



The Professional and the Volunteer interpreting a living history site



Web image courtesy of Gibson House
(http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/culture/gibson_house.htm)

establish truth, and generalize across time and space. Evaluation is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics. The fundamental difference between research and evaluation in terms of judging quality is that research aims to produce knowledge and truth, while useful evaluation supports action.

Evaluation differs fundamentally from research in the purpose for collecting data and standards for judging quality of the outcomes (Patton, 1997). Basic research is undertaken to discover new knowledge, test theories,

A hybrid of research and evaluation is the best way of describing the approach I have come to use in my visitor-related case studies (e.g., Rossi & Freeman, 1993). I am trying to build on knowledge and truth about the impact of museum experiences on an individual's lifelong learning, and make a contribution to advancing the audience research and evaluation field. Audience research inspired this interpretive case study in which I compared planning for the visitor experience and visitor response to the developed environment in a living history site setting.

During 1987-1988 I spent several months observing and interviewing museum workers and visitors, *in situ*, at The Gibson House, which is operated by the City of Toronto Historic Museums and Art Centres. The case study included a variety of data triangulation techniques to interpret the visitor experience from multiple perspectives (e.g., Soren, 1990-2000). The Gibson House gave me insight into a living history museum representative of mid-nineteenth century middle class life in the developing community of Willow Dale.

I analyzed documents, records, missions, policy statements, and visitor surveys that I was able to access, and observed at exhibit planning meetings. I also taped interviews with museum

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workers who had been involved with the production of the environment who could reconstruct and recall deliberations and decisions about the presentation of objects and ideas to the publics visiting. Historians, architects, antique collectors, and elementary school teachers were some of the staff brought in to acquire objects and restore and recreate the house of David Gibson, an early land surveyor. Finally, through naturalistic observation and informal conversation with visitors I examined responses to each environment (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 1997; Wolf & Tymitz, 1978).



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***Based on a case study of The Gibson House
November 26, 1987 to February 28, 1988
(Soren, 1990)***

It was about 1960, really, that a small group of people began to be very concerned about any kind of historical preservation in North York. They spoke to several people, including some of the Reeves at the time. The conclusion was to begin a Historical Society. They began to accumulate material and information and concurrently began to realize that there were buildings in North York that were threatened. It was about 1965, I guess, that Gibson House was acquired by the Park Willow people. One of the City solicitors at the time was sort of delegated to deal with this problem and the Historical Society people got involved. They didn't pick Gibson House as the best but Gibson House became available through the need for some zoning changes.

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Preliminary Decisions: Restoration or Recreation

Brigadier-General J.A. McGinnis, the person selected to restore The Gibson House, was trained in the military and a specialist in military history. He was the first employee at Toronto's Fort York in 1952, the first site to be preserved in the city in 1934. He served as the Managing Director of the Toronto Historical Board from its inception in 1958 for 32 years until retirement. Brigadier McGinnis' decisions for the restoration of The Gibson House were based upon strong feelings about how history ought to be taught:

You can't teach history by talking about things. You've got to teach history by talking about people. The object is not the thing. It's the people. It's one of the things that made Canadian history so dull. Since its inception it has been talking about ideas and philosophy and politics rather than talking about people and how they affected it. Therefore, you really have to try to establish your exhibit areas in order to best portray the people who lived there and the people of their times.

The historical importance of The Gibson House, for McGinnis, was that it was the home of David Gibson who was historically an important figure and affluent enough to build a home that was sufficiently well-founded that it could remain. It was not truly representative of the homes of rural life of the period; it represented the more affluent life of the time. One of the important things was that it was a locally built home that was made from everything found on the land.

The Brigadier hired Dorothy Duncan for the restoration of The Gibson House. Duncan was an elementary school teacher who worked for 10 years at Black Creek Pioneer Village as Curator of historic houses and collections and then became Executive Director of the Ontario Historical Society. She was a resident of North York and a member of the North York Historical Society (NYHS). McGinnis had come to respect Dorothy as an Advisory Board member at Black Creek Pioneer Village and had previously hired her for the restorations of Colborne Lodge and the Officers' Mess and Quarters at Fort York.

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Dorothy's decisions about what type of museum The Gibson House was going to be were based upon her experience with historic restorations as teaching tools:

I have a background of stepping into the past - a complete immersion in another period that could envelop a visitor with an historic restoration. And what a teaching tool that was, for both adults and young people. I had a total commitment to that. I felt that was a much stronger way of interpreting history than the traditional gallery showcase kind of interpretation.

She valued historic restorations that attempted to create a period in time and a total restoration "into which people could step and make that quick transition back, a century or more." She recalled that it was decided that the museum was not going to be a good place to put exhibits, displays and showcases, but that it lent itself more to an environmental restoration. The restoration group felt that The Gibson House should be a family home, typical of people who had gone through the early pioneering period and perhaps an earlier house that was not so elaborate. They had family and roots in the community. They decided that the museum would depict the life of a good, solid middle class family to whom residents of this region in north Toronto could relate in a very positive way, as ancestors if history had happened in that way.

Dorothy deliberately chose the period 1855 as the subject matter that the museum was to portray. This was a period of resettlement in the life of David Gibson, his wife Eliza, and their seven children after their involvement in the 1837 Rebellion and their subsequent return from exile in Lockport. Dorothy made this decision because:

In 1850, they would have been barely in the door from Lockport. The wagons would have hardly been unloaded. And their children would have been that much younger. I don't think the courtship was yet on with the older daughter. I feel it's safer to talk of about 1850 to 1855, in a more general way, circa 1855, because I feel that the House shows a family that's back. They've certainly brought with them their treasures but they've also acquired. They've been to some auction sales. They've made some purchases. They've had a few things made for them by local craftsmen. They're settled in and they're doing business. David's clientele is back. Mrs. Gibson is making friends. She's expecting people to drop in. The family is still at home. Within a very short time one of the daughters is to be married and gone. But all the boys and the girls are still at home. David hasn't yet built his separate office. He still appeared to be having his office in his house and his clients coming in there to discuss business with him. And if we could capture that moment in time before things began to change, that was the significant period.

The House As Artifact

The idea of "the living museum," suggests Hudson (1987) in his discussion of influential museums internationally, can be traced to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, where visitors were able to see a number of interesting folk-life tableaux. Colonial Williamsburg, according to Hudson, as the quintessential site museum, has produced something approaching a cultural revolution enabling ordinary people to gain a reliable impression of how their

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eighteenth-century ancestors lived. The North York Historical Board decided that the presentation of The Gibson House was to be accomplished in a living history atmosphere and was to be restored to present the domestic, professional, and political life of David Gibson.

Seale (1979) maintains that when an interior is taken back to its lived-in appearance in the past, the result is more a recreation than a restoration. He believes that a restoration of an historical interior, which is in the strict sense to return it to its exact appearance at a specific time in its past, is seldom possible because of a lack of comprehensive documentation. The Curator of The Gibson House from 1981 to 1988, saw this recreated historical interior or the reproduced environment as the artifact presented to the public.

The objects that Dorothy decided to acquire, through donations, loans or purchase, were generally not authentic objects used in the David Gibson home of the 1850s. Objects presented to the public were chosen because they were representative of an 1850 middle-class home and were intended to be in harmony with mid-nineteenth century rural life in south-central Ontario, then known as Canada West. The collection is particularly strong in apparel/textiles, furniture, kitchenware, tableware, surveying instruments. Generally, objects were collected that represented the conservative, traditional, simple, forthright, unadorned life style of the frugal but modestly wealthy Scotsman, David Gibson.

Dorothy's primary sources of information about the Gibson family were diaries and letters and limited support from surviving family members. Since Dorothy knew that it was going to be impossible to buy the collection with the little funding available she acquired objects through her own large network of museums, antique dealers, North York Society members, acquaintances throughout south-central Ontario, and related organizations and associations.

With the initial acquisitions Dorothy felt that she was on "pretty firm footing," but then she had to move "into chancier ground" with the things she was going to acquire. She described her deliberation process as a process of informed problem solving:

I had to sit down and think about what I had seen and what I knew, by this time, about the Gibsons because I had been reading their diaries, by now extensively, and trying in many cases to read between the lines. What kind of family really was this? My own family were from Scotland. My own family name is Gibson. My mother was a Gibson but not related to them. I knew, in a sense, how Scottish people think and thought traditionally, so that helped a little bit. And you got a sense of it, too, in things that David Gibson would say in his diary. He would go around and spend an inordinate amount of time getting quotes on beef for his men. So, you could tell he was frugal, he was careful, he watched his pennies. So, you had to build this into your thinking about him. Then I tried to read the newspapers of the day, of the period. I tried to find out what was available, what was being sold. What was being sold at auction? What was being sold new? Who was in business? I tried to think about his income. He was a surveyor and he was earning approximately this much a week or a month.

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The Living History Site Environment

Brigadier McGinnis believed that visitors expect to see a living, functioning home of the period when they come to see a living history museum. As McGinnis described: "It rubs off on you rather than what you're specifically taught. You absorb the atmosphere of the place. You get a sense of feeling what it was like to be there."

For Dorothy, it was not the collected objects that were of concern in the restored and recreated House, it was the quality of life, the everyday decisions that were being made. What was affecting people? What were people doing, saying, wearing, and talking about? To grasp the quality of life, Dorothy found that a lot of outside information was needed in interpreting the museum to the public so that visitors could attain a feel for the period and the community. In order to depict this quality of life, Dorothy's intent was to produce a context for learning about the Gibsons, which would become a symbol or a focal point of everyday life in the nineteenth century for the community of North York. She felt this was particularly important in North York, a very multicultural city in which people from many other countries were coming to make their homes and that was rapidly losing its air of a rural farm-like community.

Dorothy tried throughout, in creating the milieu for the museum, to be as honest and accurate as she could about what she considered to be this very simple Scottish family who got caught up in the events of a developing province. As she described, she wanted visitors to understand how Gibson had expected a paradise but became involved in the problem of the Family Compact's control of land and jobs, preventing immigrants who wanted work to find a job. Gibson became a sympathizer of some of Mackenzie's views. He could not have realized the seriousness of what he was getting into on December 4, 1837, when Mackenzie stopped off at his house on his way south from having stumped the northern farms and told him that the troops, professional men in Toronto, were rallying. He became caught up in events. When he went down to Montgomery's Inn he was put in charge of the prisoners. He did his best to keep the prisoners alive, to find them food, to move them to safe ground, to do all the humanitarian things. He did not take part in the hostilities. Though he was allied with Mackenzie, he was allied at a distance. Yet, he realized he needed to flee as the troops came up and set fire to everything that he and his wife had worked so hard for. Mrs. Gibson had the incredible presence of mind to grab his surveying equipment, the baby, a new silver dollar, and the works of the clock and dragged them out of the house to a neighbour.

Dorothy felt, as she read the diaries and the letters, that a very strong message came through, which she wanted to convey in the environment she created in the House:

He had all the human foibles that we all have. He did not have good taste. He wasn't rich. He wasn't any of these things that we want to believe our ancestors were. And so let's try to tell an honest story here. He wasn't the perfect man. It was only because he lost his job and there was a change of government, there was an election in the United States, that suddenly he was without work. And now he had to start again. So, he decides to come back. This might be, in the end, the easiest thing to do. We're dealing with a man who has all the problems that modern people do.

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Dorothy believed that we tend to romanticize the past and like to gentrify our ancestors. We don't like to attribute to them any of our own foibles or problems. We want them to be perfect, to have had perfect taste, to be rich, to have had servants to do all the dirty work, a different view than the solid middle class Gibson family to be portrayed at The Gibson House. In contrast, Dorothy wanted visitors to leave the environment the restoration group produced at The Gibson House with a feeling that history is not something that happens somewhere else - in Toronto, Ottawa, Rome, Paris, London, or some other exotic place. It can happen right here in my house, on my street, and in front of my lot. People today are part of history, as ongoing and continuing - a continuum - and they can affect and are part of everyday events. She believed that David Gibson and his family were a perfect example of this continuum in the way they had affected events but were also victims of events.

There were no funds to hire assistants with the growing collection in 1971. Instead, people who came to the Post Office next door to post a letter or walked along the pathway beside the House heading for the nearby subdivision saw cars and people coming and going and volunteered to help. They were taught how to catalogue the collection, mix buttermilk paint, and apply it to some of the furniture that needed to be refinished. The first Volunteers Coordinator collected Canadiana from country auctions, opened a shop in her summer kitchen in Ottawa from 1965 to 1967, then came to Toronto with four young children. She joined the Historical Society because she was "interested in the story of the people behind what I was collecting." She explained the interest of the first ad hoc volunteer group for the museum:

It was lovely to be at the House. It had a very special feeling. It was unique in this whole area and it still is but there was an atmosphere, there was a spirit of the House and the people who lived there. It wasn't ostentatious. It just looked like an ordinary family house.

In 1971, the first Christmas, there were a lot more visitors than had been expected. The museum was understaffed with a skeleton paid staff whose work was focused on the school tours, considered to be the backbone of the museum. Several volunteers came in on a help-out basis and wore whatever long dresses they had that looked old. During the second season, the decision was made that there were certain jobs that volunteers could do, quite apart from the function of the staff, for which they would need some training. Dorothy saw this as making the House come alive to the casual visitor.

Interpretation of the Living History Site Story

Dorothy came in for a series of six evenings and talked about the House and the family. They had to have something that vaguely resembled a costume of the 1850s because as the first Volunteers Coordinator said, "it's just part of being authentic." Most of them made their own costumes out of cotton. Dorothy told them a bit about surveying so that they could see Mr. Gibson's work and how important that was in conveying to the visitor the story of the House.¹ Part of every evening was on the information and the facts and part was on the techniques of touring and learning about what the visitor comes to see.

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One of the things that Dorothy emphasized was that visitors did not come to hear everything the volunteer knows. "You're not to feel badly because you forgot to tell them something. You can't possibly tell them everything - not overload." But there were some salient points about the life and times of the Gibson family that needed to be covered and that the volunteers were taught. The first Volunteers Coordinator explained the importance of the story to be told to the casual visitor:

The House wouldn't be complete, and it wouldn't be intelligent, if it didn't have the objects. The objects serve people. The House serves individuals, and so do the objects, and it's the relationship of the occupants to their world that makes the story. So, we developed a story to be able to go through the House and tell people about the people who lived there, what it was like to live in the House and live in Willow Dale at that time. You couldn't go to the grocery store. The post office was close but how would you get down to Toronto to a meeting if you had to go because the Rebellion was a very big thing there, too? And, of course, that really captivated the volunteers. We still, in volunteer training today, get that story, because that's paramount.

Decisions, then, about how to tell the Gibson House story to the public were based on Dorothy's philosophy of interpretation. She believed that there should be no written, memorized script, no pre-arranged speech for interpreters. In training Dorothy told new interpreters that a memorized script is "like pressing a button in your belly button and you turn on." Instead, the interpreter in a restored house should be welcoming each individual visitor into the home.

McGinnis aptly summed up his expectation for visitors experiencing the environment he helped to produce in The Gibson House and other living history museums. For McGinnis, interpreters need only orient visitors to what they are going to see when they go into a space. Then, he believed, visitors should be left alone so that they can see if they can experience the space themselves. A more casual, easier approach gives a feeling of the place. Then a visitor may be able to imagine and understand that the same thing, that kind of fireplace equipment, has been used for 150 years and it hasn't changed. They have it in their own home or it's something they've seen in their grandfather's shed.

The Interpreter as Teacher

The visitor to The Gibson House encounters an anachronism, a House and a way of life that is out of place, of a different era, than the life that we live today. How can visitors to the museum, with their diverse interests, expertise and life experiences, relate to the 1850s lifestyle presentation at The Gibson House? How can the museum experience of a past period in history be integrated into the personal history of the visitor so that the Gibson family's life makes sense in the context of contemporary life?

Volunteers wanted people to leave the museum with a feeling of pleasure, a warm, good feeling, and an overall impression of having liked the place. The interpreters told visitors stories about the Gibsons' life and the restoration of the House, placing the House in a meaningful context for visitors. Visitors told interpreters corresponding stories about their own lives and asked questions about objects with which they were familiar. Dorothy believed that visitors

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would take away more and find the visit more interesting if tours were less verbal and visual with more multi-sensory activity, like holding a surveying chain and feeling the weight of it, or by experiencing special smells and tastes. Volunteer interpreters anticipated that a visitor may learn history in terms of the background of the House and the people who lived there, and the history of the times. One volunteer described how visitors may learn to appreciate the past:

There may be an understanding of what life was like then, the hardships involved, the lack of labour-saving devices in a home with a lot of children. There comes an appreciation of what kind of people it must have taken - not just to survive - to have a well-rounded family life. And what I think it says to people today is that, "the material things that you have aren't necessarily the end to fulfilment and to family life. There are other intrinsic [qualities]." I think, in a way, it's a very substantial, reassuring thing to families to come and see, "Gee, look how well it worked and look how much there was."

Interpreters believed that what visitors were able to learn depended on why they came. The person coming to get a feeling for what life was like in the 1850s in order to translate it into their own living could learn a lot about the objects, furniture and furniture styles, and the general ambience of the House. What were termed "conscious-of-family folks," the young family wanting a certain ambience and hominess in their home, found that they had things that resembled objects in The Gibson House. These discoveries were confirming, made them feel good, and gave them ideas for how to work objects into their own homes. The kitchen was particularly significant for visitors:

The kitchen seems to be very important because if people are going to have that atmosphere in their own contemporary home today, it's more likely to be in the kitchen than anywhere. The kitchen is always a favourite because it's so warm and friendly, sort of like your grandmother's kitchen. It has so many things in it and usually there's something going on there and there's a person in it. And when they come in, it smells nice. They sometimes will spend a fair amount of time. We always turn the visitor over to the kitchen person [a paid staff person for safety reasons], so, they're getting sort of a new voice and a new slant.

The age of the visitor influenced what an individual may learn from an interpreter. One volunteer who was also a teacher discussed the nature and value of generational links that could be made within families who visited the House:

Children who come with Mom and Dad, start to feel, often, a generational link because almost invariably Mom or Dad say somewhere around the House, "Grandma had one of those. When I was a kid I ..." Something happens, the pull between generations happens, and I often wonder, when they go away, what happens at the supper table when they talk about it? Does it grow? Because there sure is a chance for it to grow. I think, sometimes, the visitor gets curious and wants to learn more. The older people come there through nostalgia. I don't think they come there to learn anything in particular. I think what happens to the older person is that they see something that they grew up with, probably cast off and have considered useless and old-fashioned, and here they see it in use again and valued in a museum. Somehow, that translates into a sense of value for themselves. They like to see things that remind them of their youth.

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The type of experience visitors had at The Gibson House depended, to some extent, on the personality and expertise of the interpreter on duty during their visit. Although the same basic information was presented each tour, interpreters had their own idiosyncratic style, adding a unique flavour to each tour depending upon the aspect of the story in which they were most interested. As interpreters explained, a "natural, warm-type person" gives one kind of tour. Somebody else who is "quite stiff" just gives the information out but that kind of tour may be more valuable for some visitors because they really want the information and they want it to be right. Another person may be "kind of fuzzy" and perfect for yet another type of visitor. Some interpreters emphasized the political life of the time. Others stressed the handicrafts that were done. Many of the interpreters were quite matronly, very much in control and well able to discipline unruly children. In a grandmotherly way they had a no-nonsense but warm and inviting approach. These volunteers seemed to be easy to listen to and effectively involved visitors, particularly children, in the storytelling about the House.

For example, one interpreter, an authentic type Mrs. Gibson, had wire-rimmed glasses, grey hair pulled back in a severe bun covered with her starched white house cap from which hung dangling lappets. She wore an exquisite black fine print cotton dress with white lace collar and a delicately crocheted black shawl, white cotton apron, handknitted heavily fringed woollen shawl, black stockings, and black boots. The group found her sitting in the breezeway between the administrative wing and the old House on a small wooden chair working on a piece of embroidery. She graciously rose and invited the group inside for a tour. During her parlour talk she spoke slowly, carefully choosing each word, with her hands clasped in choir position across her waist. She commented during her tour that she was, indeed, Scottish, just like David Gibson. She spoke with a distinct Scottish inflection. She told us that she, too, remembers the past, the prickly horse hair in her grandmother's house and being told to stop fidgeting after church.

In contrast, a younger, robust and very warm interpreter, who looked like she was a 1960s flower child, held a group spellbound in the kitchen with her expertise in spinning. She talked about how the wool was sheared from the sheep, showed how it was teased, and talked about David Gibson's father's wool mill in Scotland. She demonstrated how a drop spindle works, how to make double ply wool, and ended with a discussion about vegetable dyeing showing the visitors the basket of vegetables, grown on the farm, that the Gibsons would have used to naturally dye their material.

A third very different style of interpretation, a young Mr. Gibson (the Senior Historical Interpreter in 1988), invariably had both children and adults rapt in his creative presentations and authentic storytelling about the family. "Imagine a sunny day in the parlour," he said to one group. "The couch would be moved over here to catch the sun. The family would be involved in their various activities." And he brought out toys and games to play with, clothes to try on, and memorabilia to examine. He liked to bring in rich visual images because he found people can get very involved and follow stories about the family with them. He was dramatic yet gentle, and set up effective problem solving situations. He probed with interesting, thought-provoking questions that demanded thought and response from his audience. He thought that "exploring through doing" was the best teaching strategy to help visitors find out what the Gibson life was like.

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Volunteers believed that the interpreter-led tour should be tailored to the visitor who is coming to visit the museum. For instance, older people tend to have "the most glorious stories" to tell about when they were young, and prefer to talk more than listen to a lot of information. A middle-aged mother who had a guided tour that had been geared towards helping her son with a history project found the tour to be most interesting in terms of the responsibility taken by the children in the Gibson family:

I was particularly taken with the responsibility the children took, the extent to which they helped out. My husband is now very ill and can't do what he used to do, things like cutting the grass. He never included our three sons in tasks. He wanted them done his way, very exacting, and the boys didn't do it right. Now it's hard to accept that the job is not done as we like it, but it must get done. In the Gibson family, the children obviously had to be taught, supervised by their mother and father, so that over a long period of time they were able to do tasks on their own. I'm also taken with their home-based, family-oriented lifestyle, partly because there was less to do outside the home. My own children are very involved with hockey and baseball. Many jobs had to get done at the Gibsons'.

The Visitor as Learner: a Social Call

Who visits The Gibson House as a living history museum presenting objects of the past? What kind of person visited the House when it first opened in 1971? Why did visitors come to the House? What did they expect to see? What kind of experience did they have? Has the type of visitor and the reasons for attendance changed over the years? Has the experience for the visitor in the House changed, knowing that the message that the visitor is to receive about the people in the House has remained constant over the years? I asked the contractor, restorer, staff and volunteers interviewed these kinds of questions.²

The early years

During its early years, the early 1970s, people in North York supported The Gibson House because they felt strongly that the municipality of North York, which was emerging into a city, needed a museum. There was inordinate publicity and media coverage because the museum had opened and the restoration group had managed to complete their work on time. There was a press preview with a lunch on Mrs. Gibson's table and of the one thousand invitations sent out for the opening about seven hundred people came and signed the visitor book with a quill pen.

The restoration and recreation of The Gibson House had quite an effect on the visitor when it opened because it was considered a novelty. Dorothy recalls how in the province at that time there were very few restored historic buildings in the sense that Gibson House is a total restoration of the structure itself. There were many more museums in Ontario that were a combination of restored parlours, dining room, and the best bedroom with barriers on every door, showcases, exhibits, and vignettes in the rest of the structure. In these combination museums, the visitor had to make a transition as they walked around: "Now I'm in the parlour

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where I might have sat on the sofa, but now I'm looking at an exhibit of surveying equipment." When people came to The Gibson House they were given a good deal of freedom. Visitors were allowed to actually get in the parlour and sit on the haircloth sofa. When they went into the House they could see the fire blazing, smell something simmering or cooking, and watch someone from the small group of hired staff or the corps of trained volunteers.

In the early years, visitors would experience volunteers in the House doing crafts, perhaps making candles or spinning in the dining room. When it was really busy on weekends, early volunteers described how one volunteer gave visitors the tour for the downstairs section while visitors could watch and converse with another volunteer upstairs who may have been spinning or braiding rugs in the sewing room. Bread was baked almost every day and sold in the gift shop.

Volunteers interviewed recalled that when they first gave tours at The Gibson House, in 1972, "there were hardly any visitors that really had a background, very much knowledge" about restored houses. A lot of people came out of curiosity. Volunteers found that a big group of visitors in the '70s were, as they said, from "the mother earth period." An early volunteer commented:

They all wanted to go back to all the old handicrafts that you can understand in a way. But they also wanted to go back to doing things the hard way. Then, sort of with that, we got people that were doing over their own houses, farm homes and things. So, they were coming to see what we had done, or for our ideas. You still get them occasionally but it's not as common.

Volunteers noticed that people who were "just in the throes" of starting to renovate and restore their houses were not only interested in the history of the House but were also interested in what had been done to the House and where they could get things that were in the period.

Often people who appreciate that atmosphere have some of it in their own home. There's just a very comfortable, cosy feeling. Young families were collecting Canadiana and trying to create that atmosphere at home. They often came to look at the House and see how it was used there.

Very important issues of concern to visitors in 1972 were ecology and conservation. Cookery illustrated effectively how the Gibsons managed their home:

People got interested in the cooking technique - the fact that nothing was wasted, that you could feed a family well on very simple foods. There was a lot of interest in recipes. In those days there was more cookery going on, really, in the House. Recipes were given away to every visitor and they always took recipes away with them. They just seemed to like that. Any time there was food offered as part of a program, it got a good response. The cookery course was repeated several times and it brought a lot of people in, too.

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There were always special programs, and there were, for the first several years, many craft classes with a group in the House almost every night of the week and classes for children on Saturday morning. Each term - Spring, Winter, Fall - the list of craft courses that may have included spinning, cookery, embroidery, tatting, needlework of all sorts, chair caning, was published by a local community college. Most of the staff at the House, who all had different skills, taught the classes. Some of the volunteers with particular skills were also paid to teach classes. These courses helped to spread awareness about the museum.

Early volunteers interviewed felt that the majority of visitors, as Brigadier McGinnis and Dorothy Duncan had intended, were able to remember something of this environment in their own life experience, feel a connection with an aunt's or a grandmother's house in the country that still had some of the objects they saw at the museum. Most important, volunteers remembered that people were happy, pleased with their experience in the museum, and seemed to enjoy what they saw. They liked the fact that the House looked lived in. It seemed that people left with a greater understanding that the life style in Willow Dale in the 1850s was simple but that the Gibsons were living in a fairly sophisticated world. They were not pioneer immigrants living in a log cabin by this period.

The second decade

Volunteers who had been active for a number of years had observed changes both within the museum and related to publics visiting the museum. One major difference in the operation of the museum was increased professionalism in terms of staff who had been hired and conservation standards required for living history sites to receive provincial government funds. As a volunteer described, these new museum standards impacted upon the visitor experience:

Some things have changed now - just small things that don't make it look quite as lived in as it did. They always used to leave one of the boy's beds unmade, all ruffled, as if he had forgotten to make his bed when he got up in the morning. They don't do that sort of thing any more. The clothes on the bed would be not arranged - they would be as if used - thrown so that you could see the details of the costume but looking as though somebody lived there. I think the conservation side has changed that. They don't feel that things can be crumpled. They have to be smooth, like the mattress. And the dresses have to be just so with all the tissue paper inside. It has to do with conservation and it's too bad.

McGinnis explained that in the 1980s, there was a "tremendous desire" to be professional and to be looked upon by peers as being professional people. Historic buildings, he believed, are not designed to exhibit things with the utmost care; they have windows and dust. He commented on how difficult it has become to operate relatively small museums. For instance, in trying to have historic buildings open to the public, in its broadest sense, there was a demand that there be access for the handicapped. Making a living history museum accessible meant destroying the building. He expressed concern that if curators and others involved with the operation of historic houses became too immersed in their professionalism they may forget what it is they are trying to do in the museum, that is, making it a living, functioning historic house.

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Another significant change that volunteers noticed was that visitors seemed to have higher levels of education and expertise. As a result, people expected and demanded more from a museum experience. Active volunteers interviewed commented on the expertise of the visitor calling on The Gibson House in its second decade:

I think the expertise of the general visitor is so much higher than it was in the beginning. The public is really quite a bit more educated, more of them than there used to be. You have to be much more exact. You could almost tell them anything in 1972 and they'd believe it, but you can't do that any more because the modern visitor may come with a great deal of expertise in a particular area and they'll catch you if you're giving incorrect information. Visitors come with a lot of information. I don't think that they're educated and briefed in history like they used to be but I think they're much more informed.

One reason why there was increased expertise was that The Gibson House was no longer unique. By the end of the 1980s, there were many duplications of this kind of living history museum, and every museum had to work much harder to develop a unique program. One long time volunteer commented:

There has to be a reason to go to Gibson House as opposed to going to Colborne Lodge. A lot of it is just because it's just down the road or, "We have visitors in from out of town and, so, we've decided to bring them over this afternoon." The special events always were to jog people to come again whether it was a Fall or a Spring Festival of some sort. Anything to bring that visitor for particular information. The school programs became the bread and butter. That's what raises the attendance figures. And part of your grant depends on attendance figures.

In a 1985 Strategic Plan, it was estimated that The Gibson House could accommodate 25,000 visitors annually and needed to reach a greater proportion of the community. The average attendance between 1971 and 1982 at The Gibson House was 13,000 visitors. The peak year for attendance was 1976, with a record 17,000 visitors. In 1985, 13,225 visitors attended, while in 1986 and 1987, the number of visitors totaled 11,391 and 11,329, respectively. One reason for visitor decline in the 1980s was attributed to extensive construction in the immediate area of The Gibson House and completion of a new subway line causing a substantial decrease in "drop-in" visitors to the gift shop, galleries, and large special events. There were, also, two work stoppages in 1987 by local school boards of education that reduced the number of school visitors.

However, volunteers felt that there were many more Americans since The Gibson House was listed in the AAA (American Automobile Association) book in the mid 1980s and was getting very high ratings. Mid-week visitors tended to be retired people, people with days off and holidays, and working people who came in during lunch time from the tall metal and glass office complexes towering above and around the little brick homestead. Seniors' residences were increasing and a seniors' centre had been built nearby. Nonetheless, long-term volunteers noticed that there were fewer older people who want to sit and talk for an hour on the weekends than when they first started touring.

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A final difference volunteers noticed in the museum since its early years was that visitors were seeing less crafts done in the House. While interpreters were on duty they could, if they had the time, do their own crafts, such as quilting, pot holders, knitting of dish cloths, making scissor cases, needlepoint, rug hooking seats for chairs, or spinning. During training interpreters were shown the basics of a few crafts that were very straightforward, simple, and typical of the period. Finished products were often sold in the gift shop along with things made by a volunteer Committee like little kits and big dolls done on a production line in somebody's basement. But the House was no longer bustling with the activity of craft classes and the gift shop had no baked goods for sale.

In 1982, staff conducted a survey of casual visitors to The Gibson House. Three-quarters of the visitors were local residents. Most visitors (67%) were on a first visit to the museum. The age distribution of those who attended was quite close to the age distribution demographics for North York (i.e., 39% were 31 to 65 years; 26% were 5 to 19 years; 20% were 20 to 30 years; 11% were 66 years or older). Most of the visitors to The Gibson House tended to be families with children or teenagers and middle-aged adults. The House was reported to attract predominantly women; most respondents to the survey (72%) were female. Visitor interests were identified. Almost half (45%) were interested in Canadian History, 30% in Local History, 28% in Antiques, 19% in Architectural Restoration, and 19% in Social History. Based upon this survey it was expected that the audience after 1982 would remain predominantly local, female, and over thirty-one years of age.

Visitor Response in 1987-1988

The sample of twenty-eight visitors whom I observed and with whom I conversed from November 1987 to February 1988 was quite similar to the demographics of the visitor profiled by current volunteers interviewed, past surveys, and Gibson House attendance figures. During that time period, visitors seemed to leave the House quite satisfied. They left comments in the Visitors' Book that were overwhelmingly positive about the outstanding, interesting, informative, or pleasurable visit, the excellent tour, or a helpful tour guide.

Nostalgic associations were the most common responses to The Gibson House story. I asked visitors about their impressions of the House after their tour and what they took away from their experience in the museum. Individuals remembered vividly a simple, hard, but good quality of life that they had experienced in their personal past in North York, Ontario, Canada or other countries:

The House reminds me of my father who was born in the 1880s and lived in Quebec. Many of the doorknobs, the sideboard - I haven't even heard that language used by others before - and the antiques remind me of the stories he told.

My mother grew up in the threshing area in southwest Saskatchewan. My mother did the cooking, four times a day, a lot of baking. We started the day with seventeen pies and one loaf of bread a man each day.

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I lived on a farm. I can remember during my birthday peeling dozens of potatoes. It was during the hay season. We used to do miles and miles of knitting.

Well, I remember when I was a child we did churning. It was kind of heavy towards the end. We used certain patterns. There was a lot of work - endless. I remember this iron, putting it in the fire until it was red hot, then pulling it out with tongs. And there was a lot of ironing done in those days.

This isn't too far from us. My aunts and uncles were farmers, my husband's family. They lived like this but more simply, they weren't as wealthy. My great-grandmother was a Cummer, related to the Gibsons. When my mother visits I will bring her here.

Look at the piano. Isn't it something? Look at the stool. We had one just like it. The horse hair - did that ever work when you sat on it. It prickled. There's nothing as hot as horse hair. Horse hair was put in children's boots - warmest thing you could use to keep toes from freezing. Feather ticks, we used to call them polly asses in Brownies! I slept in one at my grandmother's. It was terrific.

I married a farmer from Alberta and lived in this type of farmhouse. It was very primitive. You had to learn how to use a primitive washer. We churned butter and had to beat up the fireplace. The house had only one storey. It was a hard life but I enjoyed it.

I lived as a child in a cottage with eleven others. There was no hot and cold water, just a hole in the ground in the back. Granny would get up first to light the fire. I am of this era. The grandchildren keep memories alive by telling stories about the times.

For immigrants to the community of North York, the House seemed to serve as a bridge linking a past life with which they were familiar in their native land to a new life in a foreign country (although one man from Iran, a country where "we have a 7000 year-old history," found the 1850s House disappointing as an "historical" site). Two visitors commented:

It reminds me of my mother's home outside Bombay - the crockery, furniture, covers. It's a very healthy, natural life and very busy with lots to do. Bombay today is very modern, big, but just outside, village life is much like this.

In my country have that sugar [cone]. We did it [churned butter] in Africa. Just like life at home [Ethiopia]. Here three years. On farm milked cows, made butter each day, had fire for cooking. Beds in villages from straw, sometimes strips of leather. Butter - put on heads, melted in sun for better skin and make better headaches. Grandmother did it, stayed overnight, and washed off next day.

During the weekend of December 4-6, 1987, the Historical Boards sponsored events and activities along the historic route of the march of William Lyon Mackenzie and the rebels commemorating the 150th anniversary of the 1837 Rebellion. One of the events that The Gibson House presented throughout the weekend was a docudrama, *1837*, based on works by Catharine Parr Traill (1894), Susanna Moodie (1962), and Rick Salutin.³ It was presented in a community gallery space in the basement of the museum by the Claude Watson Players, a group of Grade 11 students from a local performing arts secondary school. During a group

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interview the adolescents described their responses to the environment created in The Gibson House:

The Gibson House is more than a museum where you just look at pictures and stuff. It's sort of being it because you're there, [having a] first-hand experience by sipping the cider, eating the food, sitting on the couch made out of horse hair. You can say, "Well, somebody sat here 150 years ago" and it just feels so much more as a living history than just like a piece of art in a museum. It's not facts, facts, facts. Everyone knows about the battles. It really didn't feel that historical. It felt like we kind of were in touch with it because just doing the play really made it feel as if it was sort of happening. It was about the home life. You find out what people were feeling.

An important role of the House in the community, as Dorothy had intended, was to serve as an ethnic, multicultural base where immigrants could identify with the story of an immigrant family of the 1850s. One volunteer told a poignant story of a child who had come to North York from Syria where she was born and had lived until her father said they were coming to Canada.

They had to go to Lebanon for two years until they could come to Canada. She said, "My father says we will never go back to Lebanon. It's a bad place. We are (in) Canada now. We will be Canadian. My father says that we will be free." Now this is from a nine-year-old child. She goes into Gibson House. She had no sense of it being an old House, really. It was comfortable. "My grandmother - we cooked like that in Syria." And she immediately set about - she knew why the wood was piled up, where the stuff was. These kind of children are really suffering culture shock. The children, it gets through to them, that Mr. Gibson couldn't get a job. And they all say, "Just like me. That's why we came." And they immediately feel an affinity with Mr. Gibson. And they begin to call him Mr. Gibson as if he were a living, real person with whom they have some identity.

Nostalgic Connections

More than half of my sample found a connection with a relative or a life style in their past personal history. Each of these sixteen visitors was accompanied. Six came as part of a family group. Two male/female couples and one female couple were seniors. One visitor was part of a Brown Bag Lunch series. A group of seniors was with Vacation Plus on an organized Social Call visit. A group of young adults was from the public school system in an English-as-a-second-language program.

Fourteen of the visitor anecdotes were told by females and two were by men. Almost one-third of the visitors had experienced the Gibson style of life and owned similar objects either in another province in Canada or in another country. Five of these visitors had been to The Gibson House before, two had visited years before with children, and one was brought by their child who had visited from school and "had to come back." In this group of sixteen, the visitors were reminiscing in the present about experiences and associations with their life in the past. For instance, when asked about what they took away from their experience in the House, two elderly women visitors described some connections their visit helped them to make:

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Our cupboards had the same knobs and we had stove pipes like that. I have one of those white dishes left - my sister broke all the others. I used to be a Gibson. That's why I wanted to come. I went to church today - we live in Burlington - and I decided to come. We couldn't find it. I'm an Irish Gibson, not a relative of David, but my husband says the Irish and Scottish are brothers and sisters. I was born on a farm in Grimsby in the 1920s. I was cleaning my cupboard and found my little iron for dolls. Yes, I know it was awful. Mother heated the boiler on the stove. I remember the settee in the kitchen and the cupboard with the wooden knobs upstairs in my mother's house.

My father was a MacLean. My great-great-grandfather was from Long Point where there's now an historic house, 650 acres. He was there in 1791, married three times, from England. John Backhouse, he was a friend of the Empire Loyalists - one of five boys. He was called a squire or a landowner. That building passed from one Backhouse to another, shortened to Backus. The Ontario government maintains it now, the Conservation Authority [The Backhouse and Backus Agricultural Museum, Port Rowan]. It's the only place in Canada where sassafras is grown, a Carolinian plant. You cannot cut down the trees there. A lot of families died of smallpox - a lot of headstones. There were many fires in the old days. Everything was often lost. So, I'm glad they have salvaged what they have salvaged.

Two of the Claude Watson Players had similar nostalgic reactions after their experience with the Rebellion docudrama in the House:

[The Senior Historical Interpreter] told me a lot of interesting things about Samuel Lount, things I just wouldn't find out. It [the museum] has the exact same dining room table that I have at my house, so it made me feel like home. Actually, it was like my grandmother's. It was kind of neat and then you figure, "Wow! My grandmother must have lived like this." I was much like Samuel Lount's grandson - I think it was Gordon Lount - who was actually in the march.

It's like storytime, like my grandmother probably telling me stories about how she lived. Unfortunately, knowing my grandparents lived in Canada - they didn't come from England or other places - so this is sort of like storytelling about Canada. It's like finding a diary of your grandmother's. It probably wouldn't be really amazing reading. But it would be so interesting to read how people lived, just to feel the boldness of the past.

Lifestyle Experts

A second group of visitors included collectors, history hobbyists, renovators, and avid history museum-goers. These were people who in their present lives were interested in the recreation of the past as a hobby or avocation. I observed five of these visitors, and, interestingly, four of these more focused visitors were men, not women. Four had never visited the House before and two were from outside Ontario. One was part of a group on a "van tour" of Rebellion sites in Toronto historic sites from the St. Catharine's Historic Society. Two young adults came with friends, and two middle-aged adults were alone. One visitor who had been on many downtown tours had come to The Gibson House as part of the North York Historical Society Rebellion Bus Tour and found it very interesting to learn about his own community. One nanny living in North York but in marketing in Quebec visited a lot of historic houses and liked the nice feeling more

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than the story in the House. Several of these visitors found that the House was well built and that its Georgian style made for well laid out spaces. Two men from this group expressed impressions of the House while exploring the kitchen:

I collect books on Victorian homes. I want to do my own book of photographs on Domestic Architecture [as he takes another photo in the kitchen]. There aren't any in-depth books. I came back to The Gibson House because I love the kitchen and fireplace. I don't know why they don't build kitchens like this any more.

I'm interested in redoing my house and in furniture. This is a well laid out House. This tinker box is a reproduction, the striker is too curved. Do you sell these candles? We have a lot of early candleholders that would look better with them. How do you get the tallow so white? Where do you get your fat from? I like to collect used antiques. I've visited all the other historic houses. Gibson House is the last and one of the best because there are few reproductions. Isn't that a great basket? Amazing handle. I want to buy a sugar cone - will you chip some off? Aren't these old lucifers great? How old would they be? Do you ever use the bake oven?

Over time I considered these visitors to be lifestyle experts in that they knew about the past lifestyle and were familiar with objects presented at The Gibson House. Local residents and tourists who were more expert historic site museum-goers, hobbyists, antique collectors, and home renovators were impressed by the well built house and appreciative of the quality of objects collected and displayed at the museum. They seemed to use the restoration of the House and collected objects to confirm their personal interests and expertise. Overall, the experience at The Gibson House seemed to provide casual visitors with information and understanding about the relationship between a life style in the past and their present interests and expertise.

The Curator at The Gibson House from 1981 to 1988 had a background in History, worked at several other museum sites, and had completed a Museum Education program just prior to her post at Gibson House. She was the first professionally trained Curator to join The Gibson House staff. She found from her somewhat cursory visitor studies that most people, from their personal experience, did not understand the context of the House, that it was a farm house. As she described:

It's a bit of culture shock when people come here for the first time. They just walk right in off the street. You get a lot, you know, that the House is a cultural oasis or it's such a juxtaposition with the development. There's a mental point that you have to pass through. It's more successfully done at Black Creek or Sainte-Marie-Among-the-Hurons where it works on levels, taking you back slowly. First you're going through an artifact area, then into an audiovisual. Then you actually go into the site. We can't hope to do something like that but we can offer something like a time tunnel.

Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, which was family-based, was the model that the Curator was looking to in developing programs for The Gibson House. Sturbridge Village had "scads of research that they developed into wonderful education programs and beautiful resource packets." When she came to the museum in 1981, she focused upon increasing

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educational programming, particularly through entertaining using music, drama and storytelling, in order to make the program more active and vibrant and to increase the community liaison.

The Curator believed that the House could stand on its own with an active calendar of events and a more perfect presentation in the House itself. Special events, the galleries, and hands-on programming outside the House could serve as a funnel, leading and directing people into the House. For the students participating in the Rebellion docudrama special event, their costumes represented the most effective link between the special event and the feeling of belonging to the House:

When we were in costume, it really felt like we were part of the House, as if we belonged there. People coming in, when we were outside the door, were looking at us like we were part of it. It was really neat to be wearing those costumes and walking through a House where they would look somewhat like that and where they really were. It was more comfortable wearing a dress like that because, since it's such a long dress and it's very shapeless, you had a lower sense of gravity. And you were more centred because you didn't have to worry about how the bottom half looked. But, at the same time, you had a lot better posture because the tight skirt held you up, so to speak.

The end of an era

At the end of this study, not only was the museum's first professional Curator of seven years leaving but the volunteers who had been the backbone for interpretation in the House since its inception were in a transition period. Developments and changes seemed to be a sign of the times in the historic site world of the late 1980s. The rise of professionalism in the living history museum in Ontario with its emphasis on conservation, preservation, and policy conflicted with traditional values and virtues of volunteerism. The volunteer was becoming a relic of the past as the demands of contemporary society made it increasingly difficult for the woman to retain her sole role as nurturer. She had to contribute to the family income in order for the family to survive, particularly in expensive urban centres. In a review of Ontario Heritage Policy one of the general issues that arose across the province was an emphasis on supporting community efforts and volunteerism as more critical than the need to stimulate professionalism in heritage fields (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, 1988).

At The Gibson House, the volunteer group was also being forced to reexamine its roots. The volunteers had been largely a group of women who were full-time family caregivers. Their expertise in nurturing seemed to extend to The Gibson House where they were able to both feed information to visitors coming to hear about David Gibson and support one another. There was a great bond between volunteers; it was "almost a sisterhood." Some volunteers considered the end of the 1980s to be "sort of a test period." In 1988 there were only seventeen active volunteers compared with over forty in early years and thirty in 1984. The old sisterhood was dispersing and there was considerable uncertainty about who would replace the strong group of committed women who initiated the volunteer organization.

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The volunteers at the end of the 1980s felt that their original needs had been met, and they were still growing through continuing research and training. Every April they had a concentrated training seminar when they introduced new ideas and the new path for the next year, and speakers were invited to talk on specific topics at monthly meetings. This ongoing training, to which the staff were invited, "gives us tools for touring," maintained one volunteer. The life style storyline never changed but techniques for touring were evolving. For instance, room books were being developed for every room, an idea taken from the Winterthur Museum and Gardens in Delaware. One volunteer advocated that there should be "a corner somewhere, even in a place the size of Gibson House," where there is a desk, a table, magazines, and a reference library for objects displayed in the museum. More in-depth repeat visiting with "a more sophisticated platter to choose from" was another direction the museum's interpreters were considering. One volunteer saw the first visit as "a walk and gawk and look" tour. On repeat visits individuals could come back, look at specifics, and narrow down their scope to look at textiles or consider food. To accomplish these new strategies, volunteers would have to continue to research far beyond the preliminary storyline, maintained this volunteer.

Finally, different people I spoke to had varying opinions, ranging from pessimism to optimism, about the future survival of The Gibson House as an historic site. The North York Council has been more intent on urban development, particularly in the vicinity of The Gibson House, than supportive of heritage conservation and preservation. Dorothy believed in the future of the museum she had been so instrumental in producing. She commented about its survival:

This is such a rapidly changing city that it's very hard to predict the future. If it's handled well The Gibson House can survive. Many of the people who are making their homes in North York are doing it because of the rebellions in their own countries, rebellions they lost or rebellions that the other side won. And now they're here. They can surely relate to David Gibson if people make those links. But it's still got a wonderful potential. The story of the Scottish land surveyor looking for a better life can still be told to someone leaving a south Asian country today.

As the Curator from 1981 to 1988 was about to depart she was convinced that the future of the House was fairly stable. The Gibson House would not be closed but neither would the staff be increased. The grant money that was so available in the 1970s helped museums to boom and get bigger. But, quite suddenly, the money was withdrawn leaving these big structures having to ask for more and more private monies and fundraising. The Curator's parting comments at Members' Night closed the first sixteen-year era at The Gibson House and served to sum up the future direction education at the museum might take:

Education and interpretation of the House by staff and volunteers have come up to the standards of professional educators, well respected in the museum community. We have tried to reflect the changing demography and population in North York with increased programs for pre-schoolers and seniors and new Canadians. David and Eliza Gibson were both newcomers. We try to compare and contrast their lives with the North Yorkers of today. The future is a challenge. People have to feel that The Gibson House is part of their heritage. We must quash the stereotype of the visitor as an old lady with a bun. Male and female visitors are coming from a number of different disciplines, religions, and cultures. We must find new ways to preserve the House as an artifact. We can promote

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the dynamism of the site, that living history is a friendly proposition. Everyone lives in a home and can approach The Gibson House as part of their own heritage.

And with those words an era ended at The Gibson House. The Curators changed. The interpretation of the House to the casual visitor by unpaid staff was carrying on while the volunteer group was reexamining its commitment. This ethnographic investigation documented ways in which attempts were made in one living history museum to promote visitor understanding of the past in the present.

The Gibson House case study illustrates ways in which multiple methods can be used to richly portray how staff in museum settings plan for the visitor experience, and how visitors respond to environments produced. In addition to finding out about visitor experiences in the museum settings through the brief, informal, non-intrusive conversations with individuals I had observed, I was also able to find out about exhibit developers' and educators' intentions for visitor learning from interviews with museum staff.

After reading this case study in 2004, the current Curator of The Gibson House confirmed the ongoing value and usefulness of this audience research project. She commented that "although it is exploring interpretation at Gibson House in the 1970s and 80s, it shows that Gibson House was founded on very innovative interpretive techniques." The restorer and volunteers intended the visitor experience to be a hands-on, living history experience that would have connection with audiences. They ensured that there were neither "canned speeches nor static displays."

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Notes

1. Egan (1986, p. 30) has described the importance of storytelling in teaching as fixing the meaning of events. In life or in history there are no endings; patterns are imposed in order to determine meaning. These patterns are always provisional because something may happen to make us reinterpret or repattern them. The uniqueness of the story form is that it creates its own world, in which the meaning of events, and thus what we should feel about them, is fixed.
2. Volunteers involved in discussions included: the first Coordinator of the Volunteers; past president of the North York Historical Society, a Board member of the North York Historical Board for eight of its ten years and a long-term active Gibson House volunteer; two original members of the first training group who became actively involved initially as volunteers in the Display Committee and in 1979 formed a company that had been contracted to design displays in the upper Exhibit Gallery; three active volunteers two of whom were members of the first organized training program in 1973, served on many of the Volunteer Committees, and had done extensive research for the House.
3. *1837: The Farmer's Rebellion* was first shown at the Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto in 1974 directed by Paul Thompson. Following the 1987 Rebellion weekend some of the students, their teacher and I attended a performance of the production with most of the original cast. The playwright, Salutin, talked about free trade, "that wretched deal," in his introductory remarks and that it is "a good time to recall that Canadians were once willing to die in order to be masters in their own house." His concluding remark was that the play symbolizes in 1987, "the past in the present," which was the original title of this chapter in my dissertation