (CCMM) in Uruguay all have an “uncomfortable relationship” with their houses. Fear is an emotion welcomed there, and “dangerous memory” is employed as a “new weapon” to transform the structural artifact into “safe containers” for community discussion and navigating social issues and rights. The country house of late nineteenth century dictator Máximo Santos claims to be a “memory museum, not a history museum.” A space of political power, in this case a dictator’s home rather than a president’s teenage home, is used to process the modern struggle for democracy and the legacy of authoritarianism in Uruguay. Although the WWFH keeps Wilson in view, the CCMM substitutes a 1973-1984 dictatorship for Santos’ reign. Like the WWFH, the CCMM devotes a room to the memory of state terrorism. Less structured than the semi-guided Wilson tour, CCMM visitors can begin their tour in any room.³⁸ Masur and Downs argued the Beaufort designation would show the “world how important it is that we continue talking about the fundamental questions of democracy, race and citizenship that trouble our politics to this day.”³⁹ The future of the WWFH’s reinterpretation is bound by these same contemporary political and social issues as well. Currently, it is slowly revising the memory of Reconstruction for its docents and audience, giving them a

³⁸ Pharaon et al., “Safe Containers,” 61–62, 68–71.

³⁹ Downs and Masur, “The Perfect Spot for a Reckoning with Reconstruction.”

new historical perspective on America's promise and shortcomings. All South Carolinians and Americans would benefit from this exchange.

The WWFH's uphill battle to overturn the Lost Cause and how South Carolina continues to be impacted negatively by the interpretation may best be understood in the context of the revived Confederate flag debate and commemoration on the State House grounds. When the WWFH opened its door on President's Day 2014, the Confederate flag still flew unapologetically eight blocks away on the capitol grounds that the Lost Cause made. Six stars decorate the west wall of the State House marking General William T. Sherman's shelling of the city, just one of several ways in which Sherman is vilified on the grounds. Redeemer Governor Wade Hampton III rides triumphantly upon his mighty steed. The statue of Governor and Senator Benjamin "Pitchfork" Tillman, who boasted about enjoying lynchings, overlooks the front grounds. A teenage supporter of the Red Shirts, he used the memory of Hampton and the 1876 election to gain support for the 1895 state constitution that replaced the 1868 Reconstruction era one and governs the state today. Cotton Ed Smith strategically employed Reconstruction rhetoric in his anti-New Deal, white supremacy politicking the 1930s, although he has no statue. But Strom Thurmond, who evoked Reconstruction as a Dixiecrat in 1948 in his condemnation of the federal government's growing support for civil rights, does. As a WWFH exhibit film showed visitors, Red Shirt reunions that sometimes paraded in front of the capitol were vital in disseminating ideology to a new generation. South Carolina continued to drown under the weight of Lost Cause memory.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 26–27, 54–64, 96–102, 139.

Then on a night in June 2015, a young white supremacist prayed with members of Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church before opening fire and killing nine of them. His actions resulted in removing the Confederate flag from the capitol grounds after decades of debate. On June 22nd, less than week after the shooting, Governor Nikki Haley called for the Confederate flag to be removed.⁴¹ Living just outside of Columbia, Dylann Roof certainly saw the flag regularly. Pictures circulated of him with the symbol. He was exposed to the Ku Klux Klan, which lives on in South Carolina although membership numbers are down drastically according to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Even before the revived flag controversy, Klansmen dropped candy and literature in neighborhoods, intimidating families of color and shaming their white neighbors. In summer of 2014, a newly invented Klan branch, the New Empire Knights, held a three day rally at its headquarters in Abbeville. The KKK Jam included speeches, the "Sunday Sermon," live music, and a "Sunday Night Cross Lighting," symbolizing Jesus as the light of the world. After Roof's attack, the Loyal White Knights led pro-flag protests on the State House grounds and a lone Klansman rode his Confederate flag clad bicycle through two Upstate towns in protest. According to the SPLC, people drawn to these groups tend to have less education, live in poverty, feel marginalized and experience the effects of demographic changes. Had Roof explored the New Empire's website as he perused white supremacy on the internet the primary message would have been exposing "the truth about Jews." A visit to the Loyal White Knights' webpage would have indoctrinated him in the dangers of illegal immigration.

⁴¹ "Gov. Nikki Haley Calls for Removal of Confederate Flag from State House Grounds," *WIS-TV*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.wistv.com/story/29377947/gov-nikki-haley-calls-for-removal-of-confederate-flag-from-state-house-grounds>.

Candy, music, and bicycles, while harmless on the surface, created a real fear because of the Klan's history of terror. Abbeville's black residents carried with them a century old memory of the brutal lynching of a wealthy black landowner who disputed cottonseed prices the year Wilson was reelected. A rumor in the black community that the Klan soon planned to march through the town's square escalated tensions. A local youth pastor revealed the Jam inspired questions from scared children about Klan masks and he hoped the kids would escape seeing the costumed men.⁴²

A Confederate flag erected to commemorate the Civil War's centennial and protest desegregation in the early 1960s was just part of America's long history of social and institutional racism that made Roof who he was. The momentum building in a nationwide #BlackLivesMatter campaign spoke to this history as well. On the state level, wounds were fresh from the death of Walter Scott, an unarmed traffic violation suspect shot in the back by Charleston police officer Michael Slager. The campaign collided with an act of domestic terrorism at a church active in black freedom struggles across three centuries. Among the slain was Reverend and State House legislator Clementa Pinckney, who fought for police body cameras and against voter ID laws. Ferguson, Baltimore, and Charleston, these sites of racial conflict share similar histories but only South Carolina experienced federally-mandated Reconstruction unlike the border-slave states of Missouri and Maryland. None were ever reconstructed.⁴³

⁴² Field, "Group Announces KKK Rally"; Johnson, "Ku Klux Klan Recruitment"; Harrison Cahill, "Tillman Statue Vandalized, Security Increased on SC State House Grounds," *State*, June 30, 2015, sec. Local, <http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article25832158.html>; "KKK Drops Recruitment Candy."

⁴³ Megan Garber, "The Difference Between Ferguson and #Ferguson," *The Atlantic*, August 12, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/08/the-difference-between-ferguson-and-ferguson/375955/>; Robert Greene II, "Racism Can't Destroy This Charleston Church," *Politico Magazine*, June 19, 2015, <http://politi.co/1N9AGPq>; Michael S. Schmidt and Matt Apuzzo, "South Carolina Officer Is Charged with Murder of Walter Scott," *New York Times*, sec. U.S., accessed March 9, 2017,

Exhibit reviewers to various degrees understood the contemporary social issues the WWFH's reinterpretation addressed. While Safranek hinted at the political implications and climate the WWFH operated in, Moore was more sympathetic to the undertaking. Moore saw both the short and long game the WWFH was playing. She submitted her review before the Charleston shootings yet situated her review as America approached the precipice of that historical moment. The events in Ferguson had yet to play out fully but they were national news. Using Wilson's words, she remarked that Reconstruction remained "a 'banked fire' in Columbia," as evidenced by the Confederate flag flying "on the capitol grounds." LA Clippers owner Donald Sterling was caught saying despicable things about black people, and the controversy surrounding renaming the Washington Redskins hinted at what was to come at Yale and Princeton. Yes, Moore argued, "There are good reasons to see these public conversations as depressing signs of Americans' inability to live together, however, historians cannot help but be encouraged by public willingness to have the conversation at all." Social tension combined with the growing popularity of films placing race front and center suggested to her that the public was prepared to learn how central race was to American history and contextualize contemporary problems within that past. Public historians were in unique positions to offer this lesson. The WWFH provided such as space, which could also show historians how dialogues about Reconstruction operate in public settings.⁴⁴

The WWFH can treat the scars of these events by serving as a resource for learning about the first civil rights movement and contemplating the first expressions of

https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/us/south-carolina-officer-is-charged-with-murder-in-black-mans-death.html?_r=0.

⁴⁴ Moore, "Woodrow Wilson Family Home," 189, 193.

African American political, economic and social independence following emancipation. Watching black successes in politics, business and the legal system and then bearing witness to these rights being stripped away in blood and with terror makes the path from white supremacy during Reconstruction to its current state in the twenty-first century clearer and more familiar. The devastation unleashed by Roof transforms from a shocking, isolated incident to an attack more normal than absurd. The violence serves as a reminder that Reconstruction remains unfinished.

The domestic terror attack in Charleston fueled a conversation about systemic white supremacy nationwide. At Yale this manifested itself in the decades old controversy over John C. Calhoun's affiliation with the university. At Princeton, Woodrow Wilson was targeted. A twenty-first century white-supremacist threatened to dethrone the commemorative giants of Calhoun and Wilson, but only one of these campaigns succeeded.

A group of Yale law students drafted a petition reflecting on how “deeply upsetting” it was that it took a “tragedy” to ignite a national movement to remove symbols of white supremacy from spaces belonging to the people. Created on June 29, 2015, the petition demanded Calhoun College, one the twelve residential colleges at Yale, be renamed over eight decades after honoring the 1804 graduate. By fall, over 1,500 students, faculty and alumni signed the petition circulating via email and social media. It was but one “symbolic measure” in gaining institutional respect for minority perspectives but addressed a space named for a U.S. Vice-President who called slavery “a positive good” and where students formed identities that were designed to last the alumni's lifetime. In the 1990s, student Chris Rabb convinced the university to change

Calhoun College's stained glass window of a shackled slave kneeling before the namesake. But some students thought the current movement avoided deeper systemic issues, such as Yale's lack of diverse faculty and the "alienation" felt by minority students. Thus, activists also requested an increase in faculty diversity, including tenured professors, more funds for ethnic and racial cultural centers, abolishing the title of master for residential college heads, and naming the two new residential colleges after minorities.⁴⁵

Yale attempted compromise. President Peter Salovey's annual freshman address that fall was devoted to the debate. In November, Yale publically committed fifty million dollars to a faculty-diversity initiative. But in April 2016, Salovey announced the Calhoun name would remain and only one of the two new residential colleges would be named for a minority, Pauli Murray. Murray, the first person of color or woman to be honored by Yale, was an alumnus of the Law School. Residential colleges also dropped the use of master. Student activist groups welcomed Murray's addition and discarding the master title but expressed concern their demands were not fully met. Students had even suggested options for naming residential colleges: the first Native American graduate Henry Roe Cloud or Roosevelt Thompson, a black graduate and public servant. Crystal

⁴⁵ Tanaz Ahmed, "After Charleston Shooting, Yale Students Petition to Rename Calhoun College," *USA Today College*, July 9, 2015, <http://college.usatoday.com/2015/07/09/after-charleston-shooting-yale-students-petition-to-rename-calhoun-college/>; Noah Remnick, "Yale Defies Calls to Rename Calhoun College," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2016, sec. N.Y./Region, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/nyregion/yale-defies-calls-to-rename-calhoun-college.html>; Monica Wang and Susan Svruga, "Yale Renames Calhoun College Because of Historical Ties to White Supremacy and Slavery," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/02/11/yale-renames-calhoun-college-because-of-historic-ties-to-white-supremacy-and-slavery/>; Zainab Hamid, Rachel Treisman, and David Yaffe-Bellany, "Calhoun College to Be Renamed for Grace Hopper Grd '34," *Yale Daily News*, February 11, 2017, <http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2017/02/11/calhoun-college-renamed/>; Ray Hardman, "Yale's Calhoun College: History Lesson or Institutional Racism?," *WNPR News*, June 23, 2015, <http://wnpr.org/post/yales-calhoun-college-history-lesson-or-institutional-racism#stream/0>.

Feimster, professor of African-American studies and author of *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, was ““deeply disappointed”” in the compromise but like students and Durham’s Murray Center recognized the tremendous importance of honoring Murray.⁴⁶

However, Yale could not stop the momentum of the movement. Just as the massacre in Charleston finally removed the flag from the grounds of the State House in Columbia, Yale finally acquiesced. The shift came with one of the features of the compromise. In August, Salovey formed the Committee to Establish Principles on Renaming to establish guidelines for future debates and as a response to faculty backlash. Two of the four majority principles related to the namesake’s primary legacy: if it conflicted with Yale’s mission and was disputed by his or her contemporaries. The other two principles considered the original reason the namesake was honored and the role of the building in the campus community. In December, the faculty-led task force applied the new principles to Calhoun and in January unanimously supported renaming. Calhoun’s legacy as a white supremacist and advocate of slavery only “hardened” over his life and he “distinguished himself not *in spite of* these views but *because of* them.”⁴⁷ In February 2017, Yale reversed its position, renaming Calhoun College in honor of 1934 alumna Grace Hopper, a United States Navy Rear Admiral, visionary computer scientist who invented the first compiler for a computer programming language, and winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Calhoun College 2017 graduates would be the last, but

⁴⁶ Benjamin Franklin, an honorary degree holder, was a hero to an alumna that made the largest donation in Yale’s history. The \$250 million was for the construction of new buildings. Remnick, “Yale Defies Calls”; Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College”; Hamid, Treisman, and Yaffe-Bellany, “Calhoun College to Be Renamed.”

⁴⁷ Hamid, Treisman, and Yaffe-Bellany, “Calhoun College to Be Renamed”; Quote from Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College.”

even they could choose to adopt Hopper as could alumni. Other than the Calhoun family crest, Calhoun representations such as engravings within the residential college and a sculpture would remain, but even those would be contextualized by Yale's art and history scholars and a public art committee. Hopper was perhaps the best choice as she likely appreciated the change. She once said, "the only phrase I've ever disliked is, 'Why, we've always done it that way.'" She would "tell young people, go ahead and do it. You can always apologize later."⁴⁸

As Yale scrambled to find a solution to the Calhoun problem, Wilson's name came under attack at Princeton. In November 2015, student protesters at Princeton took over President Christopher Eisgruber's office. They wanted Wilson's name removed from significant buildings as part of a larger effort "to improve the racial climate on campus." The next month the Black Justice League denounced Princeton's role in ignoring Wilson's white supremacy and demanded a plaque or webpage addressing it. Some saw it as a "spit in the face" of the very students he would have barred yet were expected to socialize in Wilson College. The campus' first residential hall, its name was based on student recommendations in the 1950s and '60s. Editors at the *New York Times* agreed with the students' call.⁴⁹

Eisgruber admitted he and the university were guilty as charged. He specifically cited his 2014 commencement speech and learning from the debate that his evoking of "Tommy" was "not sufficiently sensitive to what his racism would have meant to some

⁴⁸ Wang and Svrluga, "Yale Renames Calhoun College"; Hamid, Treisman, and Yaffe-Bellany, "Calhoun College to Be Renamed."

⁴⁹ Nick Anderson, "Princeton Will Keep Woodrow Wilson's Name on Buildings, But Also Expand Diversity Efforts," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/04/04/princeton-will-keep-woodrow-wilsons-name-on-buildings-but-it-will-take-steps-to-expand-diversity-and-inclusion/>.

of the students and families in my audience.”⁵⁰ In the speech, Eisgruber told the graduates that they probably were a lot like Tommy Wilson, class of 1879, who faced a hard transition into the real world. Like quite a few Millennials, he went home to live with his parents and changed his name to Woodrow. He “failed miserably” in his first career as a lawyer. Joseph Wilson told his sickly son who had been diagnosed with “liver torpor” to get over his “mental liver” and “choose a path and commit to it.”⁵¹ Eisgruber joked that he saw “several fathers in the audience nodding their approval!” and then warned parents “to brace themselves.” Tommy ignored his “Dad’s advice,” got a doctorate, and went on to be a successful historian. Eisgruber pointed out Princeton alum and University Trustee A. Scott Berg, who was in attendance, and his deeming Wilson “the most influential figure of the 20th century.” Then the president dismissed Wilson’s white supremacy with two sentences: “Others have emphasized that Wilson’s character and policies had serious flaws. His legacy is both compromised and controversial.” But the point was students too should embrace “the surprising twists and turns” after graduation just as Tommy did.⁵¹

At first Princeton’s response mirrored Yale’s. In April 2016, Princeton’s board of trustees voted to keep Wilson’s name on its buildings and program. A new exhibit at Wilson’s School of Public and International Affairs, named for him in 1935, attempted to correct some of these omissions. Brent Henry, a trustee and black alumnus of Wilson College and the Wilson School, chaired the committee making the decision. The decision was not unanimous, but with regards to internationalism, Wilson was “a transformative

⁵⁰ Anderson, “Princeton Will Keep Woodrow.”

⁵¹ Christopher L. Eisgruber, “2014 President’s Commencement Address: ‘Life’s Journey and the Value of Learning’” (Princeton University, June 3, 2014), <http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S40/17/17S94/index.xml>.

and visionary figure” and had pushed for the residential college system partially named for him. This did not dismiss his ideology and actions that no longer met Princeton’s current values about equality and inclusivity. Most disconcerting were his actions as president, first of Princeton and barring black students from entry and second of the United States and resegregating federal offices. Princeton promised changes such as admitting more minorities into doctoral programs and contextualizing Wilson’s representations on campus.⁵²

Students, alumni, faculty, and the rest of the nation took sides in a debate about whether representations, monuments and other commemoration efforts honoring important figures who were white supremacists should be used to promote conversations or be removed. More than a Confederate flag debate, there were calls to rename Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis. Calhoun’s statue in Charleston was tagged in red spray paint with the word racist. Just days after activist Bree Newsome scaled the State House flag pole in Columbia and removed the Confederate flag, white supremacist Governor and Senator Benjamin Tillman’s statue on the grounds was the target of red paint filled balloons. Nationally, colleges made gestures to eliminate vestiges of white supremacy on their campuses. Harvard Law School removed a slave owning family’s crest and the University of North Carolina rechristened a hall honoring a Ku Klux Klan leader.⁵³

Generating conversation was a common reason cited as to why Yale kept Calhoun College despite decades of smaller protests. President Salovey welcomed these “tough

⁵² Eisgruber, “2014 President’s Commencement Address”; Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College”; Quotes from Anderson, “Princeton Will Keep Woodrow.”

⁵³ Cahill, “Tillman Statue Vandalized, Security Increased on SC State House Grounds”; Hardman, “Yale’s Calhoun College: History Lesson or Institutional Racism?”; Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College.”

conversations” but not by “hiding our past.”⁵⁴ Removing the name might generate complacency and inspire self-congratulatory accolades but keeping the name obligated Yale and the nation to deal with its “most disturbing” sins. Princeton’s Brent Henry agreed. Using Wilson’s name to make people ““aware of his flaws” trumped his racist shortcomings. Certainly some Yale alumni went ““berserk”” about upsetting tradition, but others expressed similar logic to administrators. A black male sophomore concurred that Wilson’s ““imperfect racial views”” did not warrant removal but rather looking at him ““in a constructive way.”” A budding historian favored ““taking a rigorous and intellectual”” approach to assessing Calhoun’s legacy and Yale’s past rather than ““scrubbing the name and caving into current political pressure.””⁵⁵ The family of Chris Rabb, who got the stained glass modified in the 1990s, disagreed with his actions because the glass was a reminder of institutional racism, which future black students at Yale needed to know. Even after Yale’s reversal, Salovey equated renaming with historical erasure. He opposed it in general but Calhoun’s case was exceptional. Political scientist Khalilah Brown-Dean raised doubts that Calhoun’s name facilitated conversation though it definitely wounded people.⁵⁶

For one historian and Yale administrator the events were both a reconciliation for Yale and himself. Jonathan Holloway, the Edmund S. Morgan Professor of African American Studies, became Yale’s first black dean of students in 2014. He obtained the position after serving almost a decade as master of Calhoun College, several of those

⁵⁴ Ahmed, “After Charleston Shooting, Yale Students Petition to Rename Calhoun College”; The quotes are from President Salovey but the language of conversation was used by other administrators. Remnick, “Yale Defies Calls.”

⁵⁵ Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College”; Anderson, “Princeton Will Keep Woodrow.”

⁵⁶ Hamid, Treisman, and Yaffe-Bellany, “Calhoun College to Be Renamed”; Hardman, “Yale’s Calhoun College: History Lesson or Institutional Racism?”

years as Chair of the Council of Masters. He also served on the renaming task force. It was ““a moment of reckoning,”” an attempt to ““reconcile”” Yale’s past and present. At one point, he hoped Calhoun College would remain ““an open sore”” for the reasons Salovey listed: conversation and accountability. But he described being rattled by Charleston and events building for over a year. As a historian he worried about ““our national propensity to forget ugliness.”” But as a citizen, he continued to witness time and time again ““an inability to imagine that African Americans have a humanity.”” So when the changes were announced, he had conflicting emotions of nostalgia and being thrilled at progress. His ties to Calhoun College had given him this nostalgia, the very thing it was designed to do, but he never affiliated his beloved community with the man Calhoun he detested. Both Holloway and a history graduate student understood that future generations would subject this generation to the same scrutiny, perhaps questioning the renaming just as the 1930s decision to name a residential college after Calhoun was being judged. Max Walden was ““taking the long view.”” As a student of history, he wondered if the new Schwarzman Center named after a billionaire alumnus would be condemned in a century for Stephen Schwarzman’s legacy of ““grotesque wealth and contributions to economic inequality.””⁵⁷

The incidents at Yale and Princeton illustrate that South Carolina’s white supremacist past and present are connected to the nation’s. I was at Yale for a week in July of 2015 as part of its Public History Institute hosted by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition and the Smithsonian’s NMAAHC.

⁵⁷ Department of History, “Jonathan Holloway,” *History.yale.edu*, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://history.yale.edu/people/jonathan-holloway>; Remnick, “Yale Defies Calls”; Hamid, Treisman, and Yaffe-Bellany, “Calhoun College to Be Renamed”; Wang and Svrluga, “Yale Renames Calhoun College”; Hardman, “Yale’s Calhoun College: History Lesson or Institutional Racism?”

My research and experience with the WWFH had brought me to this space just over a week after the Confederate flag was removed from the grounds of my capitol and as the Calhoun controversy brewed quietly on campus. Numerous conversations that week centered on the flag and Mother Emmanuel. David Blight, whose book *Race and Reunion* provides invaluable insight into what Wilson's election meant for white American unity, had recently penned a tribute to Rev. Pinckney within the context of Civil War memory. Just two months prior, in addition to sharing speaking duties, the two had stood next to each other singing "America the Beautiful" at a Charleston event commemorating the end of the Civil War. But then the politician was "murdered by the handgun of a young assassin who would slaughter the forger, the voice of reconciliation, an assassin consumed not only by hatred and neo-Confederate white supremacy, but by a broader politics that suppresses the right to vote, foments racism on talk radio, the internet and television, a politics that kills."⁵⁸ The nation's white supremacist past was eating South Carolina and America alive in the present, the controversy at Yale just one manifestation. As we passed Calhoun College, Blight posed a question related to what it meant in 2015 to have a residential college at Yale bearing Calhoun's name. I had no idea at the time the petition had circulated just weeks earlier. Looking back, I cannot remember if this conversation or Dean Holloway's riveting lecture on black freedom from revolution to present came first. Both still sit with me, like an unfinished puzzle with its outside edges connected and forming a frame around partially completed sections that were coming into view. Holloway juxtaposed two images: one, of "Soiling Old Glory," a jarring Pulitzer Prize winning photograph from the 1976 Boston busing protest where a restrained black

⁵⁸ David W. Blight, "Clementa Pinckney, a Martyr of Reconciliation," *The Atlantic*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/pinckney-charleston-civil-war-150-years/396455/>.

man misleadingly looks to be seconds away from being impaled by an American flag; the other, of Bree Newsome, with a celebratory smile, holding both a pole and a detached Confederate flag. There she was clutching the Lost Cause's greatest symbol and demanding her freedom and citizenship in the wake of the Charleston massacre, the same act of terror that ignited a year and half long effort to replace a white supremacist's name on a residential college. One wonders had Calhoun been Yale's president if the campaign would have succeeded.

It took over a century to build and entrench a white supremacist memory of Reconstruction. And even as historians began to chip away at the narrative, the memory continued to endure in textbooks, monuments, historic sites, and popular culture, especially film. Filmmakers continue to engage with *Birth* and not just DJ Spooky and his *Rebirth of a Nation* featured in the WWFH exhibit. So pervasive is the film that Robert Zemeckis, "simulating Griffith's simulations," gave Tom Hanks a Nathan Bedford Forest "cameo" in the reproduction of *Birth* that begins *Forest Gump*. Like Zemeckis' film, the WWFH puts film and American history, as well as fiction and nonfiction, together. Yet while Zemeckis advanced a good white man narrative, the WWFH complicated it.⁵⁹ Quentin Tarantino confessed to Henry Louis Gates, Jr. his obsession with and desire to "deconstruct" *Birth*. Both scholar and director found Thomas Dixon's influence, via his original work *The Clansman*, to be "evil." Tarantino likened it only to "*Mein Kampf* when it comes to its ugly imagery." The director blamed *Birth* not just for rebirthing the Klan but for "all the blood that was spilled" until the early 1960s. He argued that if Dixon and Griffith were "held by Nuremberg Laws, they would be

⁵⁹ Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 191–92.

guilty of war crimes” for their creation. Tarantino penned an unfinished piece about “the thought process that would go into making” *Birth*. There was a big difference between “the grandson of a bloody Confederate officer” or “some racist Southern old-timer bemoaning how life has changed” popping off lies while rocking on his front porch and making *Birth* “every day for a year, and financing it yourself.”⁶⁰ Nate Parker attempted to reset *Birth* by giving his film about Nat Turner’s rebellion the same name. The film underperformed after Parker’s acquittal for rape during college recirculated in the press. He had also put an ahistorical rape scene of Turner’s wife in the film. So it seemed once again the black rapist and the sexual exploitation of black women took center stage in a contemporary controversy but with a twenty-first century twist.⁶¹ Reconstruction era films in Hollywood are unicorns, but the 2016 summer blockbuster season brought *Free State of Jones*. While panned by some for its reliance on the “white savior,” the director Gary Ross consulted historical monographs and historians, including Victoria Bynam, David Blight and Eric Foner. Ross even footnoted the film.⁶² But it would be nice to see a Reconstruction film not told through a white, male lens.

⁶⁰ Glenda R. Carpio, “‘I Like the Way You Die, Boy’: Fantasy’s Role in *Django Unchained*,” *Transition* 112, no. 1 (2013): 1; Henry Louis Gates Jr., “‘An Unfathomable Place’: A Conversation with Quentin Tarantino about *Django Unchained* (2012),” *Transition* 112, no. 1 (2013): 51–53.

⁶¹ Brooks Barnes and Cara Buckley, “‘The Birth of a Nation,’ Nate Parker’s Heralded Film, Is Now Cloaked in Controversy,” *New York Times*, August 17, 2016, sec. Movies, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/18/movies/the-birth-of-a-nation-nate-parkers-heralded-film-is-now-cloaked-in-controversy.html?_r=0; Leslie Alexander, “‘The Birth of a Nation’ Is an Epic Fail,” *The Nation*, October 6, 2016, <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-birth-of-a-nation-is-an-epic-fail/>.

⁶² Vann R. Newkirk II, “The Faux-Enlightened Free State of Jones,” *The Atlantic*, June 28, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/06/the-faux-woke-state-of-jones/489071/>; A. O. Scott, “Review: Matthew McConaughey Rebels Against Rebels in ‘Free State of Jones,’” *The New York Times*, June 23, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/24/movies/free-state-of-jones-review-matthew-mcconaughey.html>; Jennifer Schuessler, “A Confederate Dissident, in a Film With Footnotes - The New York Times,” June 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/16/movies/free-state-of-jones-a-film-with-footnotes.html?smid=fb-share>; Taylor and Miller, “Reconstructing Memory,” 58.

The same memory inspired *Birth's* depiction of Reconstruction in South Carolina, saved the WWFH home, inspired the State House monuments honoring white supremacists Wade Hampton III and Ben Tillman, and kept the Confederate flag flying over fifty years, first on the capitol dome and for a decade and half next to a Confederate soldier memorial on the grounds. It motivated the gunman in Charleston. It killed a Reconstruction monument. As Woodrow Wilson wrote in his 1901 essay on Reconstruction: "It is a wonder that historians who take their business seriously can sleep at night."⁶³ The tragedies that emerged in Charleston and the debate that raged on the State House grounds and the campuses of Princeton and Yale suggest the WWFH can do more. It can facilitate the hard conversations about white supremacy and the myths that shape the modern era. It can guide the dialogues about white supremacist symbols and important historical figures and presidents with inexcusable flaws and what place they should have in public spaces that define what it means to be an American, southern or otherwise.

The WWFH is a start in shattering the Lost Cause memory of Reconstruction once and for all and mainstreaming positive images of Reconstruction that have circulated since its destruction. One of the most visible presentations of a black counter-memory of Reconstruction was the Southern Negro Youth Congress' (SNYC) major convention in Columbia October 18-20, 1946. Reconstruction permeated much of the meeting. Over 1000 delegates filled Township Auditorium, the building that almost resulted in the demolition of the WWFH and ultimately led to its preservation. On the auditorium's walls hung photographs of black Reconstruction era politicians. Hopefully,

⁶³ Wilson, "Reconstruction of the Southern States," 369.

one of those images was included in the WWFH exhibit. A biracial crowd of 700 listened to Reconstruction scholar W.E.B. DuBois give his speech “Behold the Land” at Benedict, one of Columbia’s Reconstruction era historical black colleges and universities. The South was not just the front lines of the battle to obtain freedom for black Americans but for people of color across the globe. The speech looked backward to Reconstruction at the moment a modern Civil Rights Movement was gaining greater traction but also looked to a future that still may not fulfill America’s democratic promise. Historian Patricia Sullivan said DuBois’ speech praised the power of young people, which she saw reflected in #BlackLivesMatter. The convention was largely forgotten until the University of South Carolina’s History Center, as part of their loftier goal to present public programming on Reconstruction’s legacy, and the Center for Civil Rights History and Research organized a seventieth anniversary event. In the same chapel DuBois spoke in, his Pulitzer Prize winning biographer David Levering Lewis delivered “Our Exceptionalist Quagmire: Is There a Way Forward,” a speech reflecting on “Behold the Land” in light of contemporary racial and political issues.⁶⁴ Commemorative events for the next decade, such as those shaped by a new national monument in Beaufort or those celebrating counter-memories of Reconstruction, will build on this momentum. South Carolina as the “crucible” of Reconstruction used oral traditions and commemoration to shape its memory, although white supremacists were far more successful in mainstreaming their version.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 136–38; Peggy Binette, “Pulitzer Prize Winner to Commemorate W.E.B. Du Bois’ Historic SC Address,” *University of South Carolina*, October 13, 2016, http://www.sc.edu/uofsc/announcements/posts/2016/10/david_levering_lewis_70th_anniversary_web_dubois.php; Graham Duncan, “Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Southern Negro Youth Congress in Columbia,” *Auntie Bellum Magazine*, October 19, 2016, <http://auntiebellum.org/mag/celebrating-the-70th-anniversary-of-the-southern-negro-youth-congress-in-columbia/>.

⁶⁵ Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 10.

The battle for a new memory of Reconstruction must be waged in the public sphere for this is where the Lost Cause was so successfully crafted and maintained. Public historians and their peers in academia may have to accept it could take another century to dismantle well over a century of indoctrination that our professional ancestors created. But the work must be done. WWFH reviewer Cecelia Moore suspected Wilson the historian “would have been fascinated by how Reconstruction . . . continues to dictate how Americans think about individual rights, citizenship, and nationhood.” In his Reconstruction essay, Woodrow Wilson asked “How deep did the revolution go?”⁶⁶ Now that would make for a great engagement question on the WWFH tour.

⁶⁶ Wilson, “Reconstruction of the Southern States,” 388; Moore, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home,” 139.

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APPENDIX A – HISTORIC COLUMBIA POST-TRAINING
SESSION SURVEY



Today's date: _____

What was the topic of today's training? _____

1. How informative was the training you just completed?

- Very informative
- Somewhat informative
- Not informative at all

2. What percent of the information that was provided in today's training would you say you *already knew*?

- 0%
- 25%
- 50%
- 100%

3. How knowledgeable were today's trainers?

- Very knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Not very knowledgeable

4. How interesting was today's training?

- Extremely interesting
- Somewhat interesting
- Not interesting at all

5. Overall, how satisfied would you say you were with today's training?

- Very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not satisfied at all

What suggestions do you have for improving this training in the future?¹

¹ Historic Columbia administered these evaluations following each session. The organization modified some individual session evaluations to include questions on the reverse side about content. For example, the Reconstruction lecture had questions on key points about Reconstruction. Similar questions were included for Tommy Woodrow Wilson's teenage years. Docents could write responses to gauge how many key themes or ideas from the content they retained.

APPENDIX B – HISTORIC COLUMBIA REVISED DOCENT
EVALUATION MARCH 2014

Tour Review

Guide: _____ Date: _____

House: _____

Signed _____ *Date* _____
guide

Signed _____ *Date* _____
supervisor

I. Presentation of Content: How did the guide perform in the following areas relating to presentation of content?

1. Clear communication of the storyline and themes of the tour

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

2. Selection of appropriate evidence to illustrate the themes

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

3. Presenting information concisely; utilizing the allotted time effectively

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

4. Answering content-specific and factual questions accurately (for example, about the building and the people associated with it, the architecture, the furnishings, and the landscape)

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

II. Audience Engagement: How effectively did the guide engage visitors during this tour?

5. Holding the interest of the group

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support
6. Accurately “reading” the audience and adapting the tour accordingly

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

7. When appropriate, gave visitors time to experience the site on their own

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

8. Encouraging questions and taking time to answer them

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

9. Effectively uses different levels of questions to engage visitors

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

III. Procedures: How did the guide perform in the following areas relating to procedures?

10. Managing the group’s movements and behavior appropriately

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

11. Reminding visitors not to touch walls or objects in the building

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support Not Observed

12. Taking adequate and appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the collection

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

13. Exhibiting flexibility and showing good judgment in dealing with unexpected situations

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support Not Observed

14. Effectiveness at communicating and supporting site policies and procedures (photography, touching, group size, etc.)

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

15. Informing visitors about the benefits of membership, encouraging them to join, and telling them about other program opportunities at the site

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

16. If appropriate, asking visitors to complete evaluation of tour.

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

IV: Personal Characteristics: How did the guide perform in the following areas relating to personal characteristics?

17. Did the guide introduce himself/herself?

Yes No

18. Being welcoming and helpful to the visitors

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

19. Pleasant and effective speech

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

20. Neat grooming appropriate for working as an interpreter of a historic site

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

21. Performing his/her job in a conscientious and professional manner

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

22. Friendliness of body language

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

23. Speaking and acting in the best interests of the site

Excellent Good Fair Needs Support

V. General

24. Date of most recent previous tour review: _____

25. Supervisor from previous tour: _____

26. Rate the guide's progress since his/her last tour review

Excellent

Good

Fair

Needs Support

27. In what areas is more support needed? (check all that apply)

- Content
- Engagement
- Procedures
- Personal Characteristics

Please describe

28. What specific actions will take place to address the support this guide's needs? By when? Please describe.¹

¹ All twenty-eight points of assessment were part of the original docent evaluation produced in January 2014. The room assessments included in the next five pages comprised the new additions to the March docent evaluation. There were twenty-nine assessments in the original. The new addition of room breakdowns allowed point twenty-seven to be cut: "What are the guide's strengths?"

Entrance Hall: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Introduced family

Preservation addressed either on walk over, porch or hall

Semi-guided explanation

Formal Parlor: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Demonstrated 1872 Map effectively

Defined Reconstruction either in Hall or Parlor

Study/Religion: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Pantries: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Dining Room: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Demonstrated Family Tree effectively

Citizenship: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Tommy Room: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Politics: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Education: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Red Shirt/1876: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Memory: Transition Statement Room Statement Engagement Question

Contextualized film effectively

Solicited evaluations

Tour Wrap Up:

APPENDIX C – WWFH DOCENT SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS

In October 2013 in preparation for the reopening of the WWFH, Historic Columbia hired me as WWFH Lead Facilitator. This contract position grew out of my previous role as a weekend docent giving tours of several homes administered by the organization and serving on the Mann-Simons site reinterpretation committee, which developed a new tour for the property owned by a free black family before the Civil War. Erecting a number of businesses on their land, this family became middle class entrepreneurs in the capital city during Jim Crow. I served as Lead Facilitator until early May of 2015. My responsibilities as facilitator beyond being the lead docent the first year of opening included crafting the semi-guided tour, training volunteer and paid docents, and serving on the interpretative team as they finalized the exhibit. The interpretative team at the time of my hire comprised six of Historic Columbia's staff: Ann Posner (Volunteer Manager), James Quint (Education Coordinator), Fielding Freed (Director of Historic House Museums), Sarah Blackwell (Director of Programs), John Sherrer (Director of Cultural Resources), and Robin Waites (Executive Director). I also processed visitor evaluation data, presented those results monthly, and offered strategies to docents for improvement.

While the docent oral histories guided the direction of the dissertation, the docent and tour script steered visitors through the museum. Several interpretative issues with the

script also shape the dissertation. Thus the script's development and structure warrant acknowledgment. The script analysis used throughout the dissertation resembled Tami Christopher's methodology in her study of the House of Seven Gables in Salem, Massachusetts. Christopher looked at the numerous script changes at the site from 1910-1999 to determine how the historic house museum (HHM) adjusted its history to meet new needs and contemporary changes. For example, she noted how the professionalization of public history, marketing strategies, and issues of inclusivity in the post-Civil Rights era influenced tour modifications. In the case of the WWFH, the script's evolution over an eight month process illuminated the major interpretative challenges before the reopening and during the first four months of operation.¹ For this appendix, I included script analysis for the spaces not thoroughly covered in dissertation chapters to show other interpretative dilemmas in the script writing process.

Before my arrival, Historic Columbia drafted a rough tour format designed around the exhibit panels, artifacts, twenty-first century skills incorporated into the museum, and South Carolina education standards. I took over script writing in early December 2014, transforming this document with feedback from the interpretative team into a formal script. I deleted lengthy text on education standards and twenty-first century skills and repetitive information from the panels. I produced the first working rough draft of the script on December 10, 2013 based on a walk-through with Waites and Blackwell several days earlier. Blackwell led an afternoon walkthrough guided by this script the following day with other team members who supplied feedback for the second revision. The team

¹ Tami Christopher, "The House of the Seven Gables: A House Museum's Adaptation to Changing Societal Expectations since 1910," in *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities*, ed. Amy K. Levin (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 63, 67-72, 74.

continued to give comments on each version of the script, although only a handful of scripts were accompanied by a walk-through. Ultimately, I oversaw eight revisions of the script during my time at Historic Columbia, most of them within the first three months before opening.²

This first script inspired several key decisions. Its bullet point format required more structure to improve accessibility. The team wanted to develop a narrative and flow that accommodated visitors interested in a presidential site or Reconstruction and those in between. The team decided to balance and maintain the dual themes of Reconstruction and Wilson through transition statements given upon entry into each space. A specialist in cultural competency, community engagement and urban and critical multicultural education, consultant Daniella Cook stressed the importance of the transitions and “hooks” for each room. “Hooks” for the dual narrative were imbedded in either the transition or room statements. These two statements when combined with an engagement question statement became part of a new script methodology used in each room to drive the tour narrative. This approach resolved the most glaring issue, reducing the excessively long tour to under ninety minutes. However, the three statements and dual narrative also became tools for me to design the tour to challenge the “lenticular logic of racial visibility.” Tara McPherson defined this concept as the ability to see only one of two linked histories or images at a time, usually one of whiteness, when they are in fact

² Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH,” December 6, 2013; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 7, 2013; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen’s Revision” (Historic Columbia, December 10, 2013); Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 10, 2013; Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Adult Tour Format Revisions,” December 10, 2013; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “Adult Tour Revision 2,” December 16, 2013; Robin Waites, “WWFH Tour Training Opening 1.8.14” (Historic Columbia, January 8, 2014); Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH General Calendar,” January 13, 2014.

bonded together. One of these histories is what Bruce Baker, a historian who specializes in South Carolina Reconstruction memory, called a “counter-narrative” that held the black memory of Reconstruction. The three statement methodological approach helped sort the most critical information to share in each space and cut unessential dialogue to give time for panel exploration. The purged material sometimes shifted to an emerging and robust supplementary section that docents could incorporate at their discretion.

Crafting transitions from the bullet points that were pithy or effectively linked the themes of the rooms together sometimes took several revisions. Some spaces lent themselves to engagement questions better than others, so much so that in certain spaces supplemental questions provided additional options for engagement. The struggle with engagement questions centered on needing context to set-up the question and making sure the question was engaging rather than forced.³ Not all questions are good questions. Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan argued that questions should have a purpose, focus on subjects visitors “care about,” and be crafted and presented so that visitors can answer them.⁴

³ Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 7, 2013; Waites, email message to Taylor, “WWFH”; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 10, 2013; Waites, email message to Taylor, “Adult Tour Format Revisions”; Sarah Blackwell, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 11, 2013; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 2; Taylor, email message to Waites, “Adult Tour Revision 2”; Sarah Blackwell, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour - SAB Edits per 12.11.13 Meeting” (Historic Columbia, December 11, 2013), 2–3; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen’s Revision 2 Dec 16” (Historic Columbia, December 16, 2013), 2; Robin Waites, “WWFH - Tour Review First Floor DC,” January 21, 2014, Historic Columbia Collection; “Daniella Ann Cook Ph.D.,” *College of Education, University of South Carolina*, accessed March 11, 2016, http://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/education/faculty-staff/cook_daniella.php; Tara McPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 7, 25–26; Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 6, 8–9.

⁴ Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Routledge, 2015), 81.

In addition to reaching out to Cook, Historic Columbia also sought docent commentary throughout the script revision process. Almost immediately, Waites requested a date for sending a script draft to docents for review so it could be announced at a volunteer meeting in mid-December discussing tour content, materials, and images. Historic Columbia circulated the most current script draft with a PDF of the exhibit text on January 2, 2014 to eight docents who supplied feedback. Pam Redfield, Jean Morgan, John Clark, Bernadette Scott, and Pris Stickney, all of whom would go on to conduct tours, attended the January 6th lunch meeting with staff. The docents, staff and consultants participated in walk-throughs in mid-January to assess content, engagement, flow, and timing. Posner, Freed and Blackwell led small groups of docents while Waites, Cook and I brainstormed together. The feedback produced from these two workshops helped polish two more revisions in January. Cook warned to steer clear of academic speech while explaining complex issues in favor of “colloquialisms.” Revisions also focused on presenting content in such a way as not to overwhelm or fatigue audiences, especially before moving to the second floor of the home.⁵ Readers of footnotes should note the December 30, 2013 script was a draft of the January 2, 2014 script and the February 4th script was the working draft for the February 6th script that went out to docents before the January 6th meeting and the February 15th opening respectively.

⁵ Waites, email message to Taylor, “WWFH”; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Follow Up,” December 7, 2013; Ann Posner, email message to Robin Waites, “Volunteer Lunch on Monday, Jan 6,” January 2, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Ann Posner, email message, “January 6, Tour Review,” January 2, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “Tour Script,” January 2, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Technique Recommendations for WWFH,” January 21, 2014; Ann Posner, email message to John Sherrer, “WW Group Comments First Floor,” January 21, 2014; Sarah Blackwell, email message to John Sherrer and Jennifer Taylor, “Tour Notes,” January 24, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Ann Posner, “Shadow Volunteers,” February 4, 2014.

Although a few minor adjustments were made to the script in April 2014 for the second WWFH docent training session, the last major revision came with the summer script. It incorporated my own experiences conducting tours as well as those of docents and the interpretive team teased out in post-opening meetings in April and May. The last round of revisions began in May and June.⁶ I addressed transitions that failed to translate effectively with docents and/or guests. Docents also felt they were losing the Wilsons in some rooms on the second floor.⁷ Consultant Annie Wright assessed the situation differently on her tour a month after the home opened. She felt the walk over and much of the first floor verbally presented the house as a president's home. The Reconstruction narrative grew stronger on the first floor, culminating on the second floor. She thought making people comfortable in the space and then pushing the Reconstruction content a “good strategy.”⁸ New questions emerged, expanding an already lengthy secondary information section. Larger questions about the Wilson family’s southernness required substantial space in the script. Despite the added length, Posner thought the new “more comprehensive” script gave volunteers a better “grasp” of the information. In some spaces the script also offered a variety of engagement questions, based on my own tour experiences, that were “more likely to pique interest” for the docents because of the questions’ interchangeable qualities that met varied docent/audience interests.⁹ I invited the team on the tour to see the updates in action and with team comments finalized the

⁶ Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, “Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014,” May 14, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Action Items,” May 21, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Robin Waites, “Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014,” May 22, 2014.

⁷ Robin Waites, “WWFH Tour Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14,” May 21, 2014; Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, “WWFH Action Items”; Robin Waites, email message to Volunteers, “WWFH June Follow-Up,” June 13, 2014.

⁸ Annie Wright, email message to Robin Waites, “Feedback on the WWFH Tour,” March 18, 2014.

⁹ Taylor, email message to Waites, “Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014”; Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Taylor, “Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014,” May 14, 2014.

script on June 13, 2014 to meet Waites' impending deadline to send volunteers "a comprehensive letter" and the revised script. Waites wanted volunteers to see we were incorporating their feedback and asked me to highlight where and why I made changes in the summer script for staff and docents.¹⁰ When "script" appears in the dissertation without specifying a version or date in a footnote, it refers to this summer revision.

As the script writing process illuminates, Historic Columbia demonstrated a willingness to improve their exhibit and tour based on docent feedback well after opening. Volunteer Jean Morgan "really appreciated" that docent feedback was "solicited," noting "our input seemed to actually be taken into consideration" and resulted in some changes.¹¹ Despite their constructive criticism, numerous docents liked the structure of the script, moving room by room with a clear thematic topic.¹² Volunteer docent Cyndy Storm appreciated both the absolute statements required and the freedom to select other details to throw in, often based on visitor interest.¹³ Volunteers Kathy Hogan and Doe also felt they could make their tour their own. Hogan modified the script by typing in additional points she wanted to emphasize. Doe had enough information to meet Doe's own interests and answer visitor questions, which sometimes led to new paths of inquiry.¹⁴ The script required "brevity" as well as precise language to illuminate

¹⁰ Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Action Items"; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014," May 29, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Summer WWFH Script Edits," June 13, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Script Edits," June 13, 2014; Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, "Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014"; Waites, email message to Volunteers, "WWFH June Follow-Up."

¹¹ Jean Morgan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 25, 2016.

¹² Cyndy Storm, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 4, 2016; Halie Brazier, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 27, 2016; Kathy Hogan, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 16, 2016; Docent Doe, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, February 17, 2016.

¹³ Storm, interview.

¹⁴ Hogan, interview; Docent Doe, interview.

Reconstruction while keeping Wilson in view. These smaller thematic narratives in each room helped chip away at the traditional HHM trope of the “great man” and replace it with an impressionable teenager living in a specific and largely misunderstood time and place.¹⁵ For Hogan and weekend docent Halie Brazier, the script simplified the docent’s interpretative responsibilities. Brazier not only liked there was “a clearly delineated topic” but claimed after a chuckle that “her brain works well” with the “more organized and strict” script. Hogan found the room by room structure and engagement questions made learning the tour easier and less laborious. She also understood that Historic Columbia needed some control over what docents said.¹⁶

¹⁵ Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist’s Guide*, quotes 105, 107.

¹⁶ Brazier, interview; Hogan, interview; Kathy Hogan, “Historic Columbia Docent Survey for Jen Taylor’s Dissertation,” 2016.

Woodrow Wilson Family Home



HISTORIC COLUMBIA

Adult Tour

Walk from the Robert Mills Museum Shop (RMMS)

- The Wilsons came to Columbia in the fall of 1870 at the height of the post-Civil War Reconstruction era.
 - Woodrow Wilson's father, Dr. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, accepted a teaching position at the Columbia Theological Seminary, which operated in what is now known as the Robert Mills house and grounds.
 - Dr. Wilson moved his wife and four children from Augusta, Georgia, where he had pastored at First Presbyterian Church since 1860.
 - By early fall of 1870, the Wilsons rented the Campbell-Bryce House, across Pickens Street from the seminary.
 - Secondary: Thus Tommy's sister Anne temporarily lived right across the street from her future husband George and his family the Howes. (Note: This point can be reinforced or initially mentioned in the dining room also.)

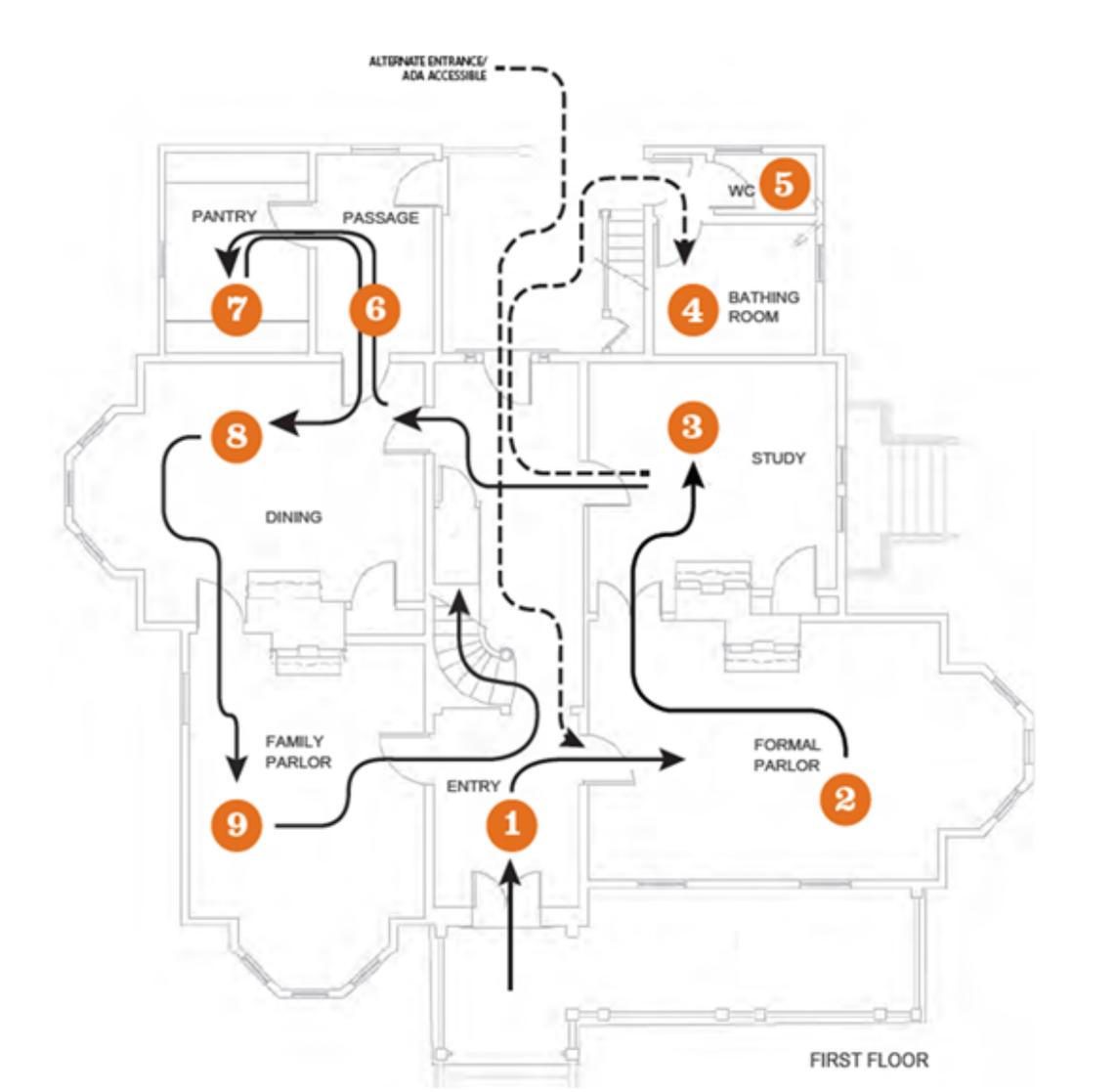
- (Crossing Taylor) We are taking a path similar to the one Dr. Wilson, and sometimes his son, Tommy, the future 28th president of the United States, would have taken nearly every day. You are walking in the footsteps of a president.

Front Porch

- Historic Columbia closed the site in 2005 and launched a multi-year \$3.6 million rehabilitation.
 - Years of undetected moisture damage resulted in the failure of 93% of the building's sill (joins wood frame and masonry), the foundation for the entire framework of the house.
 - Stiff winds littered the yard with shingles and caused window panes to shake in their frames.
 - Chunks of plaster fell, exposing lath on ceilings and walls.
 - Lath: Narrow strips of wood nailed horizontally across the wall studs or ceiling joists. Common until mid-twentieth century when drywall became the preferred method of finishing rooms.
- The rehabilitation restored the house to its 1871 form.
 - Refer to wayside sign/s: Tommy Wilson's neighborhood details, the landscapes and outbuildings, and the Italianate villa style of architecture
 - Scientific paint analysis determined color selections and revealed a palette akin to the mid-Victorian Era during which the home was built (also reflected inside the building).
 - A video at the end of the tour recounts the rehabilitation process.
- Today we will explore the teenage years of Woodrow Wilson and his family's experience in this city during Reconstruction. Thus, the Wilson family becomes the lens through which we see this place and time. By the end of the tour, you should have a greater understanding of the complexities of both Reconstruction and Woodrow Wilson.
- Remind visitors no photography, food or drink, or touching artifacts and displays
- Scenarios for entering building for tour:
 - Enter through the front door and begin tour
 - If you are serving as the transition guide from the RMMS, hand visitors off to WWFH guide inside.

- If visitor arrived directly to WWFH without guided tour from RMMS, cover previous content on front porch and enter the building.

WWFH: Floor Plan, First Floor



Room 1

Entrance Hall/Introduction to the Site

- Transition Statement: Welcome to the Woodrow Wilson Family Home.
- Room Setup Statement: If visiting the family, you may have been greeted here by Dr. Joseph Wilson, his wife Jessie, a teenaged Tommy, or one of his older sisters, Anne or Marion. Josie, the namesake and the littlest Wilson, was far too young to greet guests. However, one of the family's domestic workers most likely answered the door.
- This home was built for the Wilson family by the fall of 1871 at the height of post-Civil War Reconstruction.
 - Engagement Question: When I say the word "Reconstruction" what comes to mind?
 - This tour should give you a better understanding of this misunderstood period when the South rebuilt itself economically, socially and physically.
- The Wilsons' residence was most likely a source of pride for the family as this was the first residence they ever owned.
 - The church generally retained ownership of the homes in which the family resided.
 - Mrs. Wilson's inheritance from her brother greatly funded construction of the home at 1705 Hampton (then Plain) Street.
- Considering this home was showplace for the family, a couple notes about preservation before we begin (see supplementary materials for additional information)
 - Original features include mantels and fireplaces, pine floor boards and woodwork, including the baseboards and doors, as well as most of the windows and hearth tiles.
 - The gas lamps, gasoliers (ceilings) and gas brackets (wall mounted) are rehabilitated pieces from the 1870s but not original, although the gas piping system is.
 - The colors of the plaster walls are not original but were chosen to compliment the restored faux graining of the woodwork. We believe the house was wallpapered.
 - A fragment of what may be the original wallpaper is located in the water closet, also a sign of the family's growing prosperity, which we will see at the end of the tour.

- Today's tour is semi-guided. You will note that the set-up is that of a traditional museum with artifacts, panels and interactives placed within a historic house. I will introduce each space and general themes of the site, but you are encouraged to explore each room on your own. If you move ahead or linger behind, be sure to reunite with the group before we head upstairs together.

Room 2

Southeast [Formal] Parlor/Orientation Space

- Transition: This room most likely served as the family's formal parlor where they would have entertained guests such as you. Today we use the space to introduce you to Reconstruction on the local, state and federal level.
- Reconstruction is the name given to the period from 1865-1877 when the former Confederacy rejoined the Union and the U.S. attempted to transform the South's slave-based society into a democracy centered on male suffrage and wage labor.¹
 - Recently freed enslaved men and women gained new rights.
 - It also included the physical rebuilding of communities damaged or destroyed by war. This house's construction occurred within that context.
- Room Setup statement [moving toward **Camille Drie's 1872 Birds' Eye View Map**]:
 - After Columbia fell to Union troops in 1865, about 1/3 of the city needed to be rebuilt, but the city was prospering by the time the Wilsons moved here prompting Tommy to say:²

¹ Crafting a definition for Reconstruction proved a test in choosing precise, succinct language and was a product of trial and error. The definition originally appeared in the entrance hall but the space is too small for giving extended definitions and background information. The number of guests who knew the general dates of Reconstruction took weekend staff docent Halie Brazier by surprise but most guests knew little else. Thus, accurate and concise language was essential. The removal of the word "true" before "democracy" and the inclusion of "male suffrage" accommodated a request by volunteer docent Pam Redfield and HHM Director Fielding Freed to acknowledge women were still denied suffrage. Redfield argued the definition "could be construed that democracy begins only when African-American males get to vote." Her concern that the phrase "free labor" might be confusing resulted in its replacement with "wage labor." Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 1; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 1; Robin Waites, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen's Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes" (Historic Columbia, December 20, 2013), 1; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 01 10 14 Post Volunteer" (Historic Columbia, January 10, 2014), 2; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft" (Historic Columbia, January 31, 2014), 5; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 02 04 14 Working Draft" (Historic Columbia, February 4, 2014), 5; Brazier, interview; Fielding Freed, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Notes from Tour," December 20, 2013; Pamela Redfield, "Thoughts on the Scrip[t] for Woodrow Wilson Family Home," January 10, 2014.

² A panel's reference to William T. Sherman's arrival in February 1865 exposed a possible interpretative problem surrounding the controversial subject of the burning of Columbia. The Sherman issue initially arose during an interpretative team walk-through in late December. I accidentally referenced Sherman, even though I had not mentioned him by name in the script. Ann Posner and Redfield suggested Sherman not be mentioned at all in the narrative in order to focus on Reconstruction. Because of the distraction the fire's origin posed, the divisive debate was only included in supplemental material to prepare docents for Sherman questions. The room statement instead emphasized successfully rebuilding the city after it fell to Union troops. The threat of Sherman derailing the tour never manifested itself, except in the minds of staff and docents. Five docents spoke about never being challenged on Sherman, with two attributing this to the

- “Three times as fine a city as it was before the war”
(Tommy quote above mantel)
- Engagement Statement: Using this digitized 1872 Birds’ Eye Map or these panels (panel 1 and mantel), you can get to know Tommy’s Columbia during Reconstruction better.³
 - Demonstration for those interested in map: drag the **cursor over certain landmark properties** to learn more about sites related to the Wilson family, education, religion, government, industry, commerce, transportation and recreation.
 - Point out #46 (WWFH) to orient guests to map. Other sites for demonstration are at the guide’s discretion.
 - Push play to start *Kathleen Mavourneen* if you would like to set “mood music” and encourage guests to explore at their own pace.

Secondary

- Demographics of Columbia/Richland County (panel 1)
- Volunteers should feel prepared to address any questions about Sherman since the panels reference him. The February 17, 1865 fires can be attributed to both Confederate and Union leadership. There are conflicting reports as to how the fires started. The firing of buildings that did occur at Union hands tended to be legitimate targets within the rules of engagement, such as government buildings and war industries, although some limited but intentional fires were set. Winds then spread the fire, worsening the situation. Given Sherman’s reputation in the South and his association with total warfare, controversy over the burning of Columbia is unavoidable.⁴

script’s language. Two docents also bypassed Sherman by emphasizing how quickly Columbia rebuilt. Ann Posner, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Adult Tour,” December 23, 2013; Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t],” 2; James Quint, email message to Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Adult Tour Comments,” December 24, 2013; Priss Stickney, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, January 28, 2016; Morgan, interview; Hogan, interview; Docent Doe, interview; Storm, interview; Jennifer Gunter, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 27, 2016.

³ The script framed the engagement question around the digital map because the team expected high-levels of interaction. While five possible engagement questions were initially drafted, several months of tour experiences revealed this was too much guided direction. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 2; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 2; Quint, email message to Taylor, “WWFH Adult Tour Comments”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Jen’s Dec 30 Revision” (Historic Columbia, December 30, 2013), 3; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “Woodrow Wilson Family Home Adult Tour Script” (Historic Columbia, January 2, 2014), 3; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 5.

⁴ Redfield read the description of the major arguments about the fire’s origins included in the January draft circulated to docents as too pro-Union and “sure to create some pushback.” The script stressed decisions made by both Confederate and Union leadership led to the fire but ultimately absolved the Union army of

- The early economics of Reconstruction⁵
 - Courtesy of Dr. Tom Brown: There was nothing like the Marshall Plan (WWII) after Reconstruction, ie no systematic federal program for rebuilding. The Freedmen’s Bureau did put up a building for the Howard School, but it did not otherwise build much in Columbia. The federal government paid for the post office and federal courthouse; the state government roofed and furnished the state house; the county government built a new courthouse; and the city government put up city hall, including its opera house. Otherwise private money paid for most construction. Most of that building would be houses, shops, etc. The only exceptionally expensive construction would have been the railroads. The proposed mill operations would have been expensive, which is why the city brought in William K. Sprague, but he did not do much on the project. The absolute destitution of the postwar South was brief. Columbia’s economy was functional long before the Wilsons arrived in 1870. Agriculture remained the chief business of the area, and it is important to bear in the mind that the Freedmen’s Bureau was focused in the immediate post-emancipation period on turning former slaves into free agricultural laborers. There was migration to the cities, but the vast majority of the freed population remained farmworkers. And of course, landholders continued to own land that they could borrow against. Note that the 1868 city directory listed one bank; the 1875 directory listed five banks. For additional info, see Edwin J. Scott, *Random Recollections of a Long Life* (1884), a memoir of a local banker.
 - Both Eric Foner in his larger study *Reconstruction* (1988) and Richard Zuczek’s South Carolina state study (*State of Rebellion*, 1996) found

direct blame. The current version emerged after the January meeting with docents. Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 3–4; Taylor, “Adult Tour 01 10 14,” 3; Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t],” 2.

⁵ These two sections were a response to docent inquiries about the economics of Reconstruction that allowed Columbia to rebuild itself. Thomas J. Brown, who sat on the exhibit team, provided background on reconstructing the public space. He argued the Marshall Plan was a good analogy and “starting point” to discuss early Reconstruction since there was little understanding of the “big picture” and nothing similar was implemented after Reconstruction. Redfield agreed given one major goal of both Reconstruction and the Marshall Plan was “to prevent the return to power of those who would reignite war.” Priscilla Stickney found the Marshall Plan effective in demonstrating the differences in strategies. James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor and John Sherrer, “Tour Notes,” January 24, 2014; Waites, “Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14”; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, “Summer WWFH Script Edits,” June 13, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to Thomas J. Brown, “Reconstruction and Economics,” January 8, 2014; Thomas J. Brown, email message to Jennifer Taylor, email message, “Reconstruction and Economics,” January 9, 2014; Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t]”; Stickney, interview.

planters struggled to resume production, negotiated contracts and refused compensation as soon as the war ended. This suggests the possibility that elites had disposable income readily available or were using unfair labor practices to avoid payment of wages they could not afford, at least until the end of the harvest season. This allowed for the “interest-free extension of credit” from employee to employer and placing part of the financial risk on freedmen. However, Foner implied that not all elites invested their entire wealth in Confederate bonds. In addition, whites largely maintained control of the **land** and thus the plantation system. As long as crops could be produced, there was wealth to be made, although there were poor crop returns in the early years of Reconstruction. Because of these crop failures as well as black labor declining by about 1/3 due to determination to work shorter hours and black women and children remaining in the home, some planters were forced to pay in wages rather than a percentage of the harvest or raise existing rates and sometimes provide “benefits” like land for garden plots. Foner also placed great emphasis on the capital brought into the region by industrialists and individual Northerners looking for investments. These investors were welcomed in 1865 to invest capital in commission houses, banks and planting partnerships, helped raise land prices, and “rescued” former slaveholders from their debt. We should also remember that 196 free blacks lived in Columbia in 1850. They certainly contributed to early economic success within the black community as this demographic would have more skilled laborers and be more educated, not unlike our own Mann-Simons family. Both Eric Foner and Thomas Holt (*Black over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction*, 1979) spoke of a vibrant mulatto class in Charleston that became politically and economically successful following the war. This trend may have been mirrored here to lesser degree as well. In addition, Eric Foner argued voluntary associations among the black community also helped the downtrodden. Approximately 10,000 slaveholders abandoned their property. As such, freedmen acquired land by squatting on unoccupied property, buying tiny plots or purchasing farms and plantations cooperatively. Income generated by black soldiers also contributed to black land ownership. Depressed prices made this all possible, but Foner claimed that these instances were rare. Often these landowners engaged in subsistence farming.

- Transition to Study: As we step into the study, imagine Dr. Joseph Wilson, Tommy’s father, working up a lecture or sermon as a professor for Columbia Theological Seminary or possibly providing a lesson to his son who claimed that his father was his main teacher.⁶

Room 3

Study/Reconstruction & Religion

- Room Setup Statement: Religious changes during Reconstruction affected more than just the seminary trying to recoup financial losses from Confederate bonds by hiring the well-respected Dr. Wilson. The post-war split of churches along racial lines and concepts of evolution also fueled religious change.⁷
- Engagement Statement: In this space you will not only get a sense of the family’s relationship to the Presbyterian Church, but we would also ask you to consider an overlooked but important legacy of Reconstruction, the formation of the black church.⁸
 - During Reconstruction, African Americans negotiated their right to worship in their own churches and use these institutions for racial uplift. After Reconstruction ended, these churches remained at the center of black communities.

⁶ By the end of January, the script addressed Redfield’s warning that Tommy’s educational relationship with his father should not be overlooked. Tommy “always claimed that his father was his main teacher.” She pointed out Joseph “directed” Tommy’s reading and intellect, “probably in this study.” Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t]”; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 6.

⁷ The original script had a broad section on “Spirituality and the Church.” Beyond the Wilson family’s Presbyterian ties, information included the creation of independent black churches. This allowed the team to emphasize “racial uplift” and highlight another site administered by Historic Columbia, the Mann-Simons property, where three of the first black churches in Columbia formed. It took several revisions to convert part of this information into a clear room statement with a concise introduction to religious changes, including debates on evolution. Excess information on the various ways black churches formed moved to the secondary section. The relationship between Tommy’s uncle James Woodrow and Darwinism, visually represented with a first edition copy of Charles Darwin’s *Origins of the Species*, provoked some interpretative concerns from docents during a walkthrough. Redfield worried about continuity since Woodrow lost his job at the seminary for attempting to reconcile religion and evolution over decade after the Wilsons left Columbia for Wilmington. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 3–4; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 3; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 3; Fielding Freed, email message to John Sherrer, Jennifer Taylor, and Sarah Blackwell, “Tour Notes,” January 24, 2014; Redfield, “Thoughts on the Scrip[t]”; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 4; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 7–8; Robin Waites, John Sherrer, and Jennifer Taylor, “WWFH Adult Tour Summer Revision Marking Changes RW JMS Comments” (Historic Columbia, June 3, 2014), 8.

⁸ This new engagement statement emerged based on my tours. If I did not emphasize the first panel discussing the black church, visitors opted to skip this panel to explore material culture. The new addition did not detour visitors from examining artifacts once I pulled back. Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 8.

- This is demonstrated by HC’s other property, **the Mann-Simons Site**, where three of the first and most successful black churches in Columbia can be linked to the formation of First Calvary in 1865 in the family’s home.
- Possible Engagement Questions Based on Visitor Interest:⁹
 - How might the artifacts in this space speak to the important role religion played in the lives of the Wilson women?
 - If needed, draw the visitors to the **pew, bible and quilt**.
 - If writing in the evening or on a dark day, Wilson would have used the **gasolier**. What features of the gasolier might make this instrument an asset for a professor working various hours?
 - A: extension hose coupled to a table lamp for additional light
 - What would be the advantage of these windows for professor working close to campus?
 - A. The **window** is an original feature. It lifts up to create a doorway, which may have allowed theological students to meet with Dr. Wilson without disturbing family activities inside the house.

Secondary

- Occasionally, table lamps were connected to jets integrated into gas brackets located on walls and above mantels

⁹ Far too much information about artifacts and architecture bogged down the script initially. An example was early emphasis on the gasolier fixtures and double-hung sashes that acted as doorways, which generated high docent and visitor interest. Until the interpretative team decided to convert this interest into engagement questions, the information frequently found its way to the supplemental section to help answer visitor questions. Months of tours revealed visitors consumed family artifacts, architecture, and panels in varying ways, prompting multiple engagement question possibilities rather than one. Settling on which engagement questions and artifacts worked best constantly evolved. For example questions about how religion shaped the black community did not land well with visitors. Part of the problem was these questions simply reimagined a similar rhetorical question on the panel Denominational Divisions, “Why was freedom of religion so important to newly emancipated peoples?” Tour experiences ultimately dictated guests were drawn to artifacts that spoke to the role of religion in women’s lives, the gasolier, and the sashes, which were called windows to avoid professional jargon. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 3; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 3; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 3; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 4; Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 5; Quint, email message to Taylor, “WWFH Adult Tour Comments”; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 7; Freed, email message to Sherrer, Taylor, and Blackwell, “Tour Notes”; Taylor, “Tour 02 04 14,” 7; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour 02 06 14 Working Draft” (Historic Columbia, February 6, 2014), 7; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Interpretation Adult Tour Second Training Version” (Historic Columbia, April 2014), 7; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 8; “Denominational Differences: Reconstruction Religion,” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

- **Artifact:** James Woodrow spent years reconciling evolution with religion. Use the **first edition copy of Charles Darwin's *Origins of the Species*** to demonstrate.
- Joseph Wilson was well-respected. He held the position of stated clerk (1865), the second highest position within the church nationally.
- Oral history taken by a later resident of this house indicates that Joseph Wilson used this space as his study.¹⁰
- Black churches were formed in a variety of ways. Sometimes white churches and missionary organizations helped shape these early black churches, but black worshipers proved instrumental to the founding and continuation of these institutions.

Transition to Rooms 6, 7, 8 in hallway

- Transition Statement Hallway: Having touched on the relationship between religion and women, as demonstrated by the Jessie's quilt, next we will enter the spaces devoted to food storage and dining, also part of the women's sphere.
- Enter the Butler's Pantry and Pantry to the right first.

¹⁰ This preceding secondary information emerged early in the script revision process. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 3; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 3; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 3; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 4.

Room 6

Butler's Pantry

- Room Setup Statement: While emancipation was the most important legacy of early Reconstruction, the end of slavery did not immediately improve conditions for most African Americans as many of them continued working in roles that they would have been familiar with as slaves. Women returned to domestic service, continuing to cook, clean and rear children for white families.
 - Black families also made choices together about how to survive financially. Some black women, rarely allowed to attend to their own families under slavery, chose to sharecrop with their families or to supplement sharecropping by working part-time taking in jobs in their home or serving as domestics.
 - African American women found new negotiating strategies for work and pay.
 - Secondary: Few household management records were kept in the antebellum period. Most elite and middle-class wives had little idea of how to translate the costs of labor and supplies into a working wage post-emancipation.
- Engagement Question: We passed through the dining room and are standing in spaces devote to food storage and preparation. What is missing from the space?
 - Invite guests to look through window: Today, the modern ramp outlines the footprint of the residence's two-story **kitchen house**. The kitchen was where domestic workers cooked and *most likely* lived.
 - Follow-up: Domestic workers would not have used the same spaces as residents and guests, although employees had access to all areas of the home. How might the architecture in this space separate people according to their roles in the household?
 - A: Access via the porch door

Secondary

- China and silver was most likely stored here when not in use.
- Although no direct information about the Wilsons' perspective on domestic service exists, their home nonetheless reflected prevailing trends in residential architecture that separated people according to their roles. While architecture in the South often separated people along racial lines, examples of segregated architecture throughout the country before and after emancipation, regardless of region, existed and demonstrate the segregated nature of work regardless of race.
- Sharecropping: A land lease system requiring poor black and white field workers to tend to a portion of white-owned land for a share of the profits. In order to obtain seeds, food, and equipment from a company store or landowner, many of these workers entered a constant cycle of debt. Other than having the option of mobility and a very small wage, this work resembled the system of plantation agriculture that endured under slavery.

Room 7

Pantry

- Transition Statement and Room Setup Statement: Feel free to explore this space and the pantry on your own. You may pick up the laminated recipes and documents or take a closer look at **clay jugs and jars** produced locally and in other parts of South Carolina. Rejoin me in the dining room when you are ready.

Room 8

Dining Room/Family Life

- Room Setup Statement: Dining rooms are considered family-centric, and it is in this room that we learn more about the diversity of families during this time period.
- During Reconstruction, the Wilsons enjoyed many meals, perhaps presented on this **Wilson family sideboard**, as a united family. Their daughter, Anne, even married in this house on New Year's Day 1874.
 - Engagement Activity: Use the **family tree interactive** to get better acquainted with Joseph 50, Jessie 46, Tommy 16, Marion 22, Anne 19, and Josie 5 (ages ca. 1872) and other members of the Woodrow, McMaster and Howe families.
- Engagement Question:
 - What does this image of the Howe family tell us about the relationship between families and labor?
 - Nearly 4 million slaves were freed nationally and well over 400,000 in South Carolina. Between 31-35% of men of fighting age (18-45) from South Carolina, or between 18,000-21,000, perished as result of the Civil War. How might the Civil War and emancipation have altered the make-up of families, black and white, in ways that did not affect the Wilsons?
 - Exhibit talking points if needed: Widows, orphanages, reuniting black families, and the April July 21, 1866 *Harper's Weekly* **image**
- Transition to Room 9: The Reconstruction Amendments discussed in the next room reflect the way the nation addressed issues related to emancipation and citizenship. In the late 1860s and 1870s, not only was America defining the rights of freed people but the country also began to identify the rights of other important groups, such as women, immigrants, veterans, and former Confederates. We still debate aspects of citizenship today.

Room 9

Southwest [Family] Parlor/Citizenship

- Room Setup Statement: We believe that the Wilson family used this space as an informal parlor for family and close friends. Parlors were natural places for conversation. Reconstruction, suffrage and the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship were probably discussed here. Today, we use the space for similar discussions. The concept of citizenship took on new meanings during the Reconstruction period as the federal government established the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to achieve greater racial equality.
 - Video Engagement: Hit play and let the video explain.¹¹
- Possible Engagement Questions:
 - What do you remember about being fourteen or fifteen years old? How did it shape the kind of person you became, your beliefs and your career?
 - Imagine a teenage Tommy living in this place and during this time. What impact do you think Reconstruction-era Columbia had on him as a president?
 - Docents can use the **flag** to demonstrate how statehood changed and the 15th and 19th amendments to show how suffrage evolved over the course of Tommy's life. As a teenager, he knew of 37 states and saw the vote extended to black men. He would lead a nation of 48 states and eventually endorse a federal amendment granting women the vote. Wilson believed prior to WWI that women's suffrage was a state's rights issue. Docents can also make a connection between Reconstruction and Wilson's efforts to negotiate peace following WWI. In addition, the total warfare of the Civil War (and the Crimean War)

¹¹ Mastering the language of a brief room statement took several revisions. The team wanted visitors to feel as if they were settling into an after-dinner conversation with the Wilsons, but the statement felt overwhelming with its introduction to constitutional changes and twenty-first century connections to citizenship. This was cut since the exhibit film included the information. However, the Reconstruction amendments' importance was never fully resolved interpretively for some docents. What continued to bother Hogan and weekend docent Jennifer Gunter was the question of why federal intervention to amend the *Constitution* was necessary. They felt discriminatory black codes passed after the war ended or President Andrew Johnson and Congress vying for control of Reconstruction, which stimulated federal intervention, should be included. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 10; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 7; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 6; Hogan, "Docent Survey"; Hogan, interview; Gunter, interview.

foreshadows trench warfare in France associated with WWI.

- Thinking about this image of women suffragists, how might women have viewed the fifteenth amendment when it passed? Having just achieved the right to vote themselves during Reconstruction, how might African American men have viewed equal voting rights for women?¹²

Secondary

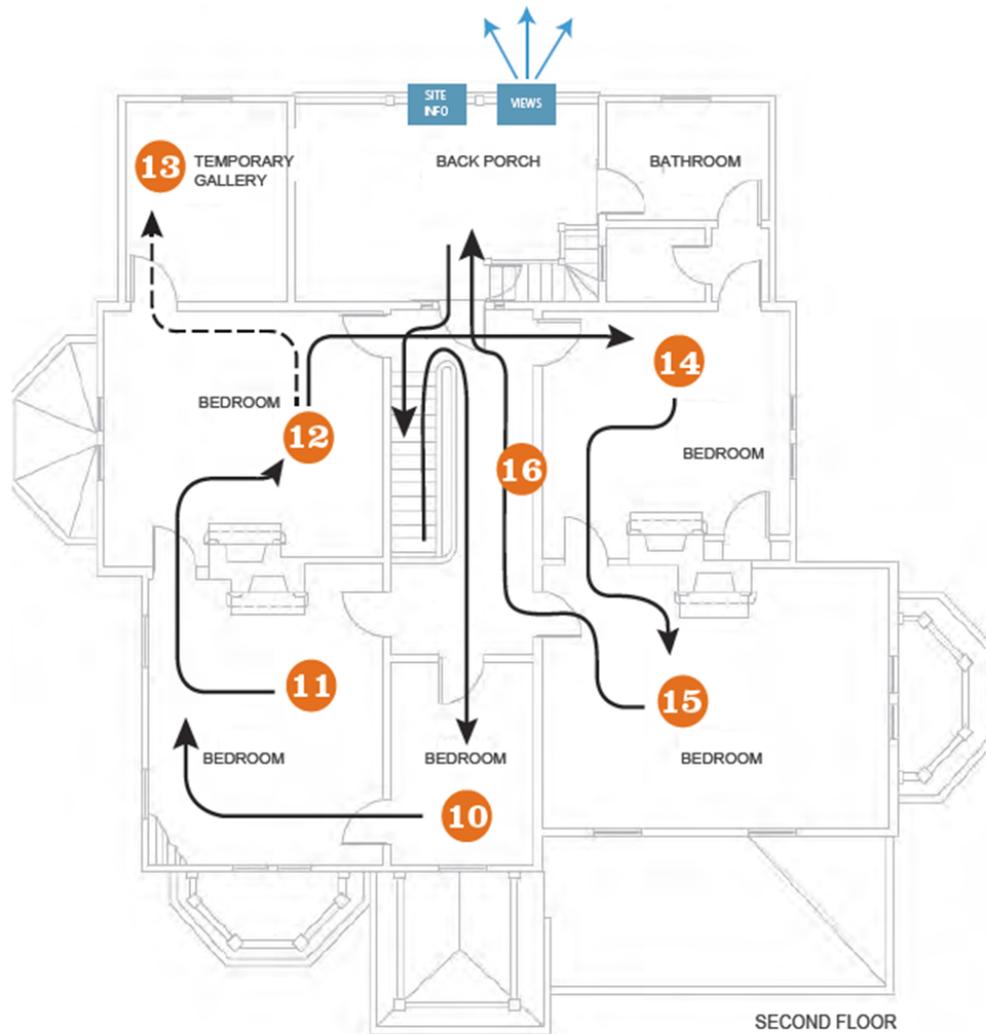
- 13th amendment: freed slaves everywhere in the U.S.
- 14th amendment: recognized the citizenship of African Americans and the rights of all citizens to “due process of law” and “equal protection of the laws.”
- 15th amendment: male citizen’s right to vote could not be infringed upon based on “race, creed, or previous condition of servitude.”
- Much like the main parlor and former dining room, this room also features a bay window that would have helped visually connect interior spaces with the surrounding yard outside.
- Suffragists are members of suffrage movements. The term applies to supporters of voting rights, regardless of political affiliation or gender. President Wilson did not endorse female suffrage until women proved essential to war efforts during WWI.¹³

¹² Docents crafted their own unique gendered and racialized approaches to suffrage. Some of them noted voting was not a natural right for women or emphasized black men received the right first. Others framed suffrage through a Wilsonian lens, highlighting it as a state’s rights issue or how Presbyterianism and Joseph Wilson might have shaped the family’s views. The number of ways in which docents could tackle suffrage explains why the script needed several revisions to concisely broach the multiple opportunities for suffrage-related engagement in the space. An ineffective section of engagement questions emerged that considered who had full citizenship, why some were excluded, and the threat full democratic rights posed. The script quickly adopted the current suffragette image related engagement question. However, a meeting with docents and the interpretative team before summer revisions resulted in cutting the other “too earnest, too leading” questions and adding two new questions. Docents could choose from three focused engagement questions, one rhetorical and the others building on an object or panel. On previous tours, visitors responded with visual cues that they liked quietly thinking about their own teenage years in comparison to Tommy’s. Morgan, interview; Heather Bacon-Rogers, interview by Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, digital recording, March 4, 2016; Stickney, interview; Hogan, interview; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 10–11; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 6; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 7; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 7; Taylor, “Tour 02 06 14,” 12; Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 12; Waites, “Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14”; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, “WWFH Adult Tour Summer Revision Marking Changes” (Historic Columbia, May 23, 2014), 13.

¹³ Docents asked for brief definitions of the Reconstruction amendments. The interpretative team requested a definition for suffragette and clarification on how Wilson came to endorse the Nineteenth Amendment.

- Transition statement: We are going to head upstairs to Tommy’s room and the private sphere of the home to learn more about his teenage years and the Reconstruction era.¹⁴

WWFH: Floor Plan, Second Floor



Taylor, “Tour 02 06 14,” 13; Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 13; “Women’s Rights,” panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014).

¹⁴ The finalized set of three engagement questions and exhibit film left visitors thinking about complex issues. An old transition engagement question no longer was needed and created an awkward silence before heading to the second floor: “How do you think this new definition of citizenship may have affected him as he was transitioning from an adolescent to an adult?” Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 7; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 6; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 7; Waites, “Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14.”

Room 10

Tommy Wilson's Bedroom

- Room Setup Statement: As the private area of the home, most of the rooms on this level served as bedrooms. Tommy's is the only one Historic Columbia can identify since Wilson referenced it as his during a visit to Columbia and this house. In this space, we invite you to use the trunk and panels to "unpack" Tommy.¹⁵
- Tommy is a teenager during his time in Columbia but also searching to define himself spiritually, politically and intellectually.
 - Tommy goes to church and school, as evidenced by **the desk**.¹⁶
 - Tommy enjoyed role playing games and the growing pastime of baseball.
 - **Artifact/Image Reference:** copy of his former Augusta team, the Light Foot Baseball Club
 - **Secondary:** The social and political tensions in Columbia could even be found in the names of local baseball teams, such as the R.E. Lees and Ku Klux.¹⁷
- Engagement Questions:
 - Did you ever struggle with a subject in school? Demo Wilson's short-hand to show how he dealt with early difficulties reading and writing.
 - When you were a teenager, what did you hang on your wall?

¹⁵ The room statement never veered away from its original intent. This meant room function would not need to be addressed for the remainder of the tour. However the "unpacking" Tommy statement, which appeared near the end of the script when the WWFH opened, was moved here for the summer script. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 12; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 9; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 7; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 8; Taylor, "Adult Tour January 2nd Draft," 11; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 15; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 16.

¹⁶ The team built on a concept that Tommy was "transitioning into a man" with specific interests. They considered whether his teenage pursuits made him a dreamer, foreshadowed his global leadership role or were a product of his Presbyterian world. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 12; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 9; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 7; Taylor, "Adult Tour 01 10 14," 11; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 15.

¹⁷ Early scripts negotiated how best to incorporate Tommy's love of baseball, also reflected in his art and a panel exhibited in his room. An early attempt focused on the gentlemanly and orderly nature of baseball "in line with Wilson's upbringing and developing maturity." Local baseball team names became a possible lens to foreshadow tension discussed in upcoming spaces. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 12; "Tommy's World," panel (Columbia, SC: The Woodrow Wilson Family Home, 2014); Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 9; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 7; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 8; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 16.

- Tommy was transitioning into a man with serious interests like politics. Thus, he admired British Prime Minister William Gladstone and hung a picture of the politician in his room.¹⁸
- **Artifact:** Here is a list of what Tommy packed with him when he first went to college at Davidson in North Carolina in 1873. He left after one year and eventually graduated from Princeton before attending graduate school at Johns Hopkins. From 1902-1910, Wilson returned to Princeton as president of the university before becoming governor of New Jersey.¹⁹

Secondary

- The Wilsons' relationship with the South: This sometimes comes up in room 11 when people contemplate the family's political leanings or in response to why Tommy and his father admired British politics. Occasionally, the issue emerges in the dining room in response to statements made about how families changed in South Carolina after the Civil War (death tolls and emancipation). Neither of Tommy's parents was Southern by birth. Joseph was from Ohio and met Jessie there after she moved to the state from Canada, although she was born in England. Until Tommy's move to Princeton, he was a southern son, born in Virginia but spending much of his youth in Augusta and his teenage years in Columbia and Wilmington, North Carolina. Dr. Wilson seems to have endorsed the Confederacy and slavery, although his historian son later acknowledged that abolishing slavery was essential to the nation's continued development. Eric Foner noted in *Reconstruction* that in December 1865, which would be the same year Wilson was appointed to

¹⁸ The most significant summer script revision was to engagement questions. Two months of tour experimentation illuminated a sustained engagement opportunity facilitated through the series of questions and demoing reproductions of Tommy's art and homework. Personal questions about struggles with school and wall art offered guests an opportunity to discuss their lives in comparison to Tommy's. Their "connections" to Tommy's "real-life, quirky, and emotional experiences" promotes what HHM Anarchists define as "poetic preservation." Taylor, "WWFH Script," May 23, 2014, 16; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 16; Vagnone and Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide*, 35, 62.

¹⁹ This was a new attempt to resolve a lack of interest in the trunk's reproduction clothing and address docent concerns that they were losing Wilson in the upstairs interpretation and that his later life was barely interpreted. Waites proposed adding content about Tommy's college experiences after his year at Davidson and his New Jersey governorship since he returned to Columbia as governor. James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Feedback on the WWFH Tour," March 19, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Daniella Cook et al., "WWFH Notes from Guides," April 21, 2014; Robin Waites, email message to Interpretative Team, "Revised WWFH Script Summer 2014," May 28, 2014.

the position of stated clerk, the southern Presbyterian Church's General Assembly still supported a biblical defense of slavery.²⁰

- Gladstone's ally Walter Bagehot wrote *The English Constitution* (1867) and described the "efficient" Cabinet, House of Commons, and Prime Minister that had, over time, come to replace the former power of the "dignified" House of Lords and Monarchy. Gladstone became the first Liberal prime minister in 1868. While the United States operates under "checks and balances" or the separation of power, in Britain, the legislative and executive branches are more connected. The Prime Minister leads the political party or coalition with the most House of Commons seats and must be a Member of Parliament.²¹
- Transition Statement: Tommy and his father both admired the British political system, as evidenced by Tommy's interest in Gladstone and his father's position as leader of the governing body of the southern wing of the Presbyterian Church. The political chaos that accompanied the Reconstruction era may have reinforced these preferences. Let's learn more about Southern politics during this time.²²

²⁰ Docents requested more information on the Wilson family's southernness, especially given his parents were not southern by birth, for the summer script. Taylor, email message to Interpretative Team, "WWFH Script Edits"; Waites, "Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14"; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 16–17.

²¹ The interpretative team decided before opening this section was needed since the staff and volunteers had little working knowledge about Gladstone and what made the parliamentary system appealing to the Wilsons. Taylor, "Tour 02 06 14," 15–16; Freed, email message to Taylor, "Notes from Tour."

²² From the first script draft, the team envisioned a political thread linking Tommy's room with the politics bedroom. This also kept the Wilson's in view as docents requested for the second floor. However, until opening, the thread was part of a lengthy room statement. Contemplating the impact "Reconstruction era party politics in the capital city" had on Tommy and his father and their "admiration" for parliamentary democracy in Great Britain opened a debate about how speculative a tour could be. Morgan thought that, although "phrased as a suggestion," the statement seemed "to want to force" that Columbia "was vitally important to the formation of" Wilson's political ideology. Her research found national politics concerned the Wilson men too. Sherrer disagreed, seeing the capital city as a continuation if not amplification of the "influence Reconstruction had on Tommy's development in Augusta." But "only Tommy could tell us" if these year were "vitally important." After temporarily adopting Sherrer's interpretation, the transition statement moved toward connecting Joseph's work with his political interests. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 13; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 10; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 9; Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 15; Taylor, "Tour 02 04 14," 15; Waites, "Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14"; Jean Morgan, email message to Robin Waites, email message, "Tour Script," January 9, 2014; John Sherrer, email message to Robin Waites and Jennifer Whitmer Taylor, "Tour Script," January 9, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to John Sherrer, "Tour Script," January 10, 2014; David Simpson, email message to Jennifer Taylor and John Sherrer, "Tour Script," January 10, 2014; Jennifer Taylor, email message to James Quint, "Presbyterians/Parliamentary Democracy," January 10, 2014; James Quint, email message to Jennifer Taylor, "Presbyterians/Parliamentary Democracy," January 10, 2014.

Room 11

Southwest Bedroom/Politics of Reconstruction

- Room Setup Statement: Democrats and Republicans of the Reconstruction era were very different from those same parties today. “**Carpetbaggers**” and “**Scalawags**,” derogatory terms today, would have been Republicans. The panels on the opposite wall discuss a forgotten aspect of Reconstruction, community or municipal services.
- Possible Engagement Questions:
 - To which political party do you think the majority of the men in this sketch of the state legislature in Columbia belonged?
 - This image corresponds with the disputed 1876 election and a period where a Democratic and Republican legislature both operated separate of one another. While the Democrats temporarily vacated the State House in November, by December they had returned to the building.
 - What municipal services were offered in Columbia that are still available today?
 - Given that Tommy’s parents were not Southern by birth, how might Columbians have viewed their presence in the capital city during Reconstruction?
 - i.e. Would it have mattered that they arrived before the Civil War and served in the Southern Presbyterian Church?²³

²³ Early scripts placed three engagement questions within a lengthy room statement. Before opening, the script divided the room and engagement statements. The team wanted to avoid defining political parties and the nicknames of their supporters given on the panels; however, after a docent called carpetbaggers opportunists, the team clarified the derogatory nature of some terms. A municipal services statement placed later in the script returned to the room statement to introduce fully the dual themes of the room exhibit. The team knew it wanted to use an image of the legislature for engagement. The team replaced an unsuccessful question about what visitors could “ascertain about political parties, divisions, perceptions or any other political issues” based on the legislature image with the party membership question. The script provided an answer so docents could prepare visitors for the disputed election of 1876. I found this question garnered more engagement than the municipal services question but the latter remained the only original question to survive summer revisions. The team substituted the current Wilson question for one on the family’s political leanings. Historic Columbia had not yet confirmed they were Democrats. The new Wilson question not only addressed docent concerns about losing the family upstairs but used conjecture to complicate regional identity and the terms “carpetbagger” and “scalawag.” Sherrer thought it “an interesting perspective” and suspected Joseph’s prestigious religious positions in the South and support for the Confederacy would have warranted respect. Redfield also wondered how much insulation the Presbyterian seminary and church provided and if the Wilson’s middling class wealth was welcomed by the “old guard.” Harry Ogden, *South Carolina--the November Election--the Dead-Lock in the State Legislature at Columbia*, 1876, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated, v. 43 (1876 December 16), cover, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalog, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98518306/>; Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 13; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 10; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 9; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 9; Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 12; Redfield, “Thoughts

Secondary

- To the left of the fireplace, the **Plexiglas panel** allows later paint schemes that once adorned the room to be viewed. The colors represented here are more in keeping with later-19th through mid-20th century styles.
- Connection between the Presbyterian Church’s governing body and England’s parliamentary democracy: The General Assembly, a parliamentary body, governs the Presbyterian Church. The chief executor of the Office of the General Assembly is the Stated Clerk, whose responsibilities included leadership of parliamentary proceedings during General Assembly meetings. Dr. Wilson served as the Stated Clerk of the Southern Presbyterian Church.
- Opera House
 - The famous Shakespearean actor Edwin Booth drew packed audiences in the South, in part because of his connection to an infamous assassin, his brother John Wilkes Booth. Columbians nearly trampled Booth’s ticket salesman and were scalping tickets at five times their value. This demonstrates that the mythical Reconstruction narrative that Lincoln’s death ensured Reconstruction would fail and that white Southerners believed he would have treated them “more fairly” had not yet developed although it will be present in *The Birth of a Nation*.
 - Lecturer Anna Dickson, who dined with the Chamberlains while on her tour, described both the rebuilt city and Governor Chamberlain’s successful administration.²⁴
- White members of the Republican Party were either **“Carpetbaggers”** (northerners who came south) or **“Scalawags”** (native southerners who embraced the Republican agenda). **Carpetbaggers were not all opportunists. Many were missionaries and teachers and committed to the project of equality.**²⁵

on the Scrip[t]”; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 16; Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 17; Waites, “Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14”; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 18.

²⁴ Additional information on Booth and Dickson offered different ways for docents to challenge myths of Reconstruction’s failures via the Opera House. Booth also allowed an early introduction to *Birth of a Nation*. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 13; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 10; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 9; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 9; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 19.

²⁵ These definitions were a response to the docent using “opportunists” but initially appeared in the room statement. Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 18; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 18–19.

- How the Political Parties Switched: By the late 1930s, white Southern Democrats began drifting away from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal coalition of Democrats at the same time a more powerful black voting block emerged in the North, which FDR began to court somewhat. New Deal support of unions will also become an issue. This began a three-decade process of transitioning many white Southern Democrats to the Republican Party and much of the African American community and former black Republicans to the Democratic Party. Following passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which would be critical to dismantling Jim Crow laws and etiquette made possible by the way Reconstruction was misrepresented by white Southerners, President Lyndon B. Johnson said, "we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come." While this reduces the political realignment to race, the statement does illustrate how the civil rights movement cemented party changes already underway due to Sun Belt politics uniting the South and West in industrial and agricultural growth.
 - Secondary: This evolution corresponds with Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat campaign for President in 1948 and the growing Sun Belt politics emerging that enabled the South and West to form a growing alliance based on developing industry, often on an anti-union platform, and agriculture. It is within Sun Belt politics that Thurmond found an opportunity to switch to the Republican Party following his alliance with Barry Goldwater in 1964. The party switch largely was complete by the late 1960s. Black voters realigned themselves with Democrats while working class whites across the nation and white Southern Democrats drifted to the Republican Party. It should be noted that certainly some exceptions do exist given these are not monolithic groups. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marks the culmination of these significant political shifts.²⁶

²⁶ Visitors frequently asked members of the interpretative team who gave tours when the political parties switched. Thus, docents need to be prepared to answer this question. The role of Sunbelt politics allowed for a richer response than attributing the switch solely to race and drew in another important South Carolina politician, Strom Thurmond. Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 19.

- Transition Statement: Many of the municipal services we have today are taken for granted. Another thing we take for granted today is public education, South Carolina’s most significant achievement during Reconstruction.²⁷

Room 12

Northwest Bedroom/The Promise of Reconstruction

- Room Setup Statement: Like municipal services, public education remains a forgotten element of Reconstruction and its most important legacy. For members of the black community as well as for poor whites, Reconstruction offered unprecedented opportunities through education and land ownership.²⁸
 - **Images:** The *1866 Harper’s Weekly image* of three African Americans reading illustrates how the black community shared knowledge and literacy until more formal schools could be established. Thus, by the mid-1870s the first generation of black female teachers emerged in Columbia, trained at the *Normal School at the University of South Carolina* with their superintendent Mortimer Warren.
 - Engagement Question: How do these women differ from the images of domestic workers we discussed downstairs?
 - Engagement Question: Why might Tommy’s parents have sent him to Barnwell private school? How might of the school’s Presbyterian roots and the introduction of public education effected their decision?²⁹

²⁷ The division and ordering of the space into two exhibit themes, first politics and then municipalities, made this transition statement possible. Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 17; Taylor, “Tour Second Training,” 17.

²⁸ The room statement reiterated the previous room’s transition statement to ensure visitors walked away from the tour knowing public education was the period’s most enduring, significant and forgotten legacy. The script circulated to docents in January included the second sentence. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 14; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 11; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 9; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 10; Taylor, “Adult Tour January 2nd Draft,” 14–15; Taylor, “Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft,” 18.

²⁹ Of the three engagement opportunities, the interpretative technique that worked best for me and Waites after months of experimentation was to connect the *Harper’s Weekly* image with the engagement question for the enlarged image of the Normal School. The question evolved slowly from asking visitors to “describe the women” and “what might be the advantages and disadvantages of” a career in teaching to how their lives changed during Reconstruction. Sherrer called the finalized version juxtaposing the teachers with the domestic workers downstairs a “powerful engagement question.” Although the question about Tommy attending private school was second, I found it worked better after introducing the arrival of public

- **Engagement Question (required)**: Hopefully, you have learned a great deal about Reconstruction to this point. Thinking back to a question asked at the beginning of the tour, if you only had a couple words to describe Reconstruction, what words would you chose?
- **Transition Statement**: Despite educational advancements, other political gains were dismantled with a backlash of violence. We will discuss the end of the Reconstruction in the next room.³⁰

Secondary

- Historically, teaching was one of the most respected careers African Americans pursued throughout the later 19th and 20th centuries. Education was and remains central in embracing the responsibilities and expectations of citizenship.
- Teaching provided black and white women an opportunity for employment outside domestic service or manual labor.
 - Advantages: access to public sphere, encouraging racial uplift
 - Limits: often required to remain single and paid less than men
 - Black women paid less than white women

education. This question originated in Tommy's bedroom, where his Barnwell attendance was first introduced. That Tommy did not attend new public schools led to an interpretive debate as to whether their integrated status was a factor in this decision. Wilson enrolled in Davidson College in North Carolina, a move most likely motivated by the fact the institution was Presbyterian-based, but USC was clearly integrated and closer. Redfield took exception to speculating about racial bias without hard evidence, arguing that Joseph possessed a Scottish heritage rooted in frugality and the credentials to "send his sons tuition-free to Presbyterian colleges." While the question did not produce lengthy discussions about the religious and racial dynamics of education, it incorporated Tommy into the space and acknowledged Redford's concern about race being the sole factor in the Wilson's educational choices. Taylor, "WWFH Script," December 10, 2013, 12; Blackwell, "Tour - SAB Edits," 9, 11; "Tommy's World, Panel"; Waites, "Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes," 9; Taylor, "Tour Jen's Dec. 30 Revision," 8, 10; Taylor, "Adult Tour January 2nd Draft," 11; Redfield, "Thoughts on the Scrip[t]"; Taylor, "Adult Tour 01 10 14," 14; Waites, "Script Revisions Notes from 4.28.14 and 5.7.14"; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 21.

³⁰ Shortly before opening, the transition statement set the stage for the tour's transition to violence. To give visitors a moment to digest the positive achievements of Reconstruction before detailing its demise, the script added and required docents to ask an early tour question again. Visitors responded well to this question because they could modify their original answers or contribute for the first time. Annie Wright liked this time to reflect. She was "able to identify growth, potential, positive changes . . . that hadn't been part of our initial answer (on the porch)." She felt this was a great opportunity for guests to see what they were learning and how their perceptions had changed. Taylor, "Tour 01 31 14 Working Draft," 18; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, "Marking Changes RW JMS," 21; Wright, email message to Waites, "Feedback on the WWFH Tour."

- The Freedman’s Bureau, missionaries and the black community set up many of these schools.
- Richard Greener came to Columbia during Reconstruction and became the first black faculty member at the University of South Carolina, formerly South Carolina College. Greener later joined Harvard University. **Coincidentally, the University of South Carolina foundation sponsored the exhibit in this space.**³¹

³¹ Many of these secondary points were originally bullet points in the pre-script document before moving to the secondary section. Other bullet points, such as the “false assertion” of forty acres and a mule, were replaced with information about what groups established schools. Rather than solely emphasizing the limits women faced as teachers, I added the “advantages” to moving out of domestic work. Greener, highlighted on a panel, was moved from a prominent position in the script. The first African American faculty member at USC and future Harvard faculty, Greener required too much exposition to introduce and a natural engagement question never emerged. However, a nod to Greener on the panel segued easily to USC’s sponsorship, which Waites requested. Taylor, “WWFH Script,” December 10, 2013, 14; Blackwell, “Tour - SAB Edits,” 11; Waites, “Revision 2 Dec 16 RW Notes,” 9; Taylor, “Tour Jen’s Dec. 30 Revision,” 10; Waites, Sherrer, and Taylor, “Marking Changes RW JMS,” 22.

Room 14

Northeast Bedroom/The Fall of Reconstruction

- Room Setup Statement: Much of the growing animosity between political parties discussed a few rooms earlier fueled political terror. By the time the use of terror reached its height in Columbia, the Wilsons had sold the home and most of the family was living in Wilmington, North Carolina.
- Engagement Question:
 - Have you heard of the Red Shirts? (Usually the reply is no.) Have you heard of the **Ku Klux Klan**?
 - The **Klan** was one of the terrorist organizations with an anti-Republican political and social agenda. They arrived in South Carolina in 1868, the same year the state's constitution allowed for greater equality and representation. The Wilsons still resided in Columbia when the Ku Klux Klan trials were conducted. After the Klan lost effectiveness, South Carolina also saw the rise of the Red Shirts led by members of the Democratic Party that used intimidation and violence to achieve political goals.
 - **Artifact: Red Shirt**
 - Use **case with guns** and **text on rifle clubs** to show origin and tools of intimidation and terror.
- **Artifacts/Images of Thomas Nast**: “**One Less Vote**” (1868) and “**Worse than Slavery**” (1874) depict the violence of the period and is representative of the **lynchings** that continued and increased during the Jim Crow period. The assassination of **Benjamin Randolph** in 1868 illustrates that this violence was not unique, even during early Reconstruction.
 - Engagement Question: If directed at you, how might you have reacted to the sight of a mob dressed in Red Shirts and images as well as stories of violence and lynching, circulating locally and nationally when it came time to cast your vote?
- When/If highlighting the “**tissue ballot**” to discuss fraud and Wade Hampton III's election, emphasize that guests can learn more about Wade Hampton and his family prior to Reconstruction at our Hampton-Preston Mansion.
- The 1876 presidential (Rutherford Hayes v. Samuel Tilden) election proved pivotal in ending Reconstruction. Through fraud and violence by

Democrats, incumbent Republican Daniel Chamberlain lost the election to Democrat and Confederate General Wade Hampton III.

- Federal troops removed
- Federal attention focused on Westward expansion and subduing Native Americans
- With little support, African Americans were disenfranchised as Democrats regained control of many political offices.

Secondary

- The KKK arose in response to the freedom and rights gained by African Americans and targeted both blacks and whites who supported the efforts of the Republican Party.
- The Mann-Simons family operated their successful businesses within the context of the successes as well as the violence of Reconstruction.
- Lost Cause Definition: Part of the rhetoric of southern nationalism that developed in the wake of Reconstruction. One aspect of the Lost Cause spoke to the origins of the war, that it had been fought for states' rights rather than over slavery. It also evoked nostalgia for the Old South. From the Lost Cause perspective, the failure of Reconstruction stemmed from political corruption. Whites redeemed the South by overturning Reconstruction in the interest of self-preservation because Republican rule in the South proved a horrendous failure. Thomas Dixon is seen as the person most responsible for transferring the Lost Cause and the South's version of Reconstruction and Redemption into American popular culture. D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* disseminated it to mainstream audiences. Reconstruction stories suited mass entertainment because of the nation's prejudices as a whole during this period, which also prevented real attempts to challenge Jim Crow segregation that developed following the end of Reconstruction. Historians and scholars of the (William) Dunning School, which focused extensively on Reconstruction, also contributed to this Lost Cause narrative. They often ignored sources detailing the African-American experience and falsely dismissed violence as unfortunate or rare and a product of lower class mobs and not elite influence. Dunning himself depicted Reconstruction as a nightmare whose horrors exceeded the Civil War.
- Jim Crow Definition: Jim Crow laws restricted black access to public spaces like schools, theaters, restaurants, and hospitals. Black men, and eventually women, were disenfranchised through grandfather clauses that

restricted the vote to those who had ancestors voting prior to the Civil War, pay poll taxes, biased literacy tests, and whites-only primaries. A Jim Crow etiquette also emerged with unwritten rules such as referring to whites by title (Mr. and Mrs.) or side-stepping on sidewalks to give whites room to walk comfortably. Violence, especially lynching, became a critical tool in maintaining this level of social control. Although de facto segregation occurred outside of the South through such tactics as residential segregation, Jim Crow laws and etiquette imposed racial segregation primarily in the South from the 1890s through the 1960s. The laws can be traced to the Black Codes formed in 1865-1866 before Congressional Reconstruction took root. Two Supreme Court decisions proved instrumental in sanctioning Jim Crow: the ruling of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 as unconstitutional (1883) and finding the segregation of railroad cars legal in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Legalized segregation and disfranchisement was entrenched fully by 1910.

Room 15

Southeast Bedroom

- Transition Statement: As we enter this next bedroom, we see that memories of Reconstruction and of Woodrow Wilson as President have been formulated and evolved over several generations.
- Room Setup Statement: We are fortunate that not only was Wilson a trained historian who wrote about this time period but that film preservation also allows us to track how media has shaped the memory of Reconstruction.
 - **Artifact**: Watch film. Be sure to explain context. This film will depict black Americans in a negative light, including the use of the blackface, a vestige of minstrelsy still perpetuated in early film. The images viewed will contradict those seen in the exhibit. The movie is also set in South Carolina, which makes it an important film that captures the state's Reconstruction memory and nationalizes it. The artistic merits of the film and how it revolutionized filmmaking ensured that the inaccurate history of the film endured throughout the twentieth century.
- The preservation of the site began in 1928 to honor a beloved Southern president.
 - **Artifact: his birth bed**
 - Most enduring connection to Wilson as it was purchased in homage by early preservationists.
 - We believe the family used it in this house.
- Woodrow Wilson was certainly a complicated historical figure as are all Presidents. The history and memory of Reconstruction proves to be just as complex. Although the Wilson quote about the film was mostly a manufactured celebratory endorsement, by screening the film in the White House, Wilson sanctioned the historically inaccurate and racist message of the film. Wilson's derogatory racial views aligned with the majority of white Americans in the early twentieth century; however, many white and black Americans were working to advance equality. His racial biases combined with his selection of cabinet members from the South allowed for the segregation of Washington D.C. for the first time under his administration. Yet, this was also a president who won a Nobel Prize, eventually endorsed suffrage for women, created the Federal Reserve and helped negotiate a resolution to WWI with his Fourteen Points and League of Nations.

- Conclusion: This historic home can be viewed as a site of healing. Initially it served to remind visitors about the first strong Southern president since Reconstruction at a time when the South was viewed as having a negative impact on the nation in the 1930s. Today the home helps heal old wounds and address the myths of Reconstruction that became accepted as truth.
- Invite guests to complete a paper or tablet evaluation and then join you on the sleeping porch.

Secondary

- Prussian blue accents were present on both the fireplace mantel and the window ledges. Why such a scheme was applied only to this room remains unanswered.
- For advanced visitors, connections can be made to treatment on non-Western colonies and the partitioning of the Middle East during treaty negotiations to end WWI that may speak to Wilson's racial biases and who he believed was entitled to sovereignty.

Back Porch

- Transition to back porch where wayside signage addresses the kitchen house as well as the neighborhood more broadly.
 - Here you can see a digitized reconstruction of the kitchen house as well as Township Auditorium, which was to be built on this site originally and would have resulted in the destruction of this presidential home. Hurleyville speaks to housing available for working class Columbians.

Tour Conclusion

- Return to the interior and lead visitors down the main stairs and out the back door to introduce the Bathing Room and Water Closet. Invite visitors to view them on their own.

Room 4

Bathing Room and Water Closet

- Evidence indicates that the Wilson family embraced the conveniences of modern technology.
 - **A bathroom and two toilet room were installed on each floor.**
 - Rear placement kept this **private space** removed from public rooms.
 - Also for private family use: domestics cleaned but most likely did not use
- Reconstruction-era water service was addressed by the city but ultimately failed.

Secondary

- We discovered original waste piping in the basement. Y-shaped in form, the piping appears to connect this room with the room immediately to its north.
- A nearly 30-foot hole situated immediately to the northeast of this room appears originally to have been a well that later was turned into a cistern for the collection of rainwater from the roof.

- Concrete installer's graffiti within floor from 1928: Notice his name, the date and, presumably, the name of a woman he was trying to impress.

Room 5

Water Closet

Wilson Family/Room Usage Information

- Engagement: Note what may be original wallpaper above door and fire suppression piping visible through wall.

Secondary Preservation:

- Another opportunity to separate the owners from those they employed through architecture.
 - Featured a gas wall bracket for illumination on dark days or evening visits, as well as a window through which fresh air could have traveled.
 - Remnants of various wallpapers and different eras of plumbing indicate that this space remained in use as a bathroom for subsequent owners following the Wilsons' time here.
 - A fire suppression system designed to save the home consisted of a network of pumps, pipes and sensors installed within chases formed between the building's structural members. Through the Plexiglas window this piping and its seismic stabilizers are visible, as wooden slats known as lath, on which the plaster walls hang.
- Conclude with invitation to return to the Museum Shop and become members of HC.

APPENDIX E – WWFH VISITOR EVALUATION

WWFH Visitor Survey

1. Please rate the overall quality of the Woodrow Wilson Family Home museum?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

2. Please rate your experience today by choosing any of the following that describe your visit. (Check all that apply).

During my tour of the WWFH exhibition today...

- I received new information
- I was interested in the information being presented
- Beliefs or thoughts that I had coming in were challenged or changed
- I felt bored
- I gained a new appreciation for people different from myself
- I lost track of time
- The guide had my full attention throughout the tour
- I preferred the self-guided portion of the tour

3. Please choose one of the following.

- I felt fully engaged throughout the entire tour.
- I felt engaged at many points during the tour.
- I felt engaged once or twice during the tour.
- I never felt engaged during the tour.

4. How were sensitive or controversial issues treated?

- Not well at all
- Somewhat well
- Extremely well
- N/A I did not feel that any sensitive or controversial issues were raised

WWFH Visitor Survey

5. What type of information was most interesting to you?

- Text and photographs in the panels
- What the tour guide told us
- Questions asked or answered by other visitors
- Artifacts/materials in the home
- Using the interactive components (Ex. Bird's Eye Map, trunk with artifacts, Viewfinder)

Something else

6. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree. The tour guide....

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| seemed knowledgeable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| was engaging | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| encouraged visitors to ask questions | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| seemed comfortable talking with museum visitors about historical issues related to race | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| used the allotted time well | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

7. What was the year of your birth?

8. Which best describes you?

- Male
- Female

WWFH Visitor Survey

9. Which best describes you? (choose all that apply)

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian/Native American, Eskimo or Aleut
- Spanish/Hispanic/Latino
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Other

10. Any comments about your experience at the Woodrow Wilson Family Home.

APPENDIX F – ORAL HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Donald Ritchie devoted a section of his book *Doing Oral History* to trends in implementing oral history into museum exhibits. In the case of the WWFH, the museum exhibit resulted in the production of oral history. Ritchie noted that oral and public history share “a natural affinity” since both have practitioners and audiences that deviate from more traditional history writing. Oral history, he argued, is a “natural tool” for the public historian’s goal of bringing “accurate, meaningful history to a public audience.” However, oral history also proved to be a natural tool in capturing the experience of public historians and docents who conducted the WWFH tour.¹ These interviews became key primary sources for this dissertation.

The WWFH docent oral history project began with a survey that concluded with a question inquiring whether docents would be interested in participating in oral history interviews. Six months after I left my contract position, Historic Columbia disseminated this short docent survey for me to all docents, including those who did not conduct WWFH tours. Ten volunteers and six weekend staff paid docents completed the survey. Eleven of them participated in oral history interviews. I left questions for the survey open ended as I knew non-WWFH docents were reluctant to give oral histories. I wanted to capture those docents’ thoughts about the reinterpretation in their own words given I expected few would go on record with an oral history. This assumption proved correct.

¹ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), quote from 41, 237-240.

Ultimately, only WWFH docents committed to oral histories. I have considered that I may have received more raw data from non-WWFH docents had I used an anonymous survey from Survey Monkey that would have allowed for multiple choice questions or answers that docents could rank.

In preparation for the oral history interviews, I drafted a general list of twenty-nine questions based on best oral history practices. These questions steered the conversation, although I did not always ask all of them. Sometimes docents addressed question themes naturally without prompting or the conversation took unique turns. An example of such a turn was docents' expression of what Ritchie called "a cathartic release of long-pent-up emotions." These can be seen in oral history projects conducted with war veterans, Holocaust survivors, coal miners and their families, and most significantly with HIV and AIDS patients. For WWFH docents indoctrinated with the Lost Cause, this cathartic release was more therapeutic than traumatizing. It allowed them to reconcile differing interpretations of history learned throughout their lives and their own connection to the racial sins of the South and the nation. Three general questions had follow-up questions in case the initial probing question did not produce full explanations. I structured questions not to lead the interviewee in their answer and to allow for open-ended responses. Sometimes, I asked the docent to describe and tell me about certain experience.² I also added personalized questions for each docent interview based on individual survey responses.

² Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005), 74–76, 102–5; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 84, 86–87, 92–93, 235–244, quote 234.

While I followed oral history protocol in securing informed consent documents, I did deviate from accepted oral history practices on the issue of anonymity. I made docents aware of how the oral histories would be used, their right to review, their right to stop the interview at any time, and that I possessed ownership to use in presentations and publications. I thoroughly explained why docent histories were important to the literature and project. However, I gave docents an option to remain anonymous in an effort to secure the most interviews and address docent concerns about speaking so candidly on the Lost Cause, institutional issues, and problems in interpreting race and white supremacy. While anonymity in oral history practice is frowned upon, I believe the docent voice was more important than the docent's identity. To truly understand the power of the Lost Cause and how issues of race influence docents and public history, docents must feel comfortable having these contentious but necessary conversations. Ritchie cites a case where Palestinian women were not identified because of political conditions. Had a large number of the docents chosen to give anonymous oral histories, the validity of the research perhaps could be questioned.³ However, only one docent chose anonymity.

Although there is a debate about what is the purest form of oral history—the transcript or the recording itself, most oral history practitioners in the United States support transcribing oral history projects. The written document can be consumed quicker than the recording and it lasts longer from an archival perspective than the original recording. Transcription is the most tedious part of the oral history process. It is generally

³ Linda Shopes, "Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, ed. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 127–28, 132; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 75–76, 126–27.

accepted that it takes six to eight hours to transcribe one hour of an oral history, but one estimate is that the entire transcription process is sixty-three hours.⁴ Because of the timeline given for completion of the dissertation and my degree, I transcribed most but not all of the full length oral histories. Some sections that I knew would not be relevant to the dissertation were paraphrased. I also did not list a repository on the release given I did not know when transcription would be complete. Making arrangements with a repository seemed presumptuous even though the primary goal of all oral history projects should be making them accessible. I informed docents I would send a new release because I believe ethically the interviewees deserved to know where their oral history would be located. Given there was no transcript, I provided interviewees with their recordings, both to keep and to review before I analyzed them for the dissertation. This at least met the professional expectation that interviewees have a right to review their transcripts, although that debate still rages as to whether allowing modifications corrupts a true unedited interview.⁵ No docent restricted information in their oral histories after review.

The last issue I considered in the oral history collection process was power. I offered docents the option to have another graduate student conduct the oral history. Oral historians recognize they are in the position of power during the interview process. By offering another interviewer I provided a way for docents to participate if they were not comfortable with my power position both as the oral historian and because of my role in

⁴ Elinor A. Maze, "The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, ed. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 228–31, 237; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 315, 324; Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 64–65, 68–70.

⁵ Maze, "The Uneasy Page," 245–46, 254; Mary A. Larson, "Research Design and Strategies," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, ed. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 120; Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 322–24; Shopes, "Legal and Ethical Issues," 128.

the organization training them. In the oral history debate about whether the interviewer should be an insider or outsider, I felt my relationship as an insider with the docents as both a trainer and fellow docent established a rapport that came through in the oral histories. It also gave me the background knowledge about the institution, museum, and docents themselves to procure the most relevant information. While I related to docents because of our shared experiences, I did not feel that I overidentified with them, a problem with insider interviews. I leave it to the reader to examine my interview questions and decide whether they were neutral and that I did not ignore obvious questions because of my pre-existing knowledge of the site.⁶

⁶ Larson, "Research Design and Strategies," 111–12; Shopes, "Legal and Ethical Issues," 141–42, 146–47.

APPENDIX G – WWFH DOCENT SURVEY FOR DISSERTATION

Name:

DOB:

Current profession or profession before retirement:

Degrees/Area of Study:

When did you start volunteering/employment with Historic Columbia?

Why did you chose to volunteer/work for Historic Columbia?

Did you conduct tours for the Wilson home before the reinterpretation in 2014?

If you underwent WWFH training, why did you choose to do so? If you chose not to participate, what were your reasons?

What concerns, if any, did you have about the new interpretation for the WWFH?

What aspect of WWFH training did you like the most?

What aspect of WWFH training did you like the least?

Describe your most rewarding experience conducting tours of the WWFH?

Describe your most challenging experience or interpretative problem while conducting tours of the WWFH?

What was your understanding of Reconstruction before WWFH training? How did this change, if at all, as a result of training or conducting tours?

What was your understanding of Woodrow Wilson before WWFH training? How did this change, if at all, as a result of training or conducting tours?

Would you consent to participating in an oral history interview about your docent experience with the WWFH?

APPENDIX H – GENERAL WWFH DOCENT ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about where you are from?
2. What was your relationship with museums, and specifically historic house museums, outside of working for Historic Columbia?
3. Of the four houses administered by Historic Columbia, which do you enjoy interpreting the most and why?
4. Of the four houses administered by Historic Columbia, which do you enjoy interpreting the least and why?
5. When Historic Columbia announced the reinterpretation of the WWFH, what were your first impressions?
6. What was your reaction to the training schedule and requirements for the WWFH?
 - A. Tell me about training without the exhibit or artifacts installed.
7. What were your impressions of the lecture portion of the training? In what ways were the lectures an asset and/or issue in your training?
8. What were your impressions of the language and sensitivity portion of the training? In what ways was this workshop an asset and/or issue in your training?
 - A. What was your reaction to the quizzes and activities included in this training?
9. What were your impressions of the shadow portion of the training? In what ways were shadowing and seeing the tour an asset and/or issue in your training?
10. What would you add to the training process?
11. What would you change about the training process?
12. Explain how you “worked up” your tour and the process of practicing your tour?
13. Tell me about your experience with the process of having your tour evaluated.
14. How do you feel about docent tours being approved before the docent is cleared to give tours?
15. Tell me about the post-opening meetings and docent feedback opportunities. In what ways were they helpful and/or problematic?
16. Take me through the house, room by room or space by space. Consider the script, panels, artifacts, technology, and architecture. What were the interpretative strengths and challenges for you in each space?
 - A. What are your impressions of and level of interaction with the interactive portions of the WWFH exhibit?
 - B. How do the videos shape your interpretation?
 - C. Do you have any thoughts about the citizenship exhibit film?
 - D. One of the greatest interpretive issues with the home was the final video in the WWFH. What were your thoughts on the first version, the revision, and the use of these films on the tour?
17. How do you feel Historic Columbia responded to the needs, questions, and issues docents had with the reopening of the WWFH and the interpretation

18. Other than giving tours, what should be a docent's role when a historic home undertakes a major interpretative change?
19. What would you change about the interpretation of the home?
20. What has been your reaction to recent protests and criticisms about Woodrow Wilson?
21. What, if anything, makes the WWFH special?
22. What is the greatest problem the WWFH faces or is yet to resolve?
23. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss that I have not mentioned?