Analysis of 2021 Historic Furnishings Survey

In 2021, a survey was released by the Historic Furnishings Division of the Harpers Ferry Center to collect data regarding the existence and use of Historic Furnishings Reports (HFRs) at National Park Service (NPS) units across the country.

Quantitative Data:

* 33 individuals completed the survey
* 49 NPS units were represented
* At least 31 of the 49 sites represented (approx. 63%) have at least one HFR
* At least 14 of the 49 sites represented (approx. 29%) have no HFR
* Of the 31 sites that are confirmed to have one or more HFRs, at least 14 sites have a newest or most recently revised HFR that is 20+ years old

Qualitative Data:

 There are four recurring themes in the comments left by respondents:

1. Recognition of the interpretive value of HFRs (Respondents 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 27, 28, and 29)
2. Digitization and accessibility (Respondents 3, 4, 5, 11, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, and 29)
3. Need for HFRs to be updatable (Respondents 3, 7, 8, and 19)
4. Interest in inclusion of object conservation needs (Respondents 2, 12, and 15)

We can glean from the data collected that respondents are overwhelmingly in support of Historic Furnishings Reports, and that many have a desire to use them, and make them living documents that are easily accessible and updatable. While many respondents acknowledged that HFRs are used primarily by curatorial staff, it is clear that the documents are of great value to park interpreters as well.

This survey proves that historic furnishings documents are an integral part of creating meaningful visitor experiences as historic sites, and that the Historic Furnishings Division at the Harpers Ferry Center remains a great asset to the National Park Service.