

# The Ashley House Management Plan 2007



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*Cover Photo:*

*The Ashley House, photographer unknown*

*Maps:*            *Description and Page*

*Base Map, p. 2-5*

*Critical Lands, p. 9-4*

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# Section 1: Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview of the Planning Process

Since 1891, The Trustees of Reservations has worked to protect special places in Massachusetts and maintain them to the highest standards. To ensure these standards are met, a program of careful planning and sound management is essential. While the management of the Ashley House is well-established, The Trustees felt it was important to affirm the outstanding characteristics of the property and to review current management practices with a focus on applying newly understood resource protection principles to ensure the continued preservation of this special place. Thus, during the winter/spring of 2007, The Trustees embarked on a process to develop a comprehensive management plan for the Ashley House. The planning process included:

- Describing in detail the site's natural, cultural, and historical resources and identifying management issues related to the protection of those resources.
- Assessing the visitor experience at the property and making recommendations for improvements.
- Forming a volunteer planning committee made up of five members from the local community, who brought various areas of expertise to the process.
- Developing a detailed list of management recommendations and a schedule for implementing the actions.
- Developing a prescribed routine management program for the reservation that will guide staff work plans and the allocation of human and financial resources.

In addition to this management plan, a consultant will be hired to assist staff in preparing a comprehensive interpretive plan for the property. This plan will focus exclusively on the interpretive program at the Ashley House and make recommendations for improving current efforts, creating new programming, engaging new audiences and increasing overall visitation. The recommendations made in the interpretive plan will be implemented in conjunction with this management plan.

## 1.2 Planning Framework

In order to ensure that the planning process and recommended future management of its properties support The Trustees' mission and meet the organization's high standards for resource protection and the visitor experience, an established framework is applied to guide the planning process for each Trustees-owned reservation. This framework outlines several factors that will guide the management of the property:

First, The Trustees' mission, as set forth by founder Charles Eliot in 1891:

*The Trustees of Reservations preserves, for public use and enjoyment, properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value throughout Massachusetts and protects special places across the state.*

Second, management will support initiatives outlined in The Trustees' Strategic Plan, *Trustees 2017*, as well as the Division of Field Operations' 2003 operational plan, *Conservation in Action!*

Finally, several principles will guide The Trustees' work at the Ashley House. These guiding principles reflect the general rules that will be applied when carrying out work at all Trustees' properties. They are value statements that may also provide a source of criteria for determining goals and recommended actions.

1. We must engage many more people in our stewardship and land conservation work. By enlisting a diversity of constituencies, we will mobilize broad-based support for land and resource protection in Massachusetts. The Ashley House is one of our 96 classrooms where visitors can participate in a variety of enjoyable activities while learning about conservation issues and stewardship strategies.
2. Resource protection is one of our fundamental responsibilities. Our stewardship protects the historical, scenic, and ecological features that define the character of our properties and contribute to our natural and cultural heritage. By providing and interpreting exemplary stewardship of our properties, we demonstrate the importance of conservation to our visitors, members, and the community at large.
3. Our ability to instill in people a strong conservation ethic is derived from our properties being in good condition.
4. The prescribed level of management for a property is informed by the significance of its resources as well as its engagement opportunity.
5. Through good communication and collaboration, we will confirm and strengthen our partnership with the local community, members, volunteers, and other conservation partners to achieve our long-term goals for the property. We view ourselves as a community partner and a regional resource, investing in creative initiatives to build shared values, perspectives and skills among a diverse constituency.
6. We consider volunteers to be an essential part of the successful management of our reservations. We will work to inspire and enable a diverse group of people to participate in the care of the Ashley House and to advocate for conservation in their communities and for conservation in general.

7. Successful management of the Ashley House relies on accurately determining and securing the necessary financial resources and managing them well. To be successful, we will actively seek the funds necessary to protect both our resources and our visitors, and to provide a high quality visitor experience. We will nurture a culture of financial responsibility, innovation, discipline and prudence.
8. We will work to reduce our contribution to climate change and minimize unsustainable environmental practices. We will share our experience and knowledge with our members, visitors, and the public, and use this experience to advocate for the development of a sustainable society.
9. We will work to secure and enhance the Ashley House by addressing management issues and opportunities beyond the reservation’s boundaries. In particular, we will work proactively to protect “critical lands” – adjacent or nearby properties that are important to the character and effective stewardship of our reservations. We will also work cooperatively with other nearby property owners, to maximize the collective conservation value of the surrounding greenspace network.
10. We will continue to adapt our management based on experience, newly gained knowledge, and available human and financial resources.

### **1.3 Acknowledgments**

The Trustees are enormously grateful to all of the volunteers, staff, and other professionals who have worked very hard to produce this management plan. Leading the way was a Management Planning Committee that consisted of the following individuals:

#### **Staff Members**

Sean Cowhig, Superintendent, Stockbridge Management Unit  
 Edie Dondero, Planner and Project Manager  
 Barbara Dowling, Historic Site Administrator  
 Susan Edwards, Director of Historic Resources  
 Will Garrison, Historic Resource Manager  
 Steve McMahon, Berkshires Regional Director  
 Julie Richburg, Berkshire and Pioneer Valley Regional Ecologist

#### **Volunteer Members**

Sharon Casdin	Rachel Fletcher
Bill Clark	Jim Miller, Sheffield Historical Society
Mary Cooper	

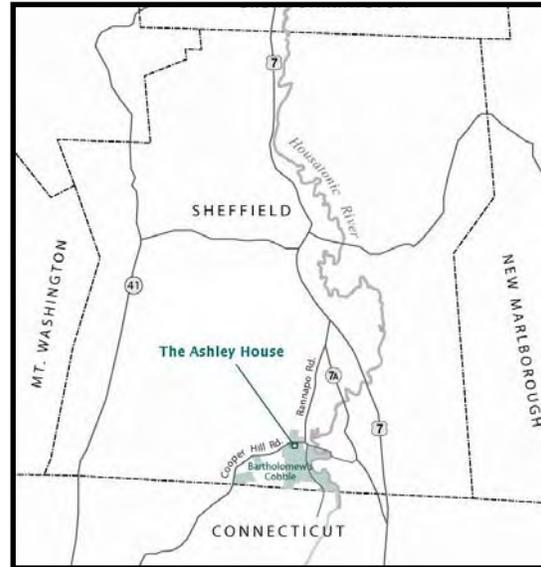
Thanks to the thoughtful and tireless participation of these individuals, and their passionate interest and concern for this unique treasure, the Ashley House will forever remain one of The Commonwealth’s special places.

## Section 2: Executive Summary

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### 2.1 The Significance of the Ashley House

The Ashley House is located in Sheffield, Massachusetts, within the Ashley Falls Historic District. It is adjacent to and surrounded by The Trustees' 329-acre Bartholomew's Cobble Reservation. The Ashley House was previously owned and operated as a museum by the Col. John Ashley House, Inc. In the late 1960s, the group was struggling financially; in response, in 1972, the local Bartholomew's Cobble – Colonel Ashley House Committee raised the funds necessary to purchase the house, its collections and the five-acre parcel of land on which it sat, and to establish a small endowment. Since acquiring the property, The Trustees have opened the Col. John Ashley House to the public as a historic house museum.



The Ashley House is historically significant on local, state, and national levels. On the local level, the house represents the roles played by an influential family and their enslaved African Americans in the eighteenth century. Col. John Ashley owned mills, ironworks, a store, and thousands of acres of farm and forest; served in Sheffield town and the Massachusetts colonial governments; and was a prominent lawyer. Col. Ashley's success was due, in part, to the hard work of the enslaved African Americans in his household.

On a state and national level, the Ashley House represents the Revolutionary era struggle for freedom. By successfully suing Col. Ashley in 1781 for her freedom, Mum Bett (later Elizabeth Freeman) contributed to the emancipation of all enslaved African Americans in Massachusetts. Col. Ashley, too, was renowned for his work related to freedom; in this case, the freedom of the American colonies. Ashley served, in 1773, on the local committee to write the Sheffield Resolves, a petition against British tyranny that outlined the town's objections to Great Britain's colonial policies.

The house itself is a well preserved example of early American architectural styles – a subtle melding of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian and late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> century Federal styles, with some slight modifications of later eras. After being moved, in 1930, one-quarter of a mile to its current location, the house was restored to its circa-1810 appearance. The house maintains its historical context in the landscape, surrounded by

fields that are still farmed, 270 years later. The Ashley House is one of the oldest standing homes in Berkshire County.

## **2.2 Summary of Significant Issues and Opportunities**

Sections Three through Eight of this plan describe the current issues and challenges at the Ashley House and identify any significant management opportunities. The recommended actions in Section Ten of this plan were crafted to address the issues and opportunities identified, some of which are listed here:

### Current Issues:

- The important role the Ashley House inhabitants played in American history is not widely recognized beyond the regional level.
- Directional signage is lacking in the parking area and visitor entrance area.
- The guided house tour, though it has a strong theme, remains too long and contains too much generic information on eighteenth-century life.
- Many of the objects on display in the house are not appropriate to the period of history being interpreted.
- Visitation to the property is very low (about 500 per season). The House is currently open only on weekends in the summer months.
- Interpretation at the property is limited to guided tours and school programs.
- The Trustees' goals for visitor engagement and the conversion of visitors into members and stewards of the landscape are not being met.

### Significant Opportunities:

- Pursue National Historic Landmark status for the additional recognition and fundraising opportunities it garners.
- Strengthen the partnership with the Upper Housatonic Valley Natural Heritage Area and, specifically, the African American Heritage Trail in an effort to increase and diversify visitation.
- Capitalize on the connection between Bartholomew's Cobble and the Ashley House. Encourage more Cobble visitors to also tour the House as part of their visit.
- Develop means of conveying interpretive information to visitors during times when the house is not open for tours.
- Encourage use of the proper (west) parking area and connecting pathway to the house so that visitors approach the house from its front façade. This approach puts the house in a more appropriate landscape context.
- Develop a corps of volunteers to assist with collections care and management.

In the summer of 2006, the Ashley House was designated an anchor site on the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail (AAHT), a program of the Upper Housatonic Valley Natural Heritage Area. Just one year after the designation, visitation has already begun to increase. The trail has already begun to draw bus tours to the property, for example. The Trustees should seize the opportunity to cultivate and engage

these new audiences and work toward achieving the goals of the organization's new strategic plan. In order to capitalize fully on this opportunity, the following course of action is recommended:

- 1) Improve the overall visitor experience at the Ashley House by implementing the recommendations made in this management plan. A good experience today is critical for all visitors but especially for bus tour participants, so that tour managers will schedule return visits.
- 2) Seek professional assistance in preparing a comprehensive interpretive plan for the property that will identify potential new opportunities to expand visitor services and programming as appropriate for the property (see Section 10.4.3).
- 3) Strengthen The Trustees' partnership with the AAHT and tap into a network of similar cultural institutions that can work cooperatively on marketing and programming.

At this time, it would not be prudent to recommend significant capital expenditures at the property, such as the construction of major new facilities (e.g., visitor center), given the historically low rate of visitation. However, should visitation continue to increase in the coming years, and if it can be demonstrated that this increase will likely be sustained, new facilities and expanded visitor services may be worthy of consideration in the future.

## **2.3 A Vision for the Future**

Based on the planning framework described in the preceding chapter and a comprehensive study of the property's significant features, a vision for the future of the reservation has emerged. The Ashley House, in ten years, will be:

- designated a National Historic Landmark;
- recognized at the local, regional, and national level as a historic site that represents the paradox of freedom inherent in late-eighteenth century America;
- providing a forum for the continuing discussion of the concept of freedom;
- serving as a destination via a variety of means (e.g., bicycle tours, bus trips, self-guided auto tours) for people wishing to learn about early American and African-American history;
- experiencing significantly more visitation than at present;
- utilizing all available technologies to promote and interpret the property;
- attracting a diverse audience and encouraging them to be stewards of history;
- connected to a network of sites both in the region and across New England that interpret themes related to the late-eighteenth century and to African American heritage;
- integrated with Bartholomew's Cobble in regard to programming and events, overall visitation and day-to-day management;
- involving volunteers in all areas of operations; and
- sufficiently funded and staffed to ensure the continued preservation and interpretation of this important landmark.

## **2.4 Implementing the Management Plan**

Section Ten of this plan includes 53 recommended management actions that have been crafted to achieve the vision for the future of the Ashley House described above. The total cost of implementing these actions over the next ten years (FY2008-2017) is estimated to be \$111,500. These funds will be derived from a variety of sources including the property's annual operating budget, the organization's capital budget and other outside sources of income such as grants and donations.

The estimated staff time needed to complete the implementation of this management plan is 2,705 hours over the next ten years. These hours are in addition to the approximately 539 hours that are needed annually to achieve an appropriate level of routine care for the reservation. Assuming the workload of the Stockbridge Management Unit remains consistent with its current level, it is believed that this work can be completed with the existing staff resources and a significant input of volunteer labor. If the organization takes on new properties or programmatic initiatives in the management unit or region, new staffing resources will undoubtedly be required.

# Map 1: Base Map



## Section 3: History

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### 3.1 Introduction

In Ashley Falls, not far from the Housatonic River, stands a small Colonial house. Its appearance belies the history contained inside. Built in 1735 for John and Hannah Ashley, it was once a center of economic and political power in Sheffield.

The Ashley family dominated Sheffield's social, civic, political, and economic life from the 1730s to the 1830s. Colonel John Ashley, the patriarch of the clan, was the leading taxpayer in the community for nearly half a century. He was a lawyer, businessman, politician, and a leader in drafting the Sheffield Resolves<sup>1</sup> in the Revolutionary era. Hannah (Hogeboom) Ashley, of a prominent Hudson River Valley family of Dutch descent, ran the household.

The history of the house also tells of enslaved and free African Americans. They worked the mills and the land, helping make Ashley wealthy. Col. Ashley owned several slaves, named Bett, John, Zack, Harry, and Lizzie; his son John owned several more (their names – except for Brom – have been lost). Bett and Brom, two of the enslaved African Americans, are famous for successfully suing for their freedom in 1781. Several other freed slaves continued to work for Col. Ashley for wages.

European settlers and enslaved African Americans worked the land. According to the Ashley family's account books, their land produced large quantities of hay, corn, rye, oats, flax, fruit for cider, wheat, and tobacco; the extensive meadows provided forage for herds of cattle and sheep; the woodlands yielded charcoal for the ironworks.<sup>2</sup> By the time of Col. John Ashley's death in 1802, he owned more than 3,000 acres with sixteen dwellings.

Today, there is little left of this Ashley family "empire." The enslaved African Americans won their freedom, the iron ore played out, and Midwestern farms soon dominated agriculture. The Ashley mills and store closed by the 1830s. Most of the

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<sup>1</sup>The "Sheffield Resolves" were a series of resolutions approved by the Town of Sheffield on January 12, 1773. The town wrote them in response to a request from the Boston Town Meeting's Committee of Correspondence. This request was sent to all 260 towns and districts in Massachusetts in November, 1772. The Boston radicals, including Samuel Adams, were upset with the actions of the British government. About 125 towns responded to the Boston Town Meeting's request for support. Drawing from the rhetoric of the Boston Pamphlet and from their own readings of John Locke, responses were passionate. The Sheffield Resolves stated that citizens of Massachusetts deserved all the rights of other British subjects. Tradition has it that the Resolves were discussed in Col. Ashley's study.

<sup>2</sup>The Ashley family account books are on loan from Joseph C. Hurlburt. The Hurlburt family (for whom Hurlburt's Hill in Bartholomew's Cobble is named) owned the William Ashley house in the center of Ashley Falls, and acquired many of the account books. The collection provides insight into the commerce of the area from the 1790s to the 1840s. Used by Myron O. Stachiw for his research project, "Colonel John Ashley and his Web of Commerce," funded by the Bay State Historical League, 2002. This paper is the basis of much of this section. Copy on file at The Trustees of Reservations, Stockbridge.

Ashley family descendents moved away. But much remains the same - the land is still farmed, the Housatonic River still meanders through the meadows, and the Ashley House still stands.

## **3.2 Significance of the Ashley House**

The Ashley House is historically significant on local, state, and national levels. On the local level, the house represents the roles played by an influential family and enslaved African Americans. Col. John Ashley owned mills, ironworks, a store, and thousands of acres of farm and forest. He served in Sheffield town government, and was a prominent lawyer. Col. Ashley's success was in part due to the hard work of Bett and the other enslaved African Americans in the household.

On a state and national level, the Ashley House represents the Revolutionary era struggle for freedom. By suing Col. Ashley in 1781 for her freedom, Mum Bett contributed to the emancipation of all enslaved African Americans in Massachusetts. Previously, Col. Ashley had worked to free the colonies from Great Britain. This included serving on the local committee to write the Sheffield Resolves in 1773, outlining the town's objections to Great Britain's colonial policies.

The house is a well preserved example of early American architectural styles – a subtle melding of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian, late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Federal, with some slight modifications of later eras. After being moved ¼-mile in 1930, the house was restored to its circa-1810 appearance. The house maintains its historical position in the landscape, surrounded by fields that are still farmed, 270 years later.

## **3.3 History of the House**

Like any surviving 270+ year-old building, the Ashley House has been repeatedly repaired, remodeled, and redecorated. The history of its changes tells much about the changing fortunes of the family.<sup>3</sup>

### 1735-1775

The house was built in 1735 on the west bank of the Housatonic River, just north of the intersection of Rannapo and Cooper Hill Roads for the newlyweds, John Ashley and Hannah Hogeboom.<sup>4</sup> It was a two-story, stud-framed building beneath a gable roof, with a centrally-located chimney. Most of the frame was constructed of massive timbers of pitch pine, a species of tree still common in the region at that time but rare at present, at least in the sizes represented by the timbers in the frame.

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<sup>3</sup> The history of the house draws heavily on the Ashley House's Historic Structures Report (2003) by Myron Stachiw and Tom Paske. On file at The Trustees' Berkshires Regional Office, Stockbridge.

<sup>4</sup> The construction date, always assumed to be 1735, was confirmed in 2003 by a dendrochronology study by William Flynt of Historic Deerfield, Inc.

The house stood on the east side of the road, facing west, with its back (east side) to the river. The principal façade (west) contained a central door with one window on each side of the doorway, and a smaller window over the door on the second floor.

In this house the Ashley children were born and raised, enslaved African Americans worked, and Colonel Ashley built his businesses, law practice, and political career. The kitchen, located where the south parlor is today, was the hub of all activity. The parlor, several workspaces under the sloping rear of the house, two or three bedchambers, and an attic would have been crowded. The attic staircase was not a continuation of the front stairs; instead, they rose from the back leanto, providing a route to the attic for slaves away from the family's living area.

A child's scribbling lends a touch of intimacy to the house. About 1750, one of the Ashleys' daughters wrote her name in chalk on a board in the attic stairway, later covered during one of the house's renovations. "Jane Ashly" [sic] is just visible behind the casing to the current attic's door.

#### ca. 1770-1815

By the late 1760s, the four Ashley children had grown and married. At the same time, Col. Ashley was at the pinnacle of his economic and political career. These factors probably prompted Ashley to undertake the improvement and upgrading of his house, to reflect his growing prosperity and status in the community. Although no record of work on his house could be found in his surviving account books, it is likely that he undertook the improvements in the late 1760s or early 1770s, possibly at the same time as the house for his son, also named John Ashley, was under construction, thereby taking advantage of craftsmen on site.<sup>5</sup>

The changes Col. Ashley made to his house were considerable. On the exterior, a fashionable new front doorway showed that Ashley was a member of an informed and educated elite. This doorway, which survives on the house, linked Ashley to the most current classically inspired styles.

On the interior, finishes and trims were updated through the house. The biggest upgrades took place in the two large front rooms on the second floor. These rooms received beam and post casings and paneling. The northwest chamber, now referred to as Col. Ashley's Study, was finished at a very high level of craftsmanship, with no expense spared.

#### ca. 1810- ca. 1840

After the flurry of renovations of the 1770s, not much was done to update the house for the next 30 years. Mrs. Ashley died in 1790 and Col. Ashley in 1802. For a few years after Col. Ashley's death, his caretaker, Mrs. Jane Steel, had the right to live in the house. John and Hannah's grandson, also named John Ashley, inherited the house, moving in with his wife and eight children about 1805.

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<sup>5</sup> This house, at the intersection of Rannapo and Cooper Hill Roads, is in private hands. It was recently restored to its 18<sup>th</sup> century appearance.

By 1805, the house had become old-fashioned and in need of repair, and contained only three fireplaces. References to the house in the records that divided up the property among the heirs defined it as “old” and valued – together with the barn – at only \$350.

Around 1810, John Ashley (the grandson) undertook a massive overhaul of the house. The chimney was replaced and the number of fireplaces increased to four. The entire rear sloping ell of the house was removed, and replaced with a one-and-a-half story gabled ell. The kitchen was moved from the south room and placed in the east side of the house, where it is today. The house was painted white, a fashionable practice at this time.

Another major change was the creation of a stylish, though a bit cramped, spiral staircase at the front of the house. The downstairs front rooms were reconfigured, and a sleeping alcove was added into the wall between the south rooms (Ashley had gout and could not climb his fancy new stairs). The trim throughout the first floor was redone in a Federal style. The circa-1770 study and front doorway were left intact. This circa-1810 appearance was the iteration of the house carefully restored by Harry and Mary Brigham in the 1930s.

John Ashley died in 1823 and his widow, Asenath Ashley, in 1836. In 1838 their heirs sold the house and five acres of land to Wyllis Bartholomew. He owned it until his death in 1846, using it for farm laborer housing. Wyllis’ son Hiram inherited it, then sold it to his son George Bartholomew in 1852. In 1882, George A. Brewer purchased the Colonel Ashley House and 220 acres of farmland. Brewer and his family operated the Eureka Stock Farm for 40 years. The core of the farm straddled Rannapo Road, with the original Ashley House and its farmyard on the river side, and Brewer’s own house across the road. The Brewer family lived in the Ashley House until 1900, when they moved across Rannapo Road. By the 1920s, the old house was being used for hay storage and as a shelter for pigs and chickens. Except for this deterioration and some slight modifications, the house remained the same throughout these decades.

Except for visual evidence in a couple of photographs taken in the 1880s and other images from the 1920s, not much is known about the barns and other outbuildings. There are some foundations still visible at the original lot along the river but none of the outbuildings remain.

In 1924 the house came back into the Ashley family. Harry Hillyer Brigham, Col. Ashley’s great-great grandson, with his wife Mary purchased the house from George A. Brewer with the understanding that the house be removed. On August 15, 1930 the house, minus its ell and chimney, was moved approximately ¼-mile to a five-acre lot on Cooper Hill Road. Harry Brigham, a retired lawyer, and Mary Brigham, an architect, restored the main block of the house to its circa-1810 appearance and furnished it with antiques. The Brighams replaced the decrepit ell with a slightly larger addition containing the kitchen and modern bathrooms. Harry Brigham died in 1941 and Mary Brigham in 1946.

In 1945, Mr. and Mrs. Edward A. Brewer acquired the house. Edward Brewer, the son of earlier owner George Brewer, had lived in the Ashley House as a child. The Brewers continued to furnish the house with antique furniture, and occasionally gave tours to interested passers-by. Mr. Brewer wished to ensure the house's permanent preservation. In 1960, he arranged to have it purchased by the newly formed Colonel John Ashley House, Inc. This small organization struggled to operate the house as a museum through the 1960s.

The Trustees of Reservations, which had owned Bartholomew's Cobble since 1946, became interested in the adjoining Ashley House. It seemed logical to combine the two properties into an "integrated holding of historical, botanical, geological and scenic values."<sup>6</sup> Led by Morgan Bulkeley III, the Bartholomew's Cobble – Colonel Ashley House Committee raised the \$167,500 necessary to purchase the house, its collections and the five-acre parcel, and to establish a small endowment. The Trustees of Reservations took title to the property in 1972.

Since that time, The Trustees of Reservations have opened the Col. John Ashley House to the public as a historic house museum. Staff and volunteers have presented guided tours of the house, organized special events, and created educational programs to teach about the Ashley Family, Bett and the other enslaved African Americans, and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century life in Western Massachusetts. Starting in 2005, the tours have focused on the theme of freedom. The Ashley House was designated an anchor site on the African American Heritage Trail, a project of the Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area, in September 2006.

The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The exterior has been stained or painted several times and re-roofed twice (ca. 1973 and 2002). Until 2002, the Bartholomew's Cobble Naturalists lived in the apartment in the modern ell; their spouses often served as "hostess" for the Col. Ashley House. Since 2002, the ell has housed staff on a temporary basis. The apartment's living room now serves as the Ashley House's visitor center.

### 3.4 Pre-Settlement

Over the past 8,000 years, the original site of the Ashley House on the west bank of the Housatonic River, and its current site on today's Cooper Hill Road, were used by Algonquian tribes for hunting, fishing, and farming. The most recent group were the Mohicans, "...a vigorous Indian nation with a thousand warriors who...held substantial territory in which hunting, fishing, gathering, subsistence agriculture, and intertribal trade provided sustenance."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Arthur C. Chase, *The Ashley's: A Pioneer Berkshire Family*. With research by Gerard Chapman. Published by The Trustees of Reservations, 1982. pp. 35-37.

<sup>7</sup> Frazier, Patrick. *The Mohicans of Stockbridge*. Lincoln, Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1992. page 2.

By the 1720s, the situation had changed drastically. Disease and war had decimated the Mohican tribe. One group of Mohicans, led by Konkapot and Umpachenee, moved from the Hudson River valley to the eastern edge of the tribe's traditional territory along the Housatonic River.

In 1735-1737, the Mohicans moved to a land grant of 9,000 acres set out for them by the Massachusetts General Court north of Monument Mountain in Stockbridge. Southern Berkshire County was now under the complete control of English settlers. For example, in 1737 Colonel Ashley purchased 50 acres "on Ironworks River [now known as Konkapot River] at a place known as Umpachenes Wigwam."<sup>8</sup> This site is probably near the center of Ashley Falls.

### 3.5 Agriculture and Industry

The land surrounding the Ashley House was used as farmland and woodlots to support farms and businesses located nearby. The extent and variety of agriculture through the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century is indicated in Ashley family account books, including: wool carding, milling grain, haying, making cider, and taking "cows to bull."<sup>9</sup> Both Colonel John Ashley and his son, General John Ashley, owned slaves. This enabled them to own and work more land than the average farmer in Berkshire County.

The iron ore beds of northern Connecticut provided the backbone for industry in southern Berkshire County. Local foundries provided much of the armament of the Revolution. The area's rivers and streams powered a wide variety of mills and factories.

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, New England agriculture changed from subsistence farms growing a wide variety of crops to dairy or niche markets. This change was due to the fact that Midwestern farmers could produce and ship grains and other produce more cheaply than local farmers. Farmers in Sheffield were part of this trend, switching to dairying and stock farms. The Bartholomew family, who acquired much of the Ashley's land in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, produced butter for the New York City market.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1880s, George Brewer purchased the Colonel Ashley house and enough property to support a large cattle and horse farm, the Eureka Stock Farm. A 1904 advertisement read, "...Eureka Stock Farm...located one and one-half miles West from Ashley Falls. This is the Best Improved Farm in Southern Berkshire. General Stock Dealer. All kinds of Stock Bought and Sold. Small Profits and Quick Sales. Drop me a Postal When You Have Stock For Sale...."<sup>11</sup> A pair of photographs from this era shows the Brewer family proudly posed, with some livestock, both in front of and behind the house.

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<sup>8</sup> Berkshire County Registry of Deeds.

<sup>9</sup> Various ledgers kept by Col. John Ashley, his son General John Ashley and grandson William Ashley 1792-1847. On loan from Joseph C. Hurlburt of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from H.A. Hillyer to William Ashley, 1843. On loan from Joseph C. Hurlburt of Lancaster, Pennsylvania

<sup>11</sup> *Atlas of Berkshire County*, 1904

## 3.6 Politics

Col. Ashley played an important role in the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary history of the region. In January 1773, Ashley was one of the authors of the Sheffield Resolves, a series of resolutions proclaiming the rights of Englishmen in relation to the English Crown. The Resolves were a statement of the rights Americans had and grievances under which they labored, including the familiar revolutionary-era cry: “No taxation without representation!”

The Sheffield Resolves demonstrated the political connections to Boston. Berkshire County may have been the western frontier, but the fevered pitch of 1770s-era politics was closely followed by the local citizenry.

The Town of Sheffield passed its Resolves at Town Meeting in response to a request from the Boston’s Committee of Correspondence. This request was sent to all 260 towns and districts in Massachusetts in November 1772. The Boston radicals, including Samuel Adams, were upset with what they considered the latest offense by the British government. In September 1772, the British government in London decided that they would pay colonial judges directly, rather than via the Massachusetts House of Representatives. This took away one of the colonialists’ checks to the power of the Crown. Now the London government, by both appointing and paying judges, could exercise unfair and unchecked power.

About 125 towns responded to the Boston Town Meeting’s request for support. Drawing from the rhetoric of the Boston Pamphlet and from their own readings of John Locke, responses were passionate. The Sheffield Resolves, for example, echoed the theme that the judiciary needed to be independent and stated that citizens of Massachusetts deserved all the rights of other British subjects. Patriots weren’t quite to the point of declaring independence, but they were getting restless.<sup>12</sup>

How does the Sheffield Resolves relate to the Declaration of Independence? The Declaration of Independence does not directly spring from the Sheffield Resolves. But they both came from the same dissatisfaction, the same history, and the same philosophy: “That mankind in a state of nature are equal, free, and independent of each other, and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property.”

Tradition has it that the Sheffield Resolves was discussed in Colonel John Ashley’s house. This is plausible, given that Col. Ashley was one of the leading citizens of Sheffield, and a member of the General Court (the Colonial legislative body in Boston).

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<sup>12</sup> This from *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord*, by Ray Raphael (New York: The New Press, 2002). See pages 32-35. Raphael argues that the Revolution was actually started with acts of rebellion in many towns, including some in western Massachusetts.

## 3.7 The Ashley Family

### **Captain John Ashley (1669-1759)**

The story of the Ashley family in Sheffield begins with Col. Ashley's father, known as Captain John Ashley, even before the formal settlement of the town. In 1722, a group of men, known as Proprietors, received permission from the General Court of Massachusetts Bay to develop two tracts of land along the Housatonic River. Captain Ashley of Westfield, the father of Col. John Ashley of Sheffield, was appointed a member of the committee to lead this project. Their charge was to assist the settlement of the Housatonic River Valley lands, with authority to admit settlers, grant lots, and to take charge of the business affairs of the newcomers.

In 1724, a deed with the local Mohican leader Konkapot confirmed the transfer of the land to the committee for the settlements, which included the present towns of Sheffield, Great Barrington, Egremont, Mount Washington, and much of Alford, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Lee. This is an area about twelve miles wide and eighteen miles long, extending northward from the Connecticut colony line and straddling the Housatonic River. In 1738, Captain Ashley transferred 266 acres to his son John Ashley, including the land where the son had already built his house.

### **Colonel John Ashley (1709-1802)**

As noted in the Introduction, Col. John Ashley was a wealthy and influential citizen of Sheffield for many decades. Born in Westfield, Ashley graduated from Yale University in 1730, and passed the Hampshire County Bar in 1732. After serving in the French and Indian War, Ashley was appointed Colonel in the South Berkshire Regiment. Other offices held included Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Berkshire County, Sheriff of Hampshire County (before Berkshire County was split off in 1761), and representative to the General Court in Boston (precursor of today's State Legislature).

By the 1760s - probably Col. Ashley's most prosperous decade - he was operating a general store, sawmill, gristmill, potash works, cider mill, tanneries, and ironworks. He did not speculate in real estate, but rather accumulated land – about 3,000 acres by the time of his death in 1802.

From 1735 to 1802, Col. Ashley lived in the same house. As his wealth increased in the 1760s and 1770s, Ashley had the building updated and redecorated. For example, the upstairs study was elaborately paneled sometime in the 1760s. But after about 1780 the updates seem to have stopped and by the time he died it was in need of repairs.

### **Hannah Hogeboom Ashley (1712-1790)**

Hannah was the daughter of Pieter Welse and Jannetje (Muller) Hogeboom of Claverack, New York. According to tradition, she met John Ashley when he visited this town along the Hudson River to ship some goods. Not much is known about Mrs. Ashley, except for her reputation of being harsh to the slaves in her household. Her violent act – hitting Bett with a hot shovel – prompted Bett to sue for her own freedom.

Colonel John and Hannah Ashley had four children:

**John Ashley (1736-1799)**

Known as General John Ashley (in 1789 he was promoted to Major General of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division of Mass. Militia). General Ashley followed in his father's footsteps, graduating from Yale, passing the bar exam, representing Sheffield in General Court in Boston, and gradually assuming control of the family businesses. With help from his father, he built a big house next door to his parents. This house, at the corner of Rannapo and Cooper Hill Roads, still stands in its original location. Like his father, General Ashley owned slaves. One of the slaves was almost certainly Brom, Bett's co-plaintiff in the court case of 1781.

**Jane Ashley Buell Porter (1738-1814)**

Before leaving her parents' home and marrying three times, Jane left her mark on the house – she signed her name in chalk in the attic stairway. The marking is still visible. In 1757, Jane married Dr. William Buell of Sheffield. In 1762, she married Capt. Ruloff Dutcher of Canaan, and in 1808 married Capt Joshua Porter of Salisbury, Connecticut. She is buried in Salisbury. Through her second marriage, Jane is an ancestor of Caroline Dutcher Sterling Choate, the same Caroline Choate who, with her husband Joseph, built Naumkeag, another property of The Trustees of Reservations. Presumably Caroline and Joseph Hodges Choate named their firstborn son Ruloff in honor of this ancestor.

**Mary Ashley Fellows (1739- 1797)**

In 1762, Mary married Gen. John Fellows of Sheffield. She is buried in Sheffield.

**Hannah Ashley Vosburgh (1744-1764)**

On January 11, 1764 Hannah married Martin Vosburgh of Claverack, New York. She died 19 days later, and is buried in Trivolia, New York.

Two more descendents deserve special mention. Two of General John Ashley's sons, John and William, inherited much of their grandfather's estate. **John (1767-1823)** inherited his grandfather's house and was responsible for some major renovations, including moving the kitchen to its current location. **William Ashley (1773-1849)** ran the family businesses. He left some of the account books in his house in Ashley Falls, which the Hurlburt family later found and preserved.

### **3.8 African Americans at the Ashley House**

According to the 1771 Massachusetts Tax Valuation, Col. Ashley owned five African men, women, and children as slaves. They labored in his household as servants and on his farms and in his mills. The Tax Valuation listed fourteen households in Sheffield as owning slaves; Col. Ashley was the single largest slave owner.

In 1781, upset with the unnecessary violence and unfairness of human bondage, one of the enslaved African American women took action. Bett, together with another slave named Brom, sued Col. Ashley for their freedom. Represented by Theodore Sedgwick, Bett and Brom won their freedom when the jury found that they were freemen illegally

detained in servitude by the Ashleys. This case, one of several in Massachusetts during the early 1780s brought by slaves, challenged the institution of slavery in the Commonwealth. The cumulative effect was the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts in 1783.

### **Bett (Elizabeth Freeman)**

The oft-told story of Bett (also known as Mum Bett or Mumbet) has inspired generations of Americans with its themes of courage and freedom. Not much is known about Bett's early life. She was born into slavery in New York around 1744. When she was young, she became the property of Colonel John Ashley, perhaps given or sold by his wife Hannah's father, Pieter Hogeboom of Claverack, NY. Most of what we know about Bett was written by members of the Sedgwick family. Theodore Sedgwick was Bett and Brom's attorney for their suit against Col. Ashley.<sup>13</sup> Bett, after winning her freedom, worked for the Sedgwicks for many years, and was loved and respected by the family.

The Sedgwicks passed along Bett's story of how Mrs. Ashley, "a shrew untamable," precipitated Bett's quest for freedom. One day in a fit of anger, Mrs. Ashley raised a red-hot kitchen shovel to strike Lizzie, described as a young servant girl. Bett took the blow instead and bore a scar on her arm for the rest of her life. She seems to have left the Ashley household shortly after this incident.

Bett sought help from a young lawyer, Theodore Sedgwick, who was known to support the anti-slavery cause. Years later, he told his daughter Catharine that Mum Bett had told him that she believed she had a case based on the newly ratified Massachusetts Constitution (1780). When he asked how she knew of this document, she responded, "By keepin' still and mindin' things."

On August 22, 1781, a jury in a courtroom of County Court of Common Pleas in Great Barrington declared that Brom and Bett "are not and were not ... the legal Negro Servants of him the said John Ashley during life," and they ordered Col. Ashley to pay thirty shillings' damages and the cost of the suit – five pounds, fourteen shillings, and four pence. This moment was a turning point for these two African Americans, and for the cause of ending slavery in Massachusetts.

"When she was waiting at table [in the Ashley home]," Catharine Sedgwick explained, "she heard gentlemen talking over the Bill of Rights ... and in all they said she never heard but that all people were born free and equal, and she thought long about it, and resolved she would try whether she did not come in among them." This was a woman about whom Theodore Sedgwick would later say: "She had nothing of the submissive or subdued character [about her]."

Later in life, Bett was quoted as saying, "Any time, any time, while I was a slave, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that

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<sup>13</sup> Little is known about Bett's co-plaintiff, Brom. It is possible he was a slave in the household of Col. John Ashley's son, General John Ashley.

minute, I would have taken it, just to stand one minute on God's earth a free woman, I would."

Bett, taking the name Elizabeth Freeman, then worked for 26 years as the Sedgwick family's housekeeper. (The Sedgwicks and others called her Mum Bett, or Mumbet, as a sign of respect.) She saved enough money to buy a plot of land in Stockbridge, where she lived with her daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Elizabeth Freeman died in 1829 and is buried in the Sedgwick family plot in Stockbridge, next to Catharine Sedgwick.

**EPITAPH FOR ELIZABETH FREEMAN'S GRAVE, SEDGWICK PIE,  
STOCKBRIDGE CEMETERY**

ELIZABETH FREEMAN

known by the name of  
MUMBET

Died Dec. 28, 1829

Her supposed age was 85 Years She was born a slave and remained a slave for nearly thirty years. She could neither read nor write, yet in her own sphere she had no superior nor equal. She neither wasted time nor property. She never violated a trust, nor failed to perform a duty. In every situation of domestic trial, she was the most efficient helper, and the tenderest friend. Good Mother, farewell.

**Zack Mullen**<sup>14</sup>

As noted by historian Bernard Drew, Bett & Brom's court case was not the first lawsuit brought against Col. Ashley. In April 1781, Zack Mullen accused the Ashleys of assault and battery and false imprisonment (from October 25, 1780 to March 26, 1781). Probably because the Bett & Brom case was decided in their favor, Col. Ashley most likely settled out of court with Zack Mullen. Mullen returned to work for Col. Ashley several years later. According to Ashley family account books, Mullen purchased grains, cotton and wool from the Ashley's store, leased an acre of land for farming, and pastured two cows on Ashley land.

**John**

John is a bit of a mystery. His name shows up a few times in the Ashley account books, purchasing a little rum, some rye, and cloth. It's possible he lived in the Ashley House, not requiring many personal items. By the time of Col. Ashley's death in 1802, he had disappeared from the account books.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The biographies for the three enslaved male African Americans are drawn from Bernard A. Drew, If They Close the Door on You, Go in the Window: Origins of the African American Community in Sheffield, Great Barrington, & Stockbridge. Great Barrington, MA: Attic Revivals Press, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard A. Drew, If They Close the Door on You, Go in the Window, page 50.

### **Harry**

Harry appears in the account books more frequently. He traveled to Claverack, NY for days at a stretch – interesting at a time when slavery was still legal in New York. He continued to work for Col. Ashley’s grandson William Ashley into the late 1810s.<sup>16</sup>

## **3.9 Decline of the Ashley Family in Sheffield**

In 1790, Hannah Ashley passed away in her seventy-eighth year. Col. John Ashley remained alone in his house with three elderly African men – former slaves, now servants - who remained after the 1781 lawsuit. Joining him in the house during the latter part of the decade and until his death in 1802 as a housekeeper, nurse, and companion was a widow, Mrs. Jane Steel. Mrs. Steel continued to live in the house several years after Col. Ashley’s death.

Another blow came in November 1799, when the heir-apparent to the Ashley wealth and status, Gen. John Ashley, died unexpectedly. This divided the holdings prematurely and diluted the wealth of the family. By 1838 both the Col. Ashley House and General Ashley House, and most of the lands once held by Col. John Ashley, had been sold out of the family. A grandson, William Ashley, retained control of the mills, store, and ironworks until his death in 1849, but did little to expand and pass on the Ashley wealth. With his demise, the Ashley presence in Sheffield largely disappeared.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., page 50.

# Section 4: Cultural Resources

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## 4.1 Introduction

In the late 1920s, the Ashley House was empty and forlorn, used for farm storage. The Ashley family's household furnishings were long since dispersed and lost to history. Today it is once again filled with ceramics, furniture, tools, and other objects dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Together with the house itself, the collections illustrate everyday life of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century western New England. They are managed according to The Trustees' Collections Management Policy (2003). This section will describe the existing cultural resources at the Ashley House including the collections, archives and the cultural landscape. The house, in and of itself a cultural resource, will be described and assessed in Section 6: Structural Resources.

## 4.2 Summary of Existing Collections

The collection was assembled from the 1930s to the present day, first by Ashley family descendents Harry and Mary Brigham, who moved the house to its current location in 1930. Mr. and Mrs. Edward Brewer, who owned the house from 1945 to 1960, added to the collections and displayed them in pleasing ways. From the 1960s to the present, donors gave a few more objects to the Col. John Ashley House, Inc. and then to The Trustees of Reservations.

There are good collections of red earthenware, stoneware, furniture, tools, and toleware.<sup>1</sup> Although few objects have a direct connection to the Ashley family, and none to the enslaved members of the household, the objects do illustrate life in 18<sup>th</sup> century western Massachusetts. The room settings have changed little from the 1950s, when the Brigham and Brewer families first assembled and displayed the objects. And, because the collections evolved over the decades without a clear furnishings plan, some objects date to the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century, well after the death of Col. John Ashley (died 1802) or even his grandson, John Ashley, who inherited the house (died 1823).

The following sections detail the existing collections at the Col. John Ashley House.

### 4.2.1 Ceramics

#### Red earthenware

There is a comprehensive collection of over 200 pieces of red earthenware (redware), most displayed in the Buttery. Most were purchased in the 1930s by Mary Brigham from dealers in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

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<sup>1</sup> Painted objects made of tinned sheet metal.

Redware was the most common form of utilitarian ceramic in early America. Imported ceramics were expensive, so through the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, New Englanders relied on local potteries to make necessary wares from local red clay.

Large redware pans held fresh milk, bowls were used for washing dishes, and jugs carried ale and cider to workers in the fields. Butter was made in earthenware butter churns. Potters even made special items like figurines and delicately crafted presentation pieces created as gifts to celebrate a wedding or anniversary. Inkwells and shaving mugs demonstrate other uses of redware for personal and household needs.

Close observation of the redware reveals the daily life of 200 hundred years ago. Cups and cooking vessels have sides and bottoms burned from being placed directly in the fireplace coals. Desire for decoration is revealed in the extraordinary green, orange, black, red, purple, and brown glazes applied by anonymous potters.

### Stoneware

Stoneware was more difficult to produce than redware because it required high firing temperatures, but it had many advantages. It did not require glazes to make it waterproof, it resisted chipping, and was easier to clean. The manufacture of stoneware was much more competitive; potters were more likely to mark their pieces. Although it did not have to be glazed, potters usually gave their wares a salt glaze. Salt was thrown into the kiln where it vaporized, giving the ware an orange peel texture.

Potters often used “slip” to decorate their wares. Slip is a thinned mixture of clay, typically mixed with an oxide to provide color. Because cobalt oxide can hold up to stoneware’s high firing temperatures, most stoneware jugs have the resulting distinctive blue decoration. Some potters painted elaborate scenes; others just highlighted the embossed names.

Stoneware pieces displayed in the Ashley House include a “corker” (ca 1840-1890), used to store soft foods such as preserves and stewed tomatoes. Jugs, such as one with a “CHARLESTOWN” stamp (ca 1800-1820), were used to store anything from molasses to rum.

### Whiteware

This ceramic type was often called “Staffordshire” because most was made in that county in England. The Ashley House has a few examples, including a blue Lafayette plate (1825). General Lafayette returned to America in 1824-1825, visiting each state amid much fanfare. There were many souvenirs, including this plate, made by (ironically) a Staffordshire, England pottery.

The plate is decorated by the transfer printing method. A master engraving would be made in copper, then the image printed on tissue paper in metallic oxide inks – in this case, cobalt blue. The tissue paper would be affixed to the whiteware body and fired. The image would remain, the paper would burn away. This was an inexpensive method, common by the early 1800s, to create complex images on pottery.

### Other Ceramics

There are also small groups of yellow-ware (also known as Rockingham ware), European porcelain, and tin-glazed earthenware (Delft) in the Ashley House collections.

### **4.2.2 Furniture**

The furniture ranges from utilitarian (work tables) to high style (high chest of drawers). Each room is fully furnished with tables, chairs, desks, looking glasses, or beds – whatever appropriate for the space. At least one piece is a reproduction (the Carver chair in the kitchen). Some were stripped and refinished – a common practice in the 1930s and 1940s. Several pieces do remain in original condition.

Here are some examples:

In the kitchen are two work tables (1720-1810), a common form made by local craftsmen. Also in the kitchen is a painted chest with drawer (1730-1800), demonstrating an appreciation for bright colors and vivid designs.

In the north parlor are three matching Queen Anne style chairs (ca. 1755-1766), part of the dowry of General John Ashley's second wife, Mary Ballantine.<sup>2</sup> The seat covers were reproduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The chairs were made in Western Massachusetts, demonstrating the fine craftsmanship available to families of the Ashleys' wealth and status.

The high chest (ca. 1730-1760) is an example of a popular 18<sup>th</sup> century form. The most complex piece made by a furniture maker, this was a status symbol. The hidden drawer in the cornice is not uncommon. This piece has been refinished.

The small tilt-top table (ca. 1775-1800) was a versatile piece of furniture. It could be used as a candle stand, a writing surface, or game table. The tilt-top made it easily stored when not in use, a useful feature in a crowded house.

Throughout the house are Windsor chairs. Windsor chairs were mass produced as early as the 1740s. Made from several different kinds of wood, these chairs were painted to hide that fact. Durable and inexpensive, these chairs were popular all over the country.

### **4.2.3 Tools**

The house is equipped with everything from toasters on the kitchen hearth to an anvil in the attic. The spinning wheels tell of textile production. The pitchforks and scythes remind us of the hard physical work of farming. Most of the tools date from circa-1750 to circa-1840, though some gadgets date to the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. Some tools were collected by the Brighams and Brewers, but most were donated later. One notable donor is Morgan Bulkeley III, who not only helped save the Ashley House, but gave many 18<sup>th</sup> century tools, some originating from Penny Royal, his family's farm in Mt. Washington, Massachusetts.

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<sup>2</sup> There were several generations of "John Ashley." Colonel John Ashley's son reached the rank of General and is thus identified.

As with many historic houses, there is the challenge of how best to display woodworking, agricultural, and metalworking tools. At the Ashley House, these items are displayed in the attic, which tends to get very hot in the summer. Not only is this uncomfortable for visitors, it can also be damaging to artifacts.

#### **4.2.4 Toleware**

Toleware is a collective term for any number of household objects, from boxes to teapots, made of tinned sheet iron. The object is painted with bright decorations. Popular in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the decorative painting was a craft often practiced by the women of the household. The Ashley House has a small but varied collection, mostly housed in a corner cabinet in the South Parlor.

#### **4.2.5 Lighting devices**

There is a wide range of lamps and candlesticks throughout the house. Some of the earliest examples are rushlight holders. They held fat or oil-soaked rushes, which provided a bit of light. The betty lamp was an improvement over the rushlight, as any kind of fat could be put in its reservoir, with a wick draped over its spout.

Then there are the more familiar candle holders made of tinned sheet iron, brass, or redware. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, fuel lamps provided a brighter and less smoky light. Whale oil was an especially popular fuel, as it burned steadily and brightly. It was the basis of the extensive whaling industry. But it was expensive, so other fuels such as camphene, which was an alcohol solution, were developed in the 1840s. These are identifiable by tall diverging wick supports – the fuel was explosive.

#### **4.2.6 Textiles**

The textile collection consists almost entirely of bed coverings and linens. Some of the linens are associated with the Ashley family, including six sheets given in 2006 by Jane Ashley Lundy, a direct descendent. Bed coverings include an 1840s Jacquard woven coverlet and a “friendship quilt” (ca. 1876). In 2005, The Trustees purchased two reproduction coverlets, made with appropriate materials, in the style of circa-1800. Except for one hat, there is no clothing amongst the existing collections.

### **4.3 Archives**

There is a small but important collection of manuscript material relating to the Ashley family, primarily a group of account books on loan to The Trustees of Reservations. These ledgers and daybooks (1760s to the 1840s) provide an extraordinary picture of the material and social world of the Ashleys and their neighbors in Sheffield. Two are owned by The Trustees; the others are on loan from Joseph C. Hurlburt of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Mr. Hurlburt is the descendent of the Hurlburt family that acquired and occupied the William Ashley House in Ashley Falls in the late-nineteenth century. When

that family sold the property in the twentieth century, they took the Ashley account books with them, preserving them to this day.

The surviving books represent only a fraction of the volumes used by four generations of Ashleys to record their financial affairs. These included extensive farmland; the raising, grazing, and slaughter of livestock; potash works; sawmill; gristmill; nail factory; plaster mill; carding mill; ironworks and iron mines; weaving and spinning accounts; records of storekeeping; and labor accounts. The quality of the records varies, from haphazard memoranda about laborers and work to be done, to sophisticated bookkeeping procedures that include daybooks and a series of ledgers with coded entries for purchases in the store.

There is a significant collection of photographs. Two are from the 1880s and show the front and back facades of the Ashley House. The other interior and exterior views are from the 1920s, depicting the house before it was moved and restored. There are a good number of photographs from the 1930s, immediately after the house was restored.

## **4.4 Collections Management**

Collections management encompasses physical care, information management, and legal procedures. Elements of physical care and preservation are security, proper storage or display techniques, protection from light and humidity, and proper object handling. Examples of information management are inventory, cataloguing, and data entry. Legal procedures govern acquisitions, appraisals, loans, and deaccessioning.

The Trustees' Standing Committee passed a Collections Policy (1998, rev. 2003) that codified professional museum standards for The Trustees' historic houses. The goal is to preserve each historic house and its contents in perpetuity, for the benefit of future generations. This policy, along with several other historic house policies, is on file with The Trustees.

As with many historic house museums, collections management practices at the Col. John Ashley House have evolved over the decades. The Col. John Ashley House, Inc., which owned the house from 1960 to 1972, seems to have taken good care of the collections. The organization deaccessioned and sold some the collection in the early 1960s.

Staff and volunteers continued to care for the artifacts after The Trustees of Reservations acquired the house in 1972. Some historic furniture was used for storage and fires were lit in the hearths. But generally speaking, artifacts were treated well, and there was considerable effort put into cataloguing the collections. In the 1990s, collections management practices were further improved to meet current museum standards. These efforts were made possible by talented maintenance staff and the creation of a Historic Resources department. A detailed Collections Management Assessment was conducted by Robert Mussey Associates (1992).

Collections care involves more than not lighting fires, preventing visitors from sitting on the furniture, and from spilling cookie crumbs on the carpets. At the Ashley House, as at any historic house, objects are dusted and vacuumed (dust is abrasive, holds moisture, and attracts insects) and cleaned (e.g., removing tarnish from silver and brass). To lessen the damage that light can cause to objects made of organic materials, there are UV filters and curtains on the windows. In the off-season, furniture is covered with sheets. The house has intrusion and smoke detectors to help prevent theft and fire damage. Some artifacts are stored in closets, in the attic, and inside historic furniture – all inappropriate places for long-term preservation.

In the mid 1970s, Ashley House “Hostess” Bettyle Carpenter inventoried the collections. (Bettyle’s husband Robert was the Bartholomew’s Cobble Naturalist; they lived in the house’s ell.) Mrs. Carpenter assigned numbers in consecutive order and painted them onto the artifacts. In 1978-1979, Susan Edwards researched and catalogued most of the collection more thoroughly, putting the information onto cards. At this time, Susan implemented The Trustees’ numbering system, used in the other historic houses. Susan assigned the new numbers, putting them on the cards but not onto the artifacts themselves, and cross-referenced Carpenter’s numbers.

In the summer of 1989, Will Garrison was hired as an intern to expand the catalog. He filled out worksheets, designed a computerized database, and entered the collections data into the database. The electronic version of this catalog information has since been lost.

Christine Wessell, a summer intern during 1991, continued the cataloguing project. She focused on the tool collection and produced detailed worksheets. Christine left a detailed daily journal of her research into the tools and her struggles to make sense of the different catalog systems.

Today, the collections, with the exception of the textiles and some tools, have been catalogued. The information is spread among several sets of cards and worksheets. Since 2002, staff have transferred about 5% of the catalog information into The Trustees’ PastPerfect database. Although it has not been a high priority to this point, transferring the information to the computer database is the best opportunity to clarify a muddled cataloguing system.

## **4.5 Conservation and Restoration**

Beyond the day-to-day preventative measures described under Collections Management, the collections sometimes require additional care. All conservation, restoration, and reproduction work is done to the highest possible standards.

The Trustees strives to use its historic buildings, landscapes, and collections to connect visitors to the past and to each special place. This is a constant struggle as staff attempts to retain the original look and meaning of the buildings, landscapes and objects, while combating the elements of time and nature. Historic houses are filled with objects that will, despite best efforts, decay or rust or break. The challenge is to find a balance

between the obligation to keep the original 18<sup>th</sup> century objects “as is” and the need to restore elements, or even replace with reproductions.

An ongoing challenge is to preserve the objects inside a house that has little climate control. The Trustees have taken practical measures, such as curtains that are closed whenever possible and UV filters installed on each pane of glass. Windows are opened in the summer to let in fresh air, but this also brings in dust and humidity. When the Ashley House is closed for the season, furniture and historic textiles are covered with dust sheets. Archival material has been removed to better (though not great) storage at the Berkshires Region office in Stockbridge. The furniture and tools stored in the attic are not so fortunate, suffering from high summer temperatures and relative humidity.

In 2006, The Trustees purchased an Archival and Research Center in Sharon that will be used to house all collections and artifacts not on display in the organization’s historic houses. Once brought on-line, this climate-controlled facility will ensure that all historic objects are stored properly and receive the highest level of care.

## **4.6 Collections Use and Research**

The Ashley House collections are used in many ways. Most are on view in the house, providing visitors tangible illustrations of the tour’s themes. Reproductions of 18<sup>th</sup> century toys and tools are used by school groups. Original documents in the archives, such as the account books, give depth to the guided tours. Also in the archives are photographs dating to the 1920s, which prove invaluable for restoration projects.

Additionally, scholars use the collections for their publications. Bernard Drew, for example, based much of his book *If They Close the Door on You, Go in the Window: Origins of the African American Community in Sheffield, Great Barrington, & Stockbridge*<sup>3</sup> on the account books.

## **4.7 The Cultural Landscape**

When Harry and Mary Brigham moved the Ashley House to its current location in 1930, it was set in an open meadow next to a small stream. Over the decades, this rather stark landscape evolved and filled in. Now a combination of lawn, trees, small gardens, hedges, and shrubs planted in various locations surrounds the house.

Little information exists from the original site on the landscape that surrounded the house before it was moved to its current location. The original 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape immediately surrounding the Ashley House was probably a busy and well used space—with a small herb garden, food preparation, laundry, etc. – all in a hard packed dirt yard. Barns and other outbuildings were attached to the house or nearby.

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<sup>3</sup> Great Barrington, MA: Attic Revivals Press, 2004.

A real estate advertisement from about 1958- which advertised the sale of the Ashley House for \$60,000 completely furnished- noted, “Approximately 7 acres with old shade trees. A stony brook flows through the property summer and winter. Easily dammed for swimming.” Newspaper articles from the 1950s and 1960s note the meadows and large shade trees around the house.

Significant press coverage was given to the Sheffield Garden Club’s creation in May 1964 of the “goosefoot” herb garden on the south side of the house. The club members did considerable historical research, basing the garden on one at Plimoth Plantation. Originally built on the south side of the ell, at some point after 1970 it was moved to its current location outside the South Parlor where it replaced some very large “smoke bushes.”

A formal landscape plan has never been created; local garden clubs, individual staff efforts, and well intentioned donations of plant material have all contributed to the current planting scheme. Immediately surrounding the house is a mixed border with lilacs and ferns along the front (west) façade, a boxwood hedge around the south patio, and three wood-framed perennial beds against the south side. The perennial beds include hosta, day lilies, phlox, and ladies’ mantle. Viburnum and lilac shrubs occur along the picket fence to the north of the house, and a variety of shrubs have been planted in patches in the lawn area south of the house. These shrub patches include flowering quince, forsythia, witch-hazel, multiflora rose, bayberry, and honeysuckle, most of which are not native. Trees include two large oaks and a large maple, several English walnut trees along the stone wall west of the house, an ornamental apple tree, and a small planted pine near the garage.

Maintenance for this assortment of ornamental plantings is minimal, apart from regular weeding of the perennial beds which is done regularly by a volunteer. The boxwood and shrubs are pruned annually by staff.

## 4.8 Significant Threats to Cultural Resources

- **Fire.** In general, old wooden buildings are at great risk from fire, either accidental or deliberate. The Ashley House is no exception. Even if a fire is not catastrophic, the resulting water and smoke damage would require expensive conservation of the houses and its artifacts. Despite smoke and heat rise detectors, the house’s remote location would slow the local fire department’s response.
- **Theft.** The Ashley House is filled with valuable antiques. Thefts can be perpetrated by visitors taking “souvenirs” while on a tour, thieves breaking in at night, or by unscrupulous staff or volunteers. Despite the alarm system, the house’s remote location would slow police response.
- **Water and Wind.** Violent thunderstorms, blizzards, and the occasional tornado are all components of the weather in the Berkshires. Buildings and their contents are thus at risk from water, falling trees, and the like. The Ashley House is prone to water damage in the chimney and windows resulting from wind-driven rain.

- **Agents of deterioration.** High and/or fluctuating relative humidity, high temperatures, light, careless handling, and pests (e.g. mice, powder post beetles) all pose threats to artifacts. These factors are especially apparent in the attic.

## 4.9 Significant Opportunities

- Create an emergency preparedness plan, outlining policies and procedures to prevent and mitigate damage from disaster or theft.
- Locate proper storage for artifacts not on display, especially those currently stored in the attic.
- Reconcile the different object catalogs and update the information as needed in a centralized database.
- Promote further research into the history of the house, the Ashley family, both the hired and enslaved members of the household, and the existing collections.
- Develop an active corps of volunteers to assist with collections management, education and visitor services.
- Identify and implement improvements to the cultural landscape to rid the area immediate surrounding the house of its twentieth-century appearance.
- Engage descendents of the Ashley Family in the ongoing preservation and stewardship of the property.

## Section 5: Natural Resources

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### 5.1 Introduction

The natural resources of the Ashley House property are inextricably linked to those of Bartholomew's Cobble. As previously outlined, the focus of this plan is on the cultural resources of the Ashley House and the five-acre parcel on which it sits. The management plan for the Cobble, completed in 2005, includes descriptions of the natural resources of the Ashley House property and details the natural resource management needs. This section will focus on the key natural resource features that will require consideration when managing the cultural resources of the Ashley House.

### 5.2 An Overview of the Natural Landscape

Bartholomew's Cobble and the Ashley House lie within the Western New England Marble Valleys ecoregion. The ecological communities within this ecoregion are influenced by the underlying limestone and marble bedrock. The rich soils that derive from this bedrock support an extremely diverse flora and fauna, with many species not found elsewhere in Massachusetts (see the Bartholomew's Cobble Management Plan for additional information). The landscape in the vicinity of the two reservations is still largely rural, with a mix of fields, woodlands, and farm and suburban houses. The town of Sheffield is 12% wetlands, with much of these included as Estimated Habitat for Rare Wetland Wildlife, a regulatory designation under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. The Trustees' properties in Sheffield fall almost entirely within Estimated Habitat and include several important wetland areas such as marshes and swamps within the floodplain of the Housatonic River, and shallow marshes, headwaters swamps, and streams. Stony Brook conveys the water flowing off of the bulk of the western portion of Bartholomew's Cobble (Hurlburt's Hill) east past the Ashley House and then to the Housatonic River. Stony Brook has been dammed by beavers to the east of the Ashley House for the last 15-20 years, creating a mosaic of shrub swamp, marsh, and wet meadow.

The immediate landscape surrounding the Ashley House is dominated by open habitats including manicured lawn, managed hayfields, and beaver-impacted wetlands [see the Bartholomew's Cobble plan for more information regarding the classification and status of these communities]. Immediately south and east of the Ashley House is a complex of wetland communities that change depending on the status of nearby beaver dams. The area was largely a wet meadow, until the return of beavers into the wetland 20 years ago. Now it is a complex assemblage of emergent marsh, beaver impoundments, and circumneutral shrub and hardwood swamps. Open pools are bordered by deep and shallow emergent marsh (cattail, bulrush [*Scirpus* spp.], sedges [*Carex* spp.], manna grass [*Glyceria* spp.], water hemlock). American bittern, endangered in Massachusetts, has been seen and heard in this wetland in 2000, 2001, and 2002 during

the breeding season. A wood turtle, a state-listed species, was observed on the lawn of the Ashley House in the 1990s and more recently in Ashley Field. This turtle prefers slow moving mid-sized streams and may have been looking for an open, sandy area for nesting when observed near the Ashley House.

The edges of the wetland area, particularly the southern edge, are a mosaic of the Circumneutral Shrub and Hardwood Swamp communities (green ash, spicebush, rough-leaved goldenrod, shrubby cinquefoil, alder-leaved buckthorn, brome-like sedge (*Carex bromoides*), wood horsetail, pussy willow, shining willow, silky willow, red-osier dogwood, swamp milkweed, swamp buttercup). The wetland area grades into a drier non-woody old field community directly east of the mowed area around the Ashley House. Great blue lobelia (threatened in Massachusetts) and showy goldenrod (watch-listed) occur here near the edge of the mowed area.

### 5.3 Regulatory Issues

#### Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act

These acts regulate activity within 100 feet of all jurisdictional wetlands and 200 feet of perennial streams and rivers. Thus, work within these areas may require a permit from the local Conservation Commission. In addition, state-listed wetland wildlife are protected under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Changes to the landscape of the Ashley House (including alteration of parking lots and removal or construction of buildings) will likely require review by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program due to the presence of rare wetland wildlife nearby.

#### Flood Management

While areas along the Housatonic River at the Cobble are prone to flooding (e.g., Corbin's Neck), this flooding typically does not present management issues since roads and structures are not affected. However, flooding along Stony Brook from beaver activity is a potential threat to Cooper Hill and Rannapo Roads and to the Ashley House itself, particularly the septic system. The Trustees' organizational guidelines for beaver management<sup>1</sup> should be consulted prior to any beaver management activity. Additionally, control of beaver-related flooding is regulated by the local Board of Health, Conservation Commission or the State through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The removal of a beaver dam or the installation of a water level control device (i.e., beaver baffler) would require the approval of one or more of these agencies. This issue is further complicated by the presence of state-listed rare species in and along Stony Brook that are covered by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). Flood control at this location would likely require approval from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

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<sup>1</sup> Beaver Management at The Trustees of Reservations. 2005. The Trustees of Reservations: Leominster, MA.

### Rare Species

In addition to the issues associated with rare species discussed above, all state-listed rare species are protected by the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Rare species are ubiquitous at the Cobble, and several species occur close to (and possibly in) the managed lands surrounding the Ashley House. In addition, any active management intended to benefit rare species should be coordinated with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

## **5.4 Threats to Natural Resources**

- Invasive (exotic) species. The most troublesome species include several herbs (e.g., garlic mustard, purple loosestrife), several shrubs (e.g., common buckthorn, common and Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, Morrow's honeysuckle), and vines (oriental bittersweet and black swallowwort). Specific threats from these species include competition with rare and uncommon species populations and the general degradation of relatively pristine plant communities. Invasive plants (and to the greatest extent practical, any exotic species) should not be used for any landscaping or gardening at the Ashley House. Established invasive plants will be removed.
- Plant succession. Both the great blue lobelia and the showy goldenrod require more open conditions, although the lobelia can also grow in partial shade. The natural process of succession would, in many cases, result in overshadowing of these significant species populations. Management of the landscape around the Ashley House and outside of the regularly mowed lawn should support the open conditions required by these species.
- Nutrient inputs to the wetlands. The septic system of the Ashley House is old and is possibly threatened by rising water during periods of beaver flooding. Failure of the septic system, whether due to old age or flooding, will result in an increase of available nutrients which could change the character of the wetlands, especially by encouraging expansion of invasive species.
- Sedimentation. Sediment and run-off (from agricultural fields or parking areas) can degrade plant communities and encourage invasive species, especially within wetlands.
- Habitat degradation and direct threats to rare species. If wood turtles are using the upland near the Ashley House for basking and nesting, increased activity outside the house (parking, outdoor events) may directly impact individuals and/or their habitat. Activities might need to be prohibited or limited during the breeding period.

## 5.5 Significant Opportunities

- Provide nesting habitat for wood turtles
- Increase the population of showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*) by managing the old field area to support a diverse herbaceous field community.
- Decrease the size of the maintained lawn.
- Conduct a survey for Brown thrasher in order to gain a better understanding of this species' habitat preference at the reservation. This species, which is significantly declining regionwide, is believed to use the hedgerow across Cooper Hill Road from the Ashley House. Staff should determine if thrashers are also using the shrub swamp or other habitats at Bartholomew's Cobble.

## Section 6: Structural Resources

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### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the Ashley House and its accompanying structures and assess the current condition of each. A prescribed routine management program, which details the annual tasks associated with the maintenance of these structures, is included in Section Eleven.

### 6.2 Building Descriptions and Current Conditions

#### *Ashley House (1735)*

The main block of the Ashley House was built in 1735. It is a timber-framed, two-story, two-room deep, center chimney house. The house was extensively remodeled three times: in the 1770s by Col. Ashley; about 1810 by his grandson, John Ashley; and again in the 1930s when it was moved and restored.

Today, the house remains largely as it appeared in the 1810s, with two front parlors, a large kitchen with buttery, three bedchambers and a study on the second floor, and a full attic. The first and second floors are connected by a winding front staircase. The full basement was built when the house was moved to its current location in 1930. The house has a cedar shake roof and the exterior is painted a tan color. There is no heat in the house and minimal electrical wiring.

Attached to the back of the house is a stone porch/patio measuring approximately 12' x 18' in size. Beneath the structure is a hollow room (approx. 5' x 10') which was the location of an old well, no longer in use. While the patio is not historically accurate in nature, it provides a platform that can be used as part of tours or other programs. Removing the structure, which is not advocated at this time, would require that the room beneath be filled in.

#### *Current use and condition*

The Ashley House presently serves as a historic house museum. The main house and ell (see below) are opened to the public on weekends during the summer months via guided house tours.

Overall, the main house is in good repair. The exterior was painted in 2000, over the previous coating of solid stain. This paint is now starting to peel, especially on the south and west façades. A new roof and gutters were installed in 2002, though the roof around the chimney continues to leak in driving rainstorms. Although one window cap in very poor condition was replaced in 2002, other windows and doors need attention.

### ***Ashley House ell***

Early in the house's history, a rear lean-to gave the house a saltbox form. This was replaced with a 1½-story rear ell about 1810; this, in turn, was demolished when the house was moved in 1930. There is now a two-story ell attached to the east side of the historic house. Built about 1930 for Harry and Mary Brigham, this frame structure housed a modern kitchen, two bathrooms, and a full basement with furnace and other utilities.

For the next 70 years or so, the ell served as housing for the owners (the Brighams, then the Brewers) and a series of caretakers. After The Trustees of Reservations acquired the house in 1972, the ell housed employees - always married couples. The husband served as Ranger/Naturalist for Bartholomew's Cobble and the wife served as "Hostess" for the house, giving tours in season. This tradition ended in the late 1980s. The Naturalist continued to live here, but paid house guides were hired to conduct tours. In 2002, the ell ceased to be used as year-round staff housing.

### ***Current use and condition***

The ell serves two purposes. The apartment's living room, accessed through the east door, now serves as a Visitor Center. There are interpretive materials (e.g., exhibit of historic photographs) on view, a small gift shop, membership materials, and a desk from which staff sells tickets. The first floor bathroom is available to both staff and visitors.

The ell is also used to house interns or employees on an "as needed" basis. The intern/staff member has access to the kitchen, the upstairs bathroom, and one of the two upstairs bedrooms.

The ell is in good structural condition. The interior was painted in 1999 and the exterior in 2000. No repairs or renewal are needed at this time.

### ***Garage***

The garage is located east of the main house, next to Cooper Hill Road. This small frame building has a garage door on its south façade. It was built circa 1950 on a cinder-block foundation and has a concrete floor.

### ***Current use and condition***

The garage currently serves as a storage area for supplies and equipment belonging to The Trustees' Stockbridge Management Unit, the unit responsible for maintaining the Ashley House and Bartholomew's Cobble. The building is in good structural condition and no repairs or renewal needs have been identified at this time.

**Table 1: Summary of Buildings**

<b>Building</b>	<b>Date of Construction</b>	<b>Size (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Current Use</b>	<b>Current Condition</b>
Ashley House	1735	2200 sq ft	Historic house museum	Good
Ell	1930	1200 sq ft	Visitor Center; private residence	Good
Garage	ca. late 1930s	450 sq ft	Property support; storage	Good

### **6.3 Routine Maintenance**

Annual operating budgets have identified funds to address routine maintenance needs at the Ashley House. These routine needs include water quality testing for the well, service contracts for the heating system, pumping of the septic system, and annual pest control treatment. A complete list of all routine maintenance tasks associated with the buildings will be included in the Prescribed Routine Management Program in Section Eleven of this plan. Periodic renewal projects (e.g., roof replacement) are listed and tracked in the organization’s structural resource database ([www.structural-resources.org](http://www.structural-resources.org)).

### **6.4 Capital Renewal and Improvement**

When creating a management plan it is important to proactively plan for the renewal of building systems. The rule of thumb for building a reserve to pay for renewal needs is to set aside 2% of building replacement values for renewal needs. In the case of the three buildings associated with the Ashley House (i.e., main house, ell, and garage), the annual renewal need is calculated at \$10,875. This renewal figure assumes that all building systems were recently renewed and it does not include infrastructure renewal associated with site improvements (i.e., parking areas or trails). While this number is useful for budget planning purposes, The Trustees does not, at this time, incorporate funds in this amount into the property’s annual operating budget.

## 6.5 Significance of Structural Resources

- The Ashley House is a building of historic significance for being the residence of Elizabeth Freeman at the time of her landmark lawsuit.
- The Ashley House is one of the oldest remaining homes in Berkshire County.
- The Ashley House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.
- In 2006, the House was named an anchor site on the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail.

## 6.6 Threats to Structural Resources

- **Leaking roof.** After storms with heavy precipitation, roof leaks around the chimney can be detected in the attic of the main house. At present, these leaks are infrequent and are not causing any major structural damage. They should be addressed, however, before the problem becomes any worse.
- **Fire.** Fire is always a threat to historic houses and their collections. The rural location of the Ashley House and its distance from the town center intensify this concern. Proper maintenance of the house and its systems (e.g., heating electrical) can help reduce any potential threat from fire.

## 6.7 Significant Opportunities

- **Establish a freestanding ticketing and welcome area.** Establishing a separate structure to be used as a ticketing and/or interpretive display area would allow for the retention of the ell as a private staff residence. It could also provide a place for visitors to linger and wait while a tour is in progress.
- **Repair the windows and doors.** Many of the windows and the doors in the main house are in need of repair and painting. The threshold of the front door needs rebuilding as well.

# Section 7: The Visitor Experience

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## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe current visitation at the Ashley House; detail the general visitor experience; provide an overview of available visitor services and facilities; identify issues with visitor safety; describe the present interpretive programs and identify any challenges and opportunities; and describe current marketing efforts.

## 7.2 Current Visitors to the Ashley House

Approximately 500 people visit the Ashley House each year.<sup>1</sup> Guest book records from the past three years show that 80% of the visitors to the Ashley House reside in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut, while the other 20% come from various places across the United States or, rarely, from abroad. Further, the guest book shows that between 30-40% of those who signed-in came from within a twenty-five mile radius of the property. Many (the daily sheets indicate about 15%) add the Ashley House to their visit to Bartholomew's Cobble, with encouragement from the Cobble staff. It is likely that a number of these individuals are participating in the "Rocks, Road and Revolution Quest," a self-guided exploration for visitors which begins at the Cobble's Visitor Center and ends at the Ashley House.

The number of Trustees members who visit varies from year to year, but has been in the 19% range for the last three years (2004-06). Observations by front-line staff suggest that visitors are predominantly adult couples of 35 years or older. They are typically affluent and well educated, and only a few are traveling with children. Not counting school groups, children account for only about 25-30 (5%) visitors per year.

Almost all of the visitors to the Ashley House arrive by personal vehicle. The property lies in an isolated region, without public transportation or within an easy, or safe, walking distance of anywhere other than Bartholomew's Cobble. It has been observed that only a few visitors stop on impulse while driving by the Ashley House, but most actively seek out the property or are guided there by the staff at the Cobble. A walking trail from the Cobble connects directly with the Ashley House property.

Historically, the Ashley House has seen only about three coach (bus) tours per year, usually one or two of which are arranged by the Berkshire Visitor's Bureau as Familiarization Tours, designed to promote county tourism. This low number of bus tours is likely due, in part, to a lack of promotion of this type of use by The Trustees. Up until this time, a protocol for handling bus tours, one that addressed the logistical

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<sup>1</sup> Actual visitation numbers are as follows: 443 in 2005; 591 in 2006; and 720 (estimated) in 2007. The total number of visitors in 2006 included 200 individuals who attended the dedication of the Elizabeth Freeman Room and official "launch" of the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail.

problems presented by the house and grounds, did not exist. In the past year, however, staff has developed a protocol for dealing with large group tours and is prepared to begin promoting the House as a destination for organized group tours. It is expected that the number of bus tours visiting the property will increase in the coming years.

## **7.3 Visiting the Ashley House**

### **7.3.1 The Approach and Arrival**

There are no approach signs for the Ashley House on Route 7, the main north/south connector for Berkshire County. One approach sign exists at the intersection of Route 7A and Rannapo Road in Sheffield to help visitors find the Ashley House; a second sign is located at Rannapo and Cooper Hill Roads. There is also an approach sign in Ashley Falls directing visitors to the house. The entrance to the property is marked by a standard Trustees' entrance sign. When a guide is on duty, a large "Open" flag is hung from the picket fence along the road.

A visitor parking lot is located to the west of the property. In practice, this parking lot is seldom used, however. It is not sufficiently marked and the opening presents itself at a point where the straight open stretch of road starts to twist, climb a hill and become lined with trees. Attention needs to be on the road itself, as local users who know the road well have been observed to drive quickly around this bend, often crossing the center line. If visitors find the parking lot, they often don't see – for reasons unknown – the stairs leading to the front lawn of the Ashley House and instead walk along this stretch of road.

The approach from this parking lot does, however, provide the visitor with an optimum introductory view of the house and property. The Georgian façade in its isolation and surrounding farmland sets a proper tone for what might be the oldest remaining house in Berkshire County. Having arrived at the front lawn of the house, however, the visitor is not provided with any directional signage guiding them to the public entrance, which is located on the east side of the house, in the ell.

In practice, almost all cars park in the semi-circular drive around the modern garage to the east of the house. There is seldom more than one group visiting the Ashley House at any given time, so there is plenty of room here to park. From this parking area, the visitor's approach to the house is towards the Visitor Center entrance. A sign explaining the significance of the site is placed by this parking area. This sign was recently updated to reflect the house as a stop on the African American Heritage Trail and to promote Mum Bett, its most famous inhabitant. Open days and hours are displayed on a second sign posted by the visitors' entrance door.

Unfortunately, from this vantage point, the visitor sees only the newer (1930s) section of the house, the attached ell, and a modern garage and gravel drive. There is little feeling that one is about to enter an 18<sup>th</sup> century historic house and the landscape context is lost; both ambiance and context are missing from this approach.

### **7.3.2 Visitor Orientation**

Throughout the winter and on weekdays in the summer, the informational sign by the driveway and the hours posted by the visitors' entrance door are the only orientation available to the visitor. There is no standard Trustees bulletin board conveying information about the house, tours, or The Trustees.

On summer weekends, a staff member is on the property to greet and talk with visitors. Visitors enter the house via the newer ell, built in the 1930s, into what was once the living room of the former caretaker's apartment. This space is used as a Visitors' Center, where guests can talk with staff, pay for a tour or buy a book or postcard. Framed historic photographs of the House and its former residents decorate the walls and provide context.

At present, when the guide on-duty is giving a tour to visitors, the Visitors' Center must be locked and a sign is put in the vestibule informing guests when the next tour will be available. There are two chairs in the vestibule if people want to sit and wait. The area is small and uninviting, so few people have been observed using this area. Most visitors walk around the house at this point but many do not wait for the tour itself if the time indicated on the "next tour" sign is too long.

## **7.4 Visitor Services and Facilities**

### **7.4.1 Gift Shop / Ticket Sales**

Gift and ticket sales are handled in the Visitors' Center. A folding table with a cloth covering serves as both the front desk and "gift shop." The gift shop offers two postcards and a few books related to the Ashley House or the African American Heritage Trail.

Currently, visitors pay \$5 per adult and \$3 per child between the ages of 6 and 12 for a guided house tour. In the summer of 2006, Bartholomew's Cobble and the Ashley House offered visitors entrance to both sites for the price of a single ticket. Trustees' members are admitted to both properties for free.

### **7.4.2 Restrooms**

Restrooms in the private part of the house are available if truly needed but visitors are encouraged to use the public facilities at the Cobble's Visitor Center. Bus groups or school groups always use the Cobble facilities, as the septic system at the Ashley House has not always in the past been able to handle such numbers.

### **7.4.3 Universal Access**

At present, the Ashley House is not universally accessible. While The Trustees desire the site to be accessible to as many visitors as possible, the historic and architectural significance of the House preclude the sort of physical renovations to the building's interior or exterior façade that would be necessary to make the site accessible to persons of limited physical abilities. That said, all attempts will be made to accommodate visitors with special needs whenever possible. A site analysis would benefit staff and provide guidance in developing opportunities to increase the accessibility of the House.

## **7.5 Marketing**

Marketing for the Ashley House takes several different forms. There is a Web page for the Ashley House that can be located via The Trustees of Reservations' Web site which provides basic information on the property's location, public hours, fees and special events. The Ashley House is also one of the properties highlighted in the "Five House Brochure" currently used to advertise The Trustees' Berkshire Region properties. About 25,000 of these brochures are distributed annually throughout the Berkshires. The brochure is also placed in the Bluebird visitors' kiosk in downtown Stockbridge as well as other similar kiosks in Lee and Great Barrington.

Advertising and marketing of special programs is conducted via local area papers, newsletters, and various event listings around the Sheffield or Berkshires area. Special programs are also advertised in The Trustees of Reservations' quarterly magazine, *Special Places*, and through advertisements in the local "Shopper's Guide," which is well-used by area residents and summer visitors for its events calendar listings. The Sheffield Historical Society Newsletter lists programs and events for the area, as does the Berkshire Visitors Bureau. The Ashley House is also listed in the Berkshire Visitors Bureau guide, "Culture in the Country," and in their Official Visitors' Guide. We do not, on the whole, pay for advertising for the Ashley House in many of these publications (as is the case for The Trustees' larger venues like Naumkeag) but rely instead on their free listings.

The promotion of the Ashley House as a tourist destination is also occurring as part of a collaborative effort with other cultural and historical institutions in the area. The Ashley House currently works closely with the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail, a project of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, and the Sheffield Historical Society. The Ashley House is one of the anchor sites, and the first open to the public, on the newly created African American Heritage Trail. A large event during the summer of 2006 officially celebrated this designation. In the first full season following the designation, visitation to the property doubled as a result of this increased publicity. It is expected that visitation rates will continue to climb in the coming years, though the rate at which this will happen cannot be estimated at this time.

## **7.6 Interpretive Programming**

### **7.6.1 Public Tours**

The major form of interpretation at the Ashley House is guided house tours. House tours are available on weekends from Memorial Day to Columbus Day each year. Information covered on the regular weekend tours includes introductions to The Trustees of Reservations, the Ashley family, 18<sup>th</sup> century southwestern Massachusetts history and commerce, and the role played by the Ashley house inhabitants in the promotion of freedom in the state.

Guides receive training and have a manual of information that includes the history of the house and family, the story of Mum Bett, as well as a thematic room by room overview

through the house. In concurrence with the current Trustees' initiative to improve interpretation and presentation at its reservations across the state, the tour at the Ashley House has been and continues to be reviewed and refined to include clearly defined themes and a more professional presentation.

The interpretation of the house and its inhabitants has changed dramatically over the years. As it was first restored in the 1930s and 40s, the Brewer and Brigham families presented the house as representing an era of gracious living, as was common during the Colonial Revival period of restoring historic houses. After The Trustees of Reservations acquired the property in 1972, the interpretation shifted to the social/political realm of the Ashley family, with Mum Bett's story presented as a side note. Current interpretation presents both sides of the story by emphasizing the theme of "freedom," both in the Ashley family involvement with the Sheffield Resolves and as embodied in the story of an enslaved member of the household, Mum Bett, and her 1781 court case. It is recognized that the history of the Ashley House was shaped by all its inhabitants and that no one story would have been possible without the others. Care is taken to include the names – and give personification to - all the inhabitants of the Ashley household, including its enslaved members.

The house itself and its contents provide several dilemmas for current interpretation. Of primary concern is that the layout and furniture are consistent with the house in the early- or mid-nineteenth century, while the compelling story belongs to the 1770-1785 timeframe. Also problematic is the fact that the kitchen, the focus of both Mum Bett and her story, was relocated (c. 1810) from what is now the south parlor to its current location at the back of the house. Thus, Mum Bett's story is not told in the room most significant to her life and story.

There is also a physical challenge to designing tours in the Ashley House. Creating a tour that highlights and builds to the climax of Bett's bid for freedom while touring all the rooms in the house in a logical order is problematic. How and where should one enter the house after paying at the Visitor Center? When and where does one tell Mum Bett's story so that the visitor realizes its primary importance? How can safety concerns be avoided?

### **7.6.2 Organized Tour Groups**

The Ashley House has historically seen only two or three bus tours per year along with six to ten school groups. A regular tour group of adults presents several logistical challenges. The small rooms and narrow stairs and hallways make it difficult to have more than ten persons in a group with each guide. Bus tours of between 15 and 24 people are possible, although crowded, since the group can be split in half and two guides can take their groups through different parts of the house at the same time. Although this presents problems with the flow of narration, it is acceptable. However, any number over twenty-five, which is indeed most bus tours, presents a serious challenge. Recently, staff has been working to address this challenge and creating a tour that can accommodate larger groups. Several bus tours early in the 2007 season were handled successfully. As a result, staff hopes to begin marketing the property as a destination for bus tours.

### **7.6.3 School Groups and the Mum Bett Program**

The Ashley House also offers an outreach program for schools entitled, “Mum Bett’s World: Everyday Life in Eighteenth Century Massachusetts.” Although primarily aimed at the third grade curriculum, the program can, and has been, successfully adapted to other grade levels.

Although each part of the program can be done separately, the program is designed to consist of an in-school visit by the interpreter followed by a tour of the Ashley House and Bartholomew’s Cobble. At the school, the interpreter tells the story of Mum Bett as well as the realities of other enslaved persons in the north. Lesson content is age appropriate. Along with the story of Mum Bett, everyday life in early Massachusetts is discussed and illustrated through props and costumes. Children are encouraged to try on reproduction colonial garments, play with toys similar to those of the era, and try their hand at simple tools such as wool cards and drop spindles.

The second half of the program is a visit to the Ashley House itself, where the children can learn more about life in the eighteenth century, as well as see the house where Mum Bett’s story took place. The site visit is always done in conjunction with an educational nature walk at the Cobble led by a staff member.

Logistically, there are few problems with school groups in the house because of the coordination with tours at the Cobble. Half the group visits the Cobble while the other half is in the Ashley House. A larger number of children can be accommodated by one guide because of the children’s smaller size, along with the teacher’s ability to keep control, and by seating the children on the floor as necessary while the guide is talking.

### **7.6.4 The Quest**

A quest, entitled “Rocks, Roads and Revolution,” was created in 2005 that links the Ashley House and Bartholomew’s Cobble. A quest is a “place-based education program that uses treasure hunts to celebrate community, natural history, cultural sites, stories and special places.”<sup>2</sup> Participants pick up the quest brochure at the Cobble Visitor Center and follow the clues along the route which ends at a tree on the Ashley House lawn. Along the way, the participants learn about nature, local history and the story of the Ashley House inhabitants.

### **7.6.5 Interpretive Challenges and Opportunities**

Interpretation at the Ashley House offers a number of both challenges and opportunities, some of which are described below. All of these issues and opportunities will be addressed in a formal interpretive plan for the reservation.

- Guided tours may or may not be the best and most compelling way to interpret the Ashley House and tell Mum Bett’s story. Current trends indicate that visitors no longer want the old “stop, stand and stare” type of tours presented by house museums of the past. Most visitors, particularly families with young children, are looking for a more hands-on educational program or value-added experience.

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<sup>2</sup> From Vital Communities Web site: [www.vitalcommunities.org](http://www.vitalcommunities.org)

- The house has been moved from its original location and no longer retains any outbuildings or its external context and ambience on the immediate property. This can be a challenge to interpretation but also allows more freedom in recreating the setting or land use on the site. The wider landscape around the property does provide a wonderful setting that remains reasonably true to its 18<sup>th</sup> century counterpart.
- The furnishings and collections in the house were added by previous owners as money and mid-twentieth century sensibilities dictated. The furniture is not original to the house (with perhaps the exception of three chairs that belonged to General Ashley’s second wife at the time of their marriage) and not all are of the correct time or appropriate to the Ashley family. Although some individual collections were given to the house as a whole and need to be retained as a single entity (for example, the redware collection in the buttery, the toleware collection in the south parlor, or the tool collection in the attic), most of the furnishings and collections were added over time by the various owners and do not need to be preserved as a single unit. This is both a strength and a weakness to future interpretation.
- The house has been changed over time and no longer represents a single era of its history, and has changed drastically from its era of prime interpretation, 1770 – 1784. The house the visitor sees today is not the house as Mum Bett knew it.
- The house, although a wonderful old house and reputed to be one of if not the oldest surviving house in Berkshire County, takes a back seat to the story of the Ashley family and the enslaved members of the household.
- Isolation will play a role in determining how many visitors the Ashley House can reasonably expect to attract. The central and northern areas of the Berkshires have many more historic sites to visit, cultural venues to attend (e.g., Tanglewood, Jacob’s Pillow) and restaurants and shops to discover. With few other sites to visit in the Sheffield/Ashley Falls area, the Ashley House is not on the normal tour circuit for summer visitors. That said, however, it is believed that the African American Heritage Trail has the potential to draw many more visitors who will make the Ashley House a destination.

## **7.7 Special Programming and Events**

Over the years, staff have organized and hosted a number of special events or programs at the Ashley House. These have included:

- Colonial Crafts day – demonstrations of eighteenth-century crafts and work, such as spinning and candle making;
- “Wildlife to Village Life Tour” (in conjunction with the Sheffield Historic Society) – combined a lecture at the Dan Raymond House on Sheffield social history with a lecture on wildlife and landscape at the Ashley House; and
- “Is This Really an Old House?” – a program by Myron Stachiw on “reading” old houses and discovering what physical evidence at the Ashley House can tell us about its history.

In addition, the dedication of the Elizabeth Freeman Room and the official launch of the African American Heritage Trail was held at the Ashley House in August 2006.

The most successful special program offered has been a Mum Bett Day celebration. This event has included a reading at the site of the old Court House in Great Barrington followed by an “open house” at the Ashley House. Given the success of this program, it is a likely candidate to become an annual signature event for the Ashley House.

## **7.8 Visitor Safety**

The Trustees of Reservations recognizes that both the safety of the visitors and staff, as well as the safety of the collections and property, are of great importance. To that effect, every effort is made to have working emergency plans in place and to train staff and guides in proper safety procedures. Because of their direct contact with the public and their daily presence on site, guides act as the first response to safety concerns that might arise at the Ashley House. Guide and staff training routinely covers safety issues and every guide is provided with an Emergency Procedures handout and Core Staff Call List. Several copies of the Core Staff Call List are kept on-site, as is an Emergency Procedures manual.

One of the main safety concerns at the Ashley House is the isolation of the property. As there is only one guide on duty at a time, there is only one person to deal with an emergency and to call or go for help. A telephone and two-way radio, which can be used to contact staff at the Cobble, is located on-site.

Another safety concern for visitors is the front staircase in the main house. The stairs are narrow and curved. Although they are safe for people going from the first floor to the second, the stairs are less safe for visitors to descend, as the stairwell drops abruptly from the landing, with no guard rail on one side. Further, visibility is somewhat hindered by the shadow cast by the person descending. Consequently, visitors are routinely directed to use the staircase in the newer part of the house (the ell), which is safe and well lit. This presents a challenge to the flow interpretation and makes the tour somewhat disjointed.

On the grounds, the only major safety concern is the tendency of visitors to walk along the road outside the fence when coming from the parking area to the west side of the house. As long as visitors stay on the wide grass verge there isn't a problem, but many are tempted to walk along the road itself, unaware that traffic is faster and more frequent than the quiet, country setting would suggest. Reconfiguring the parking and entrance to the property would alleviate this problem.

## 7.9 Elements Important to the Visitor Experience

### A Compelling Story

The Ashley House's greatest asset is its historic inhabitants and the history in which they participated. The story of Mum Bett and the impact her suit for freedom had for all enslaved people in Massachusetts is one that resonates with all audiences. The other stories and characters associated with the house are also rich in interest and importance: the Ashley family and the settlement of the region; the web of commerce connected with the family and the estate; and Colonel John Ashley's political career and his participation in drafting the Sheffield Resolves.

### Landscape Setting

Even without its outbuildings and historical setting, the Ashley House still retains a rural setting in an isolated area, with the natural beauty of Bartholomew's Cobble at its back. Standing on the property, the visitor can only see two buildings easily: the General John Ashley House, which has recently been restored, and a glimpse of the back of a 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse. The rest of the view consists of farmland, wetlands and fields. There are no modern buildings or other structures visible within the immediate viewshed that detract from the visitor experience. The era of Mum Bett and the Ashley commercial empire can be easily evoked with such a backdrop.

### House and Collections

The Ashley House itself is a highlight of the visitor experience, as it was the actual home of at least two individuals who played important roles in Massachusetts history. The existing collections did not belong to the Ashley family and many are not even of the time period that is interpreted. Nonetheless, some of the collections are impressive and, while they may be removed from display in the house, should be retained intact. These items include an outstanding collection of redware; a fine collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century tools; toleware; stoneware; and numerous lighting devices.

## 7.10 Elements that Diminish the Visitor Experience

**Lack of contextual landscape.** When the Ashley House was moved from its original site along the river, none of the surrounding outbuildings were moved with it. A rear ell was torn down and the barn and sheds left at the original site. Also, the decision was made to retain the original north/south orientation of the house so that the façade no longer fronts the road. The original setting of a front door facing onto the street and the river at its back are no longer part of the Ashley House experience. Consequently, the area immediately surrounding the house has lost its cultural landscape. (As mentioned above, however, the greater landscape surrounding the house has retained a rural, agricultural feel reminiscent of the house's setting during the time of the Ashley Family and Mum Bett.)

**Minimal Signage.** Although there is signage both on the property and directing visitors to the property, it lacks coordination and clarity. Approach signs are not optimally located and are difficult to read. Once on the property, way-finding can be difficult, depending on where and how one enters the grounds. If arriving via the parking area to the west – or on-foot via the hiking trail from the Cobble – there are no signs to direct the visitor to the Visitor Center entrance. A weekday or off-season visitor has very little information available on the significance of the house and site.

**Safety and lighting.** The lack of lighting in the house makes tours difficult in the late afternoon and impossible in the evening. In particular, the staircase in the original part of the house presents a hazard for people when they descend, as there is not sufficient light and they cast a shadow on the steps in front of them as they descend. The combination of the quick drop from floor to stair-opening along with a not very firm railing, causes further concern about taking visitors down the stairwell.

## **7.11 Summary of Significant Opportunities**

**Reconfigure the visitor approach, parking and entrance.** Under the current configuration of the property entrance and parking, the visitor does not approach the house from the front. This diminishes the visitor's experience, as the approach from the front of the house is spectacular and gives the house a better sense of context. Relocating the main entrance and parking area to the west side of the property would improve the visitor experience and keep visitors away from the ell, which functions as a private residence, allowing more privacy for residents.

**Refine and improve the guided tour.** The guided tour of the Ashley House continues to be improved and refined to contain clearly defined themes and to be presented in a succinct and professional manner. A comprehensive interpretive plan for the House will be prepared following the completion of this management plan which may identify new themes for interpretation; the tour will then be amended accordingly. Additionally, as ongoing research into the Ashley Family and the members of their household yields new information, this too will be integrated into the content of the guided tours.

**Increase and diversify visitation.** With the official opening of the African American Heritage Trail, the publication of the book, *African American Heritage in the Upper Housatonic Valley*, and the completion of the Biography Curriculum Project that was undertaken in 2006- which includes the life of Mum Bett- the Ashley House is poised to receive an expanded visitor base with renewed interest in Mum Bett's home. This will require additional planning and consideration on the part of the Ashley House to accommodate larger groups of people and more family groups with children.

**Improve links between the Ashley House and Bartholomew's Cobble.** There is a good opportunity to expand the number of visitors to both the Ashley House and Bartholomew's Cobble by working together with the staff of the Cobble to encourage visitors to experience both sites. Trials in joint ticketing for both properties conducted during the summer of 2006 have shown that visitors are interested in exploring and learning more about both the historic resources and the natural landscape. Efforts should be made to further increase the link between these two properties.

**Conduct outreach to target groups.** Staff should contact target audiences in an effort to encourage them to schedule group visits to the Ashley House. Target groups should include local schools, the African American Teachers' Association and the Social Studies Teachers' Association.

# Section 8: Current Management

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## 8.1 Introduction

This section will provide an overview of the current property management program at the Ashley House and then assess, based on current available information, whether or not this management program is successfully being met. This assessment will consider all of the resources currently available to the management unit including staffing, equipment and financial resources, committees and volunteers, and membership. Section Eleven of this plan will prescribe a new routine management program that will, if implemented fully, provide an appropriate level of care for the Ashley House.

## 8.2 Description of the Current Management Program

Table #1 below lists the specific actions which comprise the current management program at the Ashley House and details for each the frequency at which it is conducted; the number of staff hours currently invested in the task; and an assessment of the current performance level of each task. Current Performance Level will be ranked using one of the five following categories:

**Poor:** The task is not being conducted at present *or* is conducted in a manner/at a frequency that is damaging to significant resources or the visitor experience.

**Inadequate:** The task is currently being conducted at a level that is threatening resources or the visitor experience.

**Adequate:** The task is currently completed at a level that does not hinder resource protection or the visitor experience.

**Strong:** The task is completed in a manner/at a frequency that represents the ideal.

**Excessive:** A disproportionate amount of staff and/or financial resources are being invested in completing the task.

**Table 1: Current Routine Management Program at the Ashley House**

Task	Frequency	Season	Total Staff Hours Invested (annual)	Total Vol Hours Invested	Current Performance Level	Notes
General repairs.	Varies	All	40	0	Adequate	Includes minor painting, small repairs
Mow and trim lawn.	Weekly	S, Su, F	84	0	Adequate	
Equipment maintenance.	Weekly	S, Su, F	12	0	Adequate	
General grounds cleanup.	Biannual	S, F	32	8	Adequate	
Wash windows/ install storms.	Biannual	S, F	16	0	Adequate	
Clean house gutters.	3x per year	S, Su, F	12	0	Adequate	2 staff, 2hrs each time
Prune lilacs.	Annual	Su	4	0	Adequate	Volunteer opportunity?
Furnace and septic maintenance.	Annual	F	4	0	Strong	
Alarm testing and maintenance.	Annual	S	4	0	Strong	
Check, service water softener.	Monthly	All	4	0	Strong	
Snow removal.	Varies	W	8	0	Adequate	
Vacuum, dust house and collections.	Every two weeks	S, Su, F	22	0	Adequate	Guides/ Historic Resource staff
Open House for season.	Annually	S	4	0	Adequate	Guides/ Historic Resource staff
Close House for season.	Annually	F	4	0	Adequate	Guides/ Historic Resource staff
Plant, weed, tend garden.	Weekly	S, Su, F	0	84	Adequate	
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>250</b>	<b>92</b>		

## 8.3 Current Capacity to Meet Property Management Goals

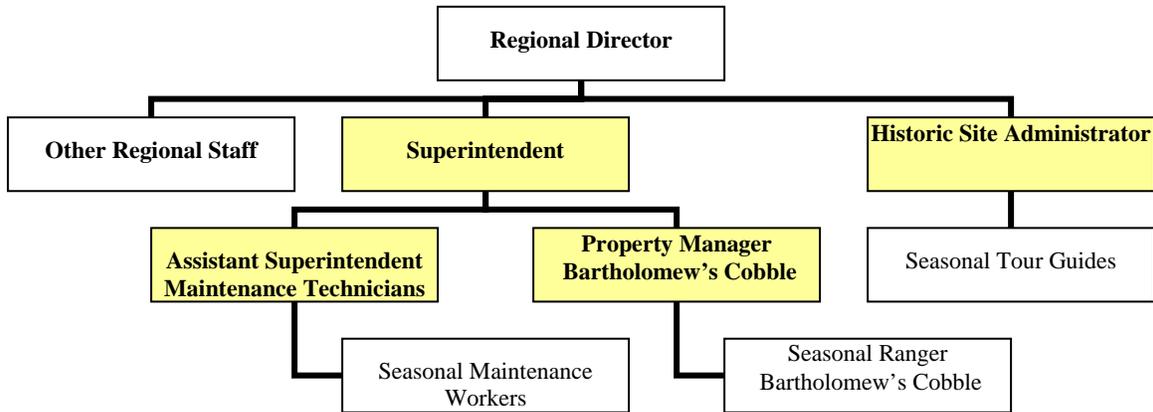
### 8.3.1 Staffing Resources

The Trustees of Reservations currently divides its statewide field operation activities into six regions. Within each region, individual properties are further organized into management units. The Colonel John Ashley House is one of ten properties managed by the Stockbridge Management Unit (SMU) of the Berkshire Region. The SMU consists of six, year-round employees: one Superintendent, one Assistant Superintendent, two Maintenance Technicians, a Property Manager at Bartholomew’s Cobble, and one Historic Site Administrator, who oversees operations at the Mission House, the Col. Ashley House and Naumkeag. During the summer months, three additional full-time,

seasonal maintenance workers are hired to assist with property maintenance and management, over 30 part-time guides are hired to provide tours at the historic houses and one part-time seasonal Ranger is hired for Bartholomew’s Cobble. In addition, the region shares an Historic Resources Manager and a Regional Ecologist with The Trustees’ Pioneer Valley Region.

**Figure 1: Organizational Chart for Berkshire Region Staff**

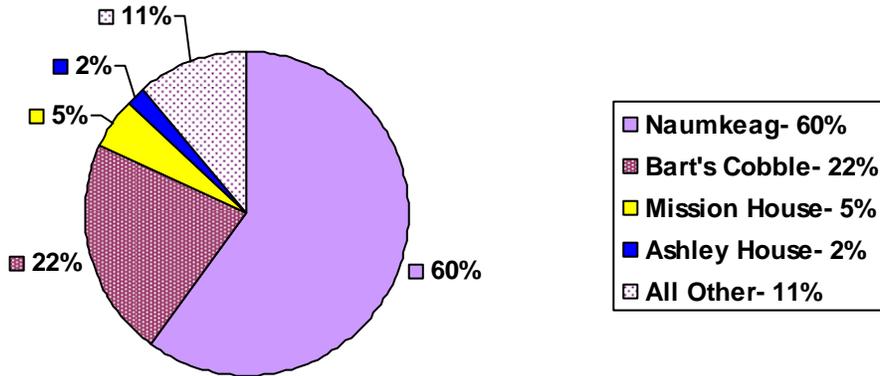
*[Note: Stockbridge Management Unit staff is shaded yellow; year-round staff is in bold.]*



The chart below shows the percentage of time spent by SMU staff at each property within the unit. Only full-time, year-round and part-time, seasonal maintenance staff are represented; historic resource personnel and tour guides are not included. The total number of hours available to SMU staff per year is 12,144. While the three summer maintenance positions contribute 2,500 hours between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the percentage of staff time spent at the various properties doesn’t change significantly from season to season.

Included in the “All Other” category in the chart below is time spent at Ashintully, Dry Hill, Goose Pond, McLennan, Monument Mountain, Questing and Tyringham Cobble, as well as the approximately 2% of total annual hours which are spent at properties outside of the Stockbridge Management Unit (i.e., Notchview, Field Farm).

**Figure 2: Stockbridge Management Unit Staff Time Allocation**



The categories of operations carried out by management unit personnel change seasonally. Winter is given over to equipment overhaul, indoor maintenance, brush burning, snow removal and the like. Spring and autumn involve the opening and closing of properties, outdoor cleanup, planting, field mowing and some pruning. Summer brings extensive and intensive lawn care, garden tending, outdoor painting and a strong surge of property visitors.

At present, the staffing level and allocation pattern support today’s management of the Ashley House.

**8.3.2 Equipment Resources**

The following table lists the major equipment resources owned by the SMU and used at the Ashley House and elsewhere in the management unit, and the condition of each. This list shows that the SMU has an extensive inventory to meet most management tasks, although certain pieces of equipment are over ten years old and beginning to show the effects of wear. The existing equipment resources support the current management program at the Ashley House.

**Figure 3: Existing Equipment Resources**

Equipment	Condition	Equipment	Condition
Ford F-150 pickup (2005)	Good	Roof Mower 30” brush mower	Poor
Ford F-150 pickup (2004)	Good	Bachtold 30” brush mower	Fair
Ford F-150 pickup (2000)	Good	Bachtold 30” brush mower	Good
Ford F-350 dump truck (1990)	Fair	Woods brush mower	Poor
Foster equipment trailer (1998)	Good	Giant Vac brush mower	Good
Racemaster mower trailer (2000)	Good	New Holland lawn tractor	Good
Kubota shuttle tractor (2003)	Good	John Deere lawn tractor	Good
Scag 48” lawnmower	Fair	Rears flail mower	Good

### **8.3.3 Financial Resources**

The following description provides a snapshot of budget income and expenses for the Ashley House. It should be noted that Fiscal Year 2008 is the first year in which the income and expenses for the Ashley House have been separated from those of Bartholomew's Cobble. Reservation receipts and endowment income are the primary sources of revenue for supporting the management of The Ashley House. Other sources include memberships, tour income, and limited sales of merchandise. Expenses include operating expenses related specifically to the property, management unit expenses (salaries, benefits, etc.) and organizational overhead.

#### Income

In 1972, a fundraising effort was undertaken by The Trustees of Reservations and local volunteers to raise funds to acquire the Ashley House and its surrounding acreage, as well as to retire the mortgage which was then held by The Col. John Ashley House, Inc. A total of \$167,500 was raised to acquire both the Ashley House and an additional 115 acres on Hurlburt's Hill. The amount raised, which included a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, exceeded the goal needed to meet the project's expenses and the excess provided a modest endowment. This was combined with the endowment existing at that time for Bartholomew's Cobble, and as of September 2007, the endowment for these two properties stood at just under \$1 million and was budgeted to generate approximately \$45,000 in interest income.

Admission receipts at the Ashley House for the last two years have been increasing, primarily due to the focus and publicity of the Elizabeth Freeman celebration. Admissions in 2006 totaled \$2,389 with merchandise sales of over \$1,000 for approximately 600 visitors. Through August of 2007, the time of this writing, admissions totaled over \$3,700 with merchandise sales of \$310 for approximately the same number of visitors. (There are six weekends remaining in the 2007 season.)

The Ashley House Committee has also undertaken small fundraising projects in support of the property.

#### Expenses

The largest expense is staff salaries, both as an allocation of full-time and seasonal maintenance staff at Bartholomew's Cobble and the part-time salaries of the Ashley House guide staff. Maintenance and repair expenses at both properties have remained near the same level for a number of years.

Operating expenses for the Ashley House are primarily related to utility expenses for the apartment; for Fiscal Year 2008 these totaled \$3,390. This total included maintenance expenses for the septic system and the alarm system. The house interpreter budget totals \$2,513.

Salaries for full- and part-time staff at Bartholomew's Cobble combine to exceed \$46,000 and, including benefits, total over \$60,000. Total budgeted admission and program income for the Cobble is more than \$16,000. These expense and income figures for the

Cobble are included here since this is the first fiscal year in which the property budgets have been separated and there is not enough data solely relating to the Ashley House upon which to make a complete analysis. It is clear that current total expenses for the two properties exceed income.

### **8.3.4 Committees and Volunteers**

#### *Ashley House Property Committee*

The Ashley House Committee consists of approximately five people from the local area who serve in an advisory capacity to staff on the management of the property. The Committee meets at least bi-monthly throughout the year. Members' responsibilities include:

- assisting staff in the implementation of the management plan recommendations and helping as lead volunteers to perform these tasks;
- encouraging membership growth and retention;
- strengthening The Trustees' connection to the local community;
- aiding in fundraising for special projects; and
- helping to staff special events.

Members of the Ashley House Committee are chosen from current members and donors of The Trustees of Reservations who have demonstrated a commitment to the organization's mission and a willingness to support The Trustees and its staff in their work.

#### *Other Volunteers*

There is one regular volunteer who maintains the small perennial herb garden at the Ashley House. A member of a local garden club, this individual plants, weeds and tends the garden regularly throughout the summer months.

Additionally, the historic resource staff is initiating a training course to teach volunteers how to properly clean and care for objects in the Ashley House and other historic houses. The goal is for this program to attract new volunteers and retain them as active participants in the care of the Ashley House and other Trustees' properties.

## **8.4 Membership**

There is little membership support for the Ashley House at present. Records show that only about 19% of visitors to the property are active members of The Trustees. House guides promote membership to the organization and brochures are available at the contact area in the Ashley House. However, opportunities to increase sales should be explored as membership revenue is critical to the organization. As an incentive to join and support the organization, members receive free admission to the Ashley House as well as the other Trustees-owned historic houses in Berkshire County.

## 8.5 Partnerships with Other Organizations

**Sheffield Historical Society.** The Trustees has an informal partnership with the Sheffield Historical Society which has helped maintain The Trustees' connections with the local community, especially those people most interested in historic preservation. There is no formal obligation to either party associated with this partnership; the Ashley House has been an additional resource for the Historical Society and vice-versa.

**Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail.** There is an informal partnership between The Trustees and the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail which includes the Ashley House as an anchor site. The creation of this trail and inclusion of the Ashley House has resulted in increased publicity for the house and, based on initial data, a steady increase in visitation.

## 8.6 Other Management Considerations

### *Ashley Falls Historic District*

The Ashley House is within the boundaries of the Ashley Falls Historic District. The purpose of the historic district is to “promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the distinctive characteristics of the buildings and places significant in the history of Ashley Falls or significant for their architecture, and the maintenance and improvement of settings for such buildings and places, and the encouragement of design compatible therewith.”

“The Historic District Commission and building inspector approve demolition, construction, alteration, fencing, change of color and other work on buildings and grounds in the district. Applications for Certificates of Non-applicability (interior work etc.), Certificate of Hardship or Certificate of Appropriateness are reviewed by the Commission at a public hearing.”<sup>1</sup>

### *National Register of Historic Places*

The Ashley House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. The designation is an honorific and there are no restrictions on the management of the property as a result of this designation.

### *Flood Management*

Flooding along Stony Brook resulting from beaver activity is a potential threat to the Ashley House. The control of beaver-induced flooding is regulated by the Sheffield Board of Health, Sheffield Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. The removal of a beaver dam or the installation of a water level control device (i.e., beaver baffler) would require the approval of one or more of these authorities. This issue is further complicated by the presence of state-listed rare species in and along Stony Brook which are covered by the Massachusetts Endangered Species

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt on the Ashley Falls Historic District from the 2004 Sheffield Master Plan.

Protection Act (MEPA). Thus, flood control at this location would also necessitate approval from the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

## **8.7 Summary of Current Management Capacity**

- Staffing levels are adequate to meet the current routine management goals of the Ashley House and the properties within the Stockbridge Management Unit. Should a new property be added or significant changes in management be made, however, more staffing resources would be needed.
- The existing equipment available to the SMU is adequate to meet property management goals. However, much of the equipment stock is aging and will need replacement in the near future.
- Financial resources available to the Ashley House are insufficient to meet current property management goals. Opportunities to increase the reservation's endowment, membership sales and earned income should be sought.
- Should visitation to the Ashley House increase enough in the coming years to warrant opening the house on additional days or hiring additional house guides, funds would need to be secured for this purpose.
- Volunteers are an underutilized resource at the Ashley House and within the management unit, in general. Identifying additional volunteer opportunities and recruiting interested individuals to assist in stewardship projects would augment the staffing resources and, more important, advance the Trustees' initiative to engage volunteers in conservation.

# Section 9: Land Conservation

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## 9.1 Introduction

The Trustees of Reservations supports an innovative land conservation program using a variety of tools for preserving ecological, scenic and historic landscapes that are threatened by inappropriate development. A primary focus of the land protection program is to acquire or protect by other means (such as conservation restrictions) important, privately owned inholdings or other threatened properties adjacent to existing reservations. This section will identify and describe properties adjacent to or near the Ashley House that should be priorities for future land conservation projects.

## 9.2 Description and Evaluation

*Why is it important for The Trustees to preserve land surrounding the Ashley House?*

The conservation of the land surrounding the Ashley House preserves the setting and supports a representation of how a home in the 1700s might have appeared in the landscape. While the house is no longer located on its original foundation near the river, the position of the Ashley House on Cooper Hill Road and the location of hayfields and pasture to the north, south and west contribute to the visitor experience.

*How can the Ashley House be further protected?*

The Ashley House is surrounded by Bartholomew's Cobble, land owned and protected by The Trustees. The Ashley House can be further protected by working to conserve those parcels of land in Ashley Falls that are related to the history of the Ashley House and Ashley family.

### 9.2.1 Present Property Configuration and Description

The Ashley House is part of the larger protected landscape of Bartholomew's Cobble. The Ashley House property was purchased by The Trustees from an organization known as the Col. Ashley House, Inc. in 1972. The deeds indicate the purchase came in two parcels totaling 4.2 acres of land. The property is bounded on the south by Stony Brook, to the north by Cooper Hill Road, to the west by land owned by R. Boyette and to the east by land purchased by The Trustees as part of the Conklin Field acquisition in 1977.

### 9.2.2 Restricted Land Associated with the Ashley House

The Ashley House is included as part of the Ashley Falls Historic District. There are guidelines and restrictions that are part of the District designation. However, these restrictions do not prohibit development, but rather control the exterior appearance of buildings. As a result, this designation will help maintain, in part, the scenic and historic setting around the Ashley House.

### 9.2.3 Roadways and Vehicular Approaches to the Property

There are few roadways that can be used to get to the Ashley House. Rannapo Road, which leaves the village of Ashley Falls at Route 7A and travels north, rejoins Route 7A after crossing the railroad tracks. Cooper Hill Road intersects Rannapo Road just north of the Weatogue Road intersection and travels west until it intersects with Silver Street. The Ashley House is on the south side of Cooper Hill Road.

Parking for the Ashley House is located on the south side of Cooper Hill Road to the west of the House. No additional land is being considered for parking or access at this time.

## 9.3 Critical Lands Inventory, Assessment, and Recommended Actions

The Trustees has developed criteria for assessing adjacent and nearby lands that may be important for maintaining a reservation's integrity and special character. These lands are ranked according to the impact, both positive and negative, they have on existing resources on the reservation and by the potential impact to the reservation if they were to be developed or their land use changed. The critical lands for the Ashley House have been ranked using the following criteria:

**Critical:** Parcels whose preservation is essential to the protection and integrity of key features *on the reservation*, such as wetland and aquifer recharge areas, hilltops and other unique landforms, scenic roads or road frontages, special vegetative features, rare species habitat or scenic views seen from the reservation. They also include parcels that eliminate inholdings.

**Significant:** Parcels whose preservation would add significantly *to the reservation*, but whose loss would not detract significantly from the character and quality of the reservation.

**Valuable:** Parcels whose preservation would add to the scenic, historic or ecological value of the reservation or would contribute to its efficient management, but are not considered critical or significant (e.g., contiguous parcels of land without unique features). Valuable parcels would include those that support an open space or biotic corridor.

One specific parcel and an assessment of its preservation value to the Ashley House is identified below and on Map 2. However, this assessment is not intended to suggest that other adjacent or nearby parcels that have not been identified here are of no conservation value. Many other nearby parcels have been identified as priorities for protection via the Bartholomew's Cobble Management Plan completed in 2005. Thus, while the parcel listed below is the only property identified as critical to the integrity of the Ashley House, many other parcels are ranked as priorities for the Cobble. This assessment, as well as the critical lands inventory in the Bartholomew's Cobble plan, is suggested as a guideline

to future acquisitions. As new information and opportunities arise, land protection priorities may change.

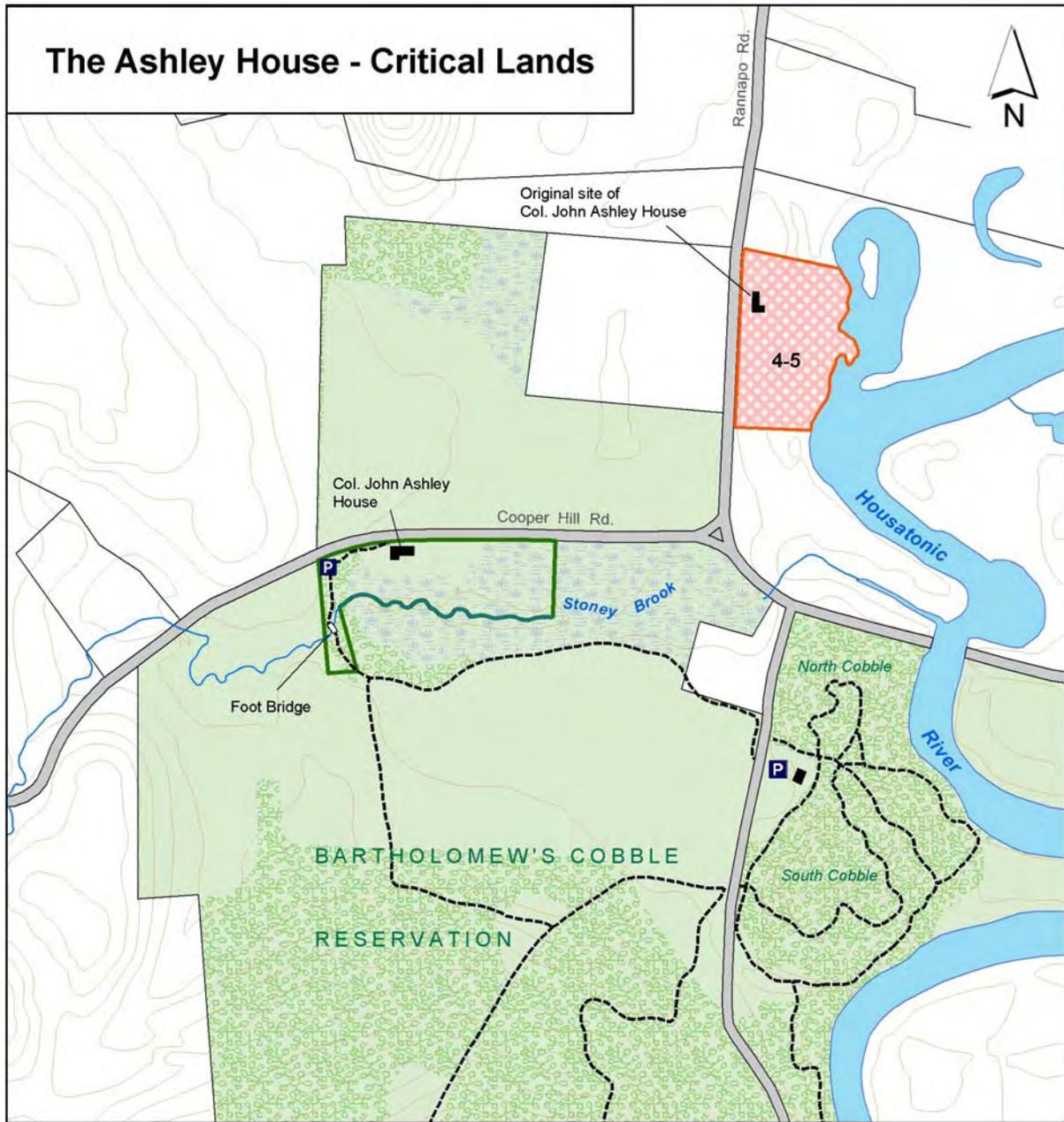
### **Critical**

**Parcel 4-5.** This parcel on the east side of Weatogue Road contains the original site of the Ashley House. Protection of this parcel would preserve the archaeological integrity of this site. (This parcel was ranked “significant” in the Bartholomew’s Cobble Management Plan. It has been upgraded to critical here for its value in protecting the archaeological integrity of the Ashley House.)

#### *Recommended Action:*

Work with the current landowner and continue discussions towards a possible acquisition but, at a minimum, work to obtain a conservation restriction (CR) to minimize the impacts of any future development.

**Map 2: Critical Lands for Protection**



- |   |                       |   |   |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|
|  | Trustees' property    |  | Trails                                  |
|  | Ashley House property |  | Parking                                 |
|  | Woodland              |  | Critical Lands<br>(with Map-Lot number) |
|  | Wetland               |   |   |

0 400 800 Feet

Produced by The Trustees of Reservations.  
June 2007.

# Section 10: Recommended Actions

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## 10.1 Introduction

Sections Three through Eight of this plan describe the significant resources and features of the Ashley House and identify the associated threats and opportunities. This chapter will address those threats and opportunities by presenting recommended actions designed to protect the significant resources of the house and reservation while also providing a high quality visitor experience. All of the recommendations made in this chapter were developed in consideration of the planning framework described in Section One, the vision for the future of the Ashley House included in Section Two, and the goals and guidelines that follow. These recommendations, together with the Prescribed Routine Management Program that is detailed in Section Eleven, will comprise the management of the Ashley House for the next ten years.

## 10.2 Historic and Structural Resources

### Goals:

- Use the significant history of the Ashley House to engage people in the preservation of this place and in our cultural heritage.
- Ensure that all buildings and structures accessible to the public are safe and any potential hazards are minimized.

### Guidelines:

- Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.
- Follow The Trustees’ Historic Resource Committee’s policies on collections, historic structures and interiors.

### 10.2.1 Historical Research

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
1.	Conduct further research into the Ashley Family and the enslaved and other members of their household.	At present, very little is known about the Ashley Family’s slaves and other workers. Any additional information that can be obtained will provide the basis for interpretation at the property.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
2.	Explore the possibility of acquiring the Ashley Family account books, which are currently on loan to The Trustees.	Currently in private ownership, the account books are the best available source of information on the Ashley Family and their affairs in Sheffield. Ideally, the books should be preserved as part of the Ashley House collections.
3.	Pursue the possibility and conduct, if possible, a systematic and potentially comprehensive archaeological investigation on the original site of the Ashley House.	Such an investigation may reveal more information on the Ashley Family; help determine where outbuildings were located and for which purposes the property was used; determine if slave quarters existed; and show how the landscape was transformed by humans. Permission from the land owner and consultation with the Mass Historical Commission would precede any activity.

### 10.2.2 Collections Management

The collections at the Ashley House are varied and were assembled over the years by the previous owners of the house, including descendants of Col. Ashley. Few items in the house have a direct connection to the Ashley Family or their slaves. Further, many of the collections are from the nineteenth century, thus not representative of Col. Ashley and Elizabeth Freeman's time in the house. Subsequent to the preparation of a comprehensive interpretive plan for the property- see Section 10.4.3- a furnishings plan will be developed that will recommend which collections, if any, are appropriate to display in the house to reflect the themes in the interpretive plan.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
4.	Reconcile the different object catalogs and update the info as needed in the Past Perfect database.	Although most objects are cataloged, the information is spread among several systems. After it has been organized, the information will provide the basis for furnishings and interpretive plans.
5.	Review and assess collections for exhibit, storage, conservation, loan or deaccession.	It is likely that many of the collections will not be useful within the new interpretive plan. A review evaluating each object's condition, history, etc. will determine its fate.
6.	Recruit and train volunteers to assist with the management and care of collections.	Tasks such as data entry, cataloging, and object cleaning are time consuming. With training, these are tasks that can engage volunteers.

### 10.2.3 Cultural Landscape

At present, the landscape that surrounds the house evokes a modern yard that is incongruous with the eighteenth-century house and its significant history. The following recommendations will 1) give the landscape an appearance that is somewhat more appropriate to the time of Col. Ashley and 2) improve visitor safety.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
7.	Remove the existing shrubbery around the house and yard and decrease the frequency of mowing.	At present, the yard has a twentieth century feel, with mowed lawn and planted shrubbery. A more appropriate landscape around the immediate environs of the house can easily be depicted. Aside from designated walking paths, which will be mowed weekly, the remainder of the lawn can be mowed less frequently.
8.	Limb up the trees in the parking area to open up the view of the front of the house and to improve sight lines.	Limbing the trees will open up a view of the house and provide better sight lines into and from the parking area.
9.	Clear the vegetation from the stone wall along the road.	The stone wall is currently overgrown with vegetation. Removing the vegetation will expose the wall, thereby improving the landscape context.
10.	Limb up the trees along the roadside to open up sight lines.	This will enhance visitor safety by ensuring that sight lines are clear for both visitors walking around the property and drivers passing on Cooper Hill Road.
11.	Clear the hedgerow, or a portion of it, directly across the street from the House to open up the view of the fields.	This could only be done pending thrasher survey and habitat assessment (see Recommendation #25).
12.	Research the fence design and consider replacing the current fence with a more appropriate design to the time period being interpreted.	The existing fence may or may not be appropriate to the time period being interpreted; more research is needed to determine an appropriate design.
13.	Replace the fence.	As portions are in poor condition, the fence needs replacing in the near future. Design will be determined pending further research.
14.	Remove the existing horseshoe drive.	Eliminating this drive will alleviate visitor confusion over where to park. Two parking spaces will be retained: one for the resident of the ell and one handicapped-accessible space (see Recommendation #39).

### 10.2.4 Structural Resources

Structures on the property include the Main House, ell and garage. Ensuring these structures are well maintained is critical to both visitor safety and the preservation of historic resources. Additional recommendations concerning the garage are included in Education and Interpretation, section 10.4.3.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
15.	Retain the ell as a private staff residence.	Because of the remote location of the Ashley House, having a staff presence at the House is desirable. Staff and visitors should be kept out of the living quarters in order to ensure the privacy and security of the resident.
16.	Fix the leak in the roof and chimney of the house.	Repair will likely include placement of a roof cap on the chimney, sealing the chimney and possibly the installation of new flashing. After the initial chimney sealant is applied, it will need to be re-applied approximately every five years.
17.	Repair windows and doors in the house.	The threshold of the front door needs to be rebuilt and some window sills need repair.
18.	Upgrade the alarm system in the house.	The existing alarm and fire detection system is in need of an upgrade in order to ensure its continuing functionality.
19.	Vent the attic above the house.	Heat retention in the attic decreases the life of the roof shingles and is damaging to artifacts stored there.
20.	Replace the roof on the garage.	This is a periodic renewal task that is due for completion.
21.	Stain the exterior of the house.	This is a periodic renewal task that is due for completion.
22.	Reinforce the handrail on the spiral staircase in the house.	Keeping tours out of the ell will necessitate the use of the spiral staircase in the Main House. In order to ensure visitor safety, the handrail should be reinforced, at the very least, and may need to be replaced entirely.

### 10.3 Natural Resources

The Ashley House sits within the greater landscape of Bartholomew’s Cobble Reservation, a National Natural Landmark and natural area of statewide significance. Management of the natural resources immediately surrounding the Ashley House will be conducted to benefit rare species and to protect the ecological integrity of Bartholomew’s Cobble, while also maintaining key features of the historic Ashley House landscape.

**Goals:**

- Maintain the Ashley House reservation as a supporting landscape of Bartholomew’s Cobble.
- Maintain and improve habitat for species of concern including wood turtle and showy goldenrod.
- Eradicate invasive species from the property to prevent spread to the surrounding landscape.
- Determine the breeding status of the brown thrasher population in the Bartholomew’s Cobble area and evaluate which habitats, if any, are being used.

**Guidelines:**

- Management of the Ashley House landscape will follow The Trustees’ organizational guidelines for ecological management of grasslands and beaver.
- Activities within the Ashley House landscape will be in compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, River Protection Act, and/or Endangered Species Act, as appropriate.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
23.	Improve nesting habitat for wood turtles.	Wood turtles have been observed in the stream and have previously attempted to nest on the Ashley House lawn. A decrease in size of the area maintained as lawn will likely improve nesting habitat. Following the abandonment of active lawn maintenance in this area, nesting habitat will be evaluated. Scarification and removal of top soil may be necessary. Monitoring the success of nests will be required to determine if active management is necessary, including the placement of predator exclosures.
24.	Manage the old field area to increase the population of showy goldenrod ( <i>Solidago speciosa</i> ).	The old field area will be periodically mowed to prevent shrub species from dominating. The time of year and frequency of mowing needs to be determined.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
25.	Conduct a survey for brown thrasher within suitable habitats on and nearby Bartholomew's Cobble and the Ashley House.	Will determine the status of the population and the importance of the hedgerow across Cooper Hill Road from the Ashley House. If the hedgerow is serving as key habitat for the brown thrasher, it will not be removed. Otherwise, it is desirable to remove the hedgerow in order to open up the view of the fields.
26.	Control invasive species on the property.	Elimination of invasive species will prevent their potential spread to important habitats within Bartholomew's Cobble.

## 10.4 The Visitor Experience

The Ashley House, since it was acquired by The Trustees in 1972, has been a low profile reservation. Its rural location and distance from other attractions, coupled with its limited seasonal hours of operation, has likely been the primary reason for its low rate of visitation, approximately 500 visitors annually. Investment in the property has historically been minimal, both in terms of financial and human resources. Since the designation of the Ashley House as an anchor site on the Upper Housatonic Valley African-American Heritage Trail (AAHT) in 2006, change has already begun.

By mid-summer 2007, just one year after the AAHT designation and the dedication of the “Elizabeth Freeman Room,” average annual visitation had already been surpassed. This increase was due, in part, to several bus tours that made the Ashley House a destination. While bus tours were not encouraged in the past (as discussed in Section Seven of this plan), staff was successful in working out logistical issues and creating a modified tour to accommodate larger groups, thereby making visits from bus tours possible. This increase in both overall visitation and bus tours is expected to continue. The scale at which the AAHT continues to draw visitors to the Ashley House over the long term remains to be seen.

In the immediate future, The Trustees should seize the opportunity to cultivate and engage these new audiences and work toward achieving the goals of the organization's new strategic plan. In order to capitalize fully on this opportunity, the following course of action is recommended:

- 1) Improve the overall visitor experience at the Ashley House by implementing the recommendations below. A good experience today is critical for all visitors but especially for bus tour participants, so that tour managers will schedule return visits.

- 2) Seek professional assistance in preparing a comprehensive interpretive plan for the property that will identify potential new opportunities to expand visitor services and programming as appropriate for the property (see Section 10.4.3).
- 3) Strengthen The Trustees' partnership with the AAHT and develop a network of similar cultural institutions that can work cooperatively on marketing and programming.

The implementation of the management recommendations made herein along with a visionary but achievable interpretive plan will ensure that the Ashley House is well positioned to attract and accommodate a greater number of visitors and provide them with an exceptional experience, while protecting and preserving the natural and historical resources that make the reservation special.

**Goals:**

- Improve visitor services and interpretive programming to increase visitation.
- Engage a diverse audience and encourage them to be stewards of the property and of history, in general.
- Encourage cross-promotion of the Ashley House with Bartholomew's Cobble, which is a flagship Trustees' property that receives a very high rate of visitation.
- Convey interpretive information to visitors during times when the Ashley House is not open for tours (i.e., weekdays).
- Emphasize the stories of Elizabeth "Mum Bett" Freeman and Col. John Ashley, which are inextricably linked, while conveying to visitors the experience of all residents of the Ashley House.
- Where possible, make the property more accessible to visitors of all physical abilities.

**10.4.1 Entrance and Arrival**

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
27.	Expand the visitor parking area at the west end of the property.	The parking area will be reconfigured in order to accommodate more vehicles (approx. 6-8) and a new bulletin board. Drainage of the lot will be evaluated to ensure that the wetlands below are not impacted by runoff. Permits from the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and/or conservation commission may be needed.
28.	Relocate the entrance sign closer to the parking area.	Relocation of the sign will help clear up confusion over where the visitor entrance and parking area is located.
29.	Improve signage along the fence and roadway directing visitors to the parking area.	Self-explanatory.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
30.	Construct and install a bulletin board in the parking area.	The bulletin board will welcome visitors by conveying basic information about the property, guided tours and the mission and work of The Trustees.
31.	Install a ticketing kiosk or shed in the parking area.	This will be a small, basic structure similar to the ranger huts found at other Trustees' properties. A volunteer or staff member will be stationed in the kiosk on weekends between Memorial Day and Columbus Day to sell admissions and memberships, convey property information, and interact with visitors. With the location of the hut in the parking area, staff can also interact with visitors parking at the Ashley House and hiking directly in to Bart's Cobble. In the future, should visitation warrant it, the building of a new facility (e.g., visitor center) should be considered. The new facility would replace the kiosk and garage as a visitor welcome center, exhibit area, meeting space and museum shop. At this time, however, visitation does not warrant the capital expenditure that would be required to construct this facility.
32.	Rebuild the existing steps or create a turf ramp leading from the parking area toward the house.	A turf ramp would likely be safer than steps and would allow for greater maneuverability of maintenance equipment. A permit from the conservation commission may be necessary.
33.	Create a clearly marked pathway leading visitors from the parking area to the front of the house and to the garage.	Upon arriving, visitors will be guided from the ticketing kiosk directly to the front of the house, where the guided tour will begin, or to the garage to view the interpretive displays (see Recommendation #45.)
34.	Install new directional signage in the parking area and on the grounds.	Clearly visible directional signs are needed to direct visitors to the parking area, restroom and ticketing area, interpretive display (i.e., garage) and tour starting point.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
35.	Promote a joint entrance fee with Bartholomew's Cobble.	It is hoped that a joint entrance fee will make it more desirable for Cobble visitors to also take a guided tour of the Ashley House. Though the fee exists already, it is not promoted and most visitors are unaware of the option.

#### 10.4.2 Visitor Services

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
36.	Create and install an interpretive panel along the path from the parking area to the front of the house that describes the current and historical landscapes and provides dates of construction for the existing structures.	Expands interpretation of the property beyond guided tours. Visitors will gain some knowledge of the people and the landscape year-round during daylight hours.
37.	Install a bicycle rack in the parking area.	A bicycle tour is being created and promoted for the African-American Heritage Trail which may bring visitors to the Ashley House.
38.	Order and install a portable toilet in the parking area.	This basic amenity will be particularly useful when large school or bus groups are visiting the property.
39.	Create and designate a handicapped-accessible parking space on a portion of the horseshoe drive.	Though the house itself is not universally accessible, physically impaired visitors can visit the display area in the garage to learn about the house and its inhabitants.
40.	Conduct a site analysis that identifies opportunities to increase accessibility and interpretative opportunities for persons of all physical abilities.	Opportunities to make the property more universally accessible- without compromising its historical integrity- will be sought.
41.	Add information about visiting the Ashley House to the Bartholomew's Cobble visitor brochure and map.	The Ashley House is identified on the map of the Cobble but no information on touring the house is included. If a joint entrance fee is to be promoted, this information should be included on the brochure/map.

### 10.4.3 Education and Interpretation

As discussed above, there is tremendous opportunity to expand on the quality and type of programming offered at the Ashley House. The significance of this House in regard to the history of Massachusetts has not been emphasized nor widely publicized beyond the local area. The newly created African American Heritage Trail has begun to raise the profile of the house but the potential opportunities are yet untapped. During this management planning process, it became clear to the planning team that professional expertise will be needed in developing an interpretive plan that will “draw a road map” for future interpretive programming at the Ashley House. More specifically, it is expected that the interpretive plan will:

- create compelling storylines for guided tours, exhibits, and programs;
- suggest and outline new educational programs and special events, including the development of new programs within MCAS for school groups;
- identify potential new audiences;
- identify potential partners and networks such as the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail; and
- write a furnishing plan that will illustrate the storylines and support programming.

(The following recommendations, #42-46, are presented in the order in which they should be implemented.)

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
42.	Hire a consultant to work with staff in writing a comprehensive interpretive plan.	The plan should identify new programming opportunities aimed at attracting new audiences and increasing visitation overall. A focus group comprised of staff, key volunteers and professionals from other institutions will be formed to assist Trustees staff in developing the scope of the plan.
43.	Develop a furnishings plan following the completion of an interpretive plan.	The furnishings plan will be created to reflect the themes of the interpretive plan; it will recommend which collections and furnishings are appropriate for display and which are not. Pending completion of this plan, collections will be assessed as per Recommendation #5.
44.	Implement the interpretive plan.	Self-explanatory.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
45.	Convert the garage into an interpretive display area.	Turning the garage into a display area will allow for the conveyance of interpretive information to visitors at times when the house is not open for tours. It also provides a place for people to explore while waiting for a guided tour to begin. The building can be opened and closed daily by staff of the Cobble. Renovations to the garage will incorporate elements of “green” (i.e., environmentally friendly) design as much as possible.
46.	Create and distribute a “Mum Bett Trail” interpretive guide.	A driving or biking trail that takes visitors to various sites important in the life of Mum Bett, including the Ashley House, would likely be very popular. This could be created and promoted in partnership with the AAHT.
47.	Organize and hold an annual Mum Bett Day event.	The first Mum Bett Day Celebration held in 2006 was a success and would be an ideal “signature event” for the property (i.e., an annual event that is unique to the property and which appeals to a diverse audience.)

## 10.5 General Management Recommendations

### Goals:

- Work cooperatively with the Upper Housatonic Valley Natural Heritage Area, the Sheffield Historical Society and other local cultural organizations to promote the Ashley House.
- Increase the local community’s involvement and investment in the property.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
48.	Create a marketing plan for the reservation.	At the present time, virtually no marketing is done for the Ashley House. A thorough and professionally-prepared marketing strategy is needed to increase the property’s visibility both locally, regionally, and across state lines into NY and CT.

	<i>Recommended Action:</i>	<i>Description/Rationale:</i>
49.	Pursue National Historic Landmark status for the Ashley House.	Designation should be sought for the prestige and publicity it garners and for the funding opportunities it makes available.
50.	Collaborate with other similar institutions to share research and interpretative themes, and to engage in joint marketing and educational programming.	Such institutions to engage may include the Royall House & Slave Quarters in Medford, MA; the Webb-Dean-Stevens Museum in Wethersfield, CT; and the Historical Society of Greenwich, CT.
51.	Continue to strengthen our partnership with the AAHT.	The partnership with the AAHT will be critical to The Trustees' efforts to increase visitation to the Ashley House. Further, the trail will help link the House to a network of other institutions that are important in African-American history. There is much to be gained from such a link, including, for example, joint marketing efforts, cooperative programming, and the sharing of historical research and information.
52.	Create an emergency preparedness plan.	An emergency plan is needed to protect the house, collections and staff and visitors in the event of an emergency.
53.	Establish an intern program that recruits graduate students to conduct historical research, educational programming, and other tasks.	For students, the Ashley House provides a priceless opportunity to learn about eighteenth-century history. In return, interns will provide much needed labor to implement the management plan.

# Section 11: Implementation

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## 11.1 Introduction

In the preceding sections, the significant resources, the visitor experience, and the current management program at the Ashley House were identified and assessed. Section Ten contained a list of recommended actions that were designed to ensure the continued protection of the property's scenic, historical, cultural and natural features and offer a high quality visitor experience. This implementation section:

- prescribes a routine management program that is designed to ensure the most efficient and responsible allocation of staffing and financial resources, protect significant features, and ensure a high quality visitor experience; and
- outlines an implementation schedule for new recommended actions.

Together, the prescribed routine management program and the implementation schedule of new actions will guide staff work plans, volunteer efforts, annual capital and operational budgeting, and fundraising strategies.

## 11.2 Prescribed Routine Management Program

Section 8.2 described the current management program for the property and made a preliminary assessment of whether or not those tasks represent an appropriate investment of staff and financial resources. Based on this assessment, as well as the full understanding of the property's needs that has emerged from this planning effort, staff has developed a prescribed routine management program for the Ashley House which is presented in Table #1. This program is intended to guide staff in developing annual work plans and budgets and in making decisions on how to allocate time spent at the Ashley House. Acceptable Performance Level will be prescribed using one of the following categories:

**Adequate:** The task is currently completed at a level that does not hinder resource protection or the visitor experience.

**Strong:** The task is completed in a manner/at a frequency that represents the ideal.

The Trustees recognizes that although it ultimately strives to be "strong" in all of its property and visitor management actions, given limited staffing and financial resources, there are some actions where an "adequate" ranking is most appropriate. To set the expectation that staff can and will achieve a "strong" ranking in every task is unrealistic and does not demonstrate the exemplary stewardship for which the organization is known. It is also acknowledged that seasonal weather fluctuations, critical unplanned events, and a multitude of other factors may also influence and alter the implementation of the routine management program.

**Table #1: Prescribed Routine Management Program for the Ashley House**

Task	Acceptable Performance Level (APL)	Acceptable Frequency	Season	Staff	Volunteer Opp?	Total hours needed to reach APL	Add'l funds needed to reach APL <sup>1</sup>	Notes
General repairs.	Adequate	As needed	All	S	No	40	\$0	40 hrs annually is average. Includes minor painting and small repairs.
Mow and trim parking area and around house; mow pathways.	Adequate	Weekly	S, Su, F	S	No	75	\$0	Represents a reduction (from current mgmt.) in amount of area mowed.
Equipment maintenance.	Adequate	Weekly	S, Su, F	S	No	12	\$0	
General grounds cleanup.	Adequate	Biannual	S, F	S	Yes	40	\$0	
Wash windows/ install storms.	Adequate	Biannual	S, F	S	No	16	\$0	
Clean house gutters.	Adequate	3x per year	S, Su, F	S	No	12	\$0	
Prune lilacs and boxwood.	Adequate	Annual	Su	S	Yes	4	\$0	
Furnace and septic maintenance.	Strong	Annual	F	S	No	4	\$0	
Alarm testing and maintenance.	Strong	Annual	S	S	No	4	\$0	
Check, service water softener.	Strong	Monthly	All	S	No	4	\$0	
Snow removal.	Adequate	As needed	W	S	No	8	\$0	8 hrs is average.
Vacuum, dust house and collections.	Adequate	Every other week	S, Su, F	HR	Yes	22	\$0	
Open House for season.	Adequate	Annual	S	HR		4	\$0	
Close House for season.	Adequate	Annual	F	HR		4	\$0	

<sup>1</sup> These are additional funds needed to reach the Acceptable Performance Level which have not been included in the existing operating budgets.

Task	Acceptable Performance Level (APL)	Acceptable Frequency	Season	Staff	Volunteer Opp?	Total hours needed to reach APL	Add'l funds needed to reach APL <sup>1</sup>	Notes
Plant, weed, tend garden.	Adequate	Weekly	S, Su, F	V	Yes	84	\$0	Strictly a volunteer task.
Continue to participate in AAHT partnership.	Strong	Ongoing	All	HR	No	20	\$0	
Clear vegetation from stone wall along road.	Adequate	Biannual	Su, F	S	Yes	20	\$0	
Manage old field area to increase population of showy goldenrod.	Adequate	Annual	F	S	No	16	\$0	Time estimate for pulling invasives around house and stone wall.
Control invasive species.	Adequate	As needed	All	S	Yes	20	\$0	
Annual "Mum Bett Day" event.	Strong	Annual	Su	All	Yes	20	\$100	
Open and close garage.	Strong	Daily	Su	S	Yes	34	\$0	15 minutes per day for 136 days.
Manage contract for port-a-john.	Strong	Annual	S	S	No	2	\$600	
Cleaning, sweeping garage; inspect port-a-john.	Adequate	Daily	Su	S	Yes	34	\$0	15 minutes per day for 136 days.
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL HOURS</b>						<b>479</b>	<b>\$700</b>	

### 11.2.1 Discussion of Prescribed Routine Management Program

As demonstrated in Table #1, human resource (staff, volunteers and contractors) needs at the Ashley House total 479 hours annually. As shown by the assessment of the current management regime in Section Eight, staff and volunteers currently spend 342 hours at the property each year. Thus, an additional input of 137 hours is needed annually to provide an appropriate level of care for the Ashley House. This increase is mainly due to the implementation of new initiatives at the property, such as the control of invasive species and the conversion of the existing garage into an interpretive display area. It is expected that the current staffing resources available, coupled with an active corps of volunteers, will be sufficient to meet the prescribed routine management program at the reservation, assuming the current workload of the management unit remains the same.

## 11.3 Implementing Recommended Actions

Section Ten of this report describes the new recommended actions needed to meet the goals and objectives for protecting the Ashley House's historical, natural, scenic and cultural resources while, at the same time, providing visitors with a high quality experience. Financial and human resources permitting, these actions will be implemented over a ten-year period, broken into three phases.

Table #2 lists all of the recommended actions and their assigned phase, and identifies the human and financial resources that will be needed to implement the action steps. Several other guidelines were used to construct the implementation table, including:

1. Only items requiring new financial resources have been assigned a cost, which are shown in 2007 dollars.
2. Each recommended action was assigned a priority rating as defined below.

**Critical** actions will address:

- urgent safety issues
- threats that are causing serious damage to the to the property's significant resources
- issues that are seriously degrading the visitor experience
- regulatory requirements.

**Needed** actions will address:

- threats to the property's resources that are not causing an imminent threat to their integrity
- key Trustees' initiatives (such as expanded educational and interpretive programming)
- basic improvements to visitor services

**Desired** actions will address:

- enhancements that optimize the visitor's experience or the property's resources.

3. Typically, these priority rankings coincide with phases 1, 2, and 3. However, there are some instances where “needed” or “desired” actions can be addressed earlier in the process. Some of these actions may be “quick and cheap” fixes that advance our goals with little effort; some may be done sooner because of funding or volunteer opportunities.
4. The estimated costs for implementing at least one of the recommended actions (#44) is unknown at this time. Therefore, the estimated total for implementing this plan will likely be higher than indicated. Table #2 provides the best estimate of anticipated costs.

Figure 1 below provides an estimate of the total cost and total amount of labor needed to implement all of the new recommended actions in this plan. This investment will be in addition to the total needs of the routine management program detailed on pages 11-2 and 11-3.

**Figure 1: Summary of Implementation Costs**

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Estimated Costs</i>	<i>Staff Hours Needed</i>
1	\$54,850	1,695
2	\$41,900	513
3	\$14,750	497
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$111,500</b>	<b>2,705</b>

## 11.4 Plan Monitoring and Review

This management plan will inform the development of annual work plans for the staff that are responsible for managing the Ashley House. The staff and property or planning committee will conduct an annual review of the plan to assess the progress that has been made on implementing the recommended actions. A written summary of progress made will be appended to the management plan annually.

Table 2 Implementation of Recommended Actions																						
Type	Phase						Rank	Staff				Budget Types										
HR- Historic & Cultural Resource Management	Phase 1: FY2008- FY2011						C- Critical	S- Superintendent				O- Operating Budget										
NR- Natural Resource Management	(April 2007- March 2011)						N- Needed	EC- Ecology Staff				S- Supplemental Funds										
SR- Structural Resource Management	Phase 2: FY2012- FY2014						D- Desired	HR- Historic Resource Staff				C- Capital Expense										
VM- Visitor Management	(April 2011- March 2014)							E&O- Education & Outreach														
E/I- Education and Interpretation	Phase 3: FY2015- FY2017							RD- Regional Director														
GM- General Property Management	(April 2014- March 2017)							AD- Advancement Department														
								GIS- GIS Staff														
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1	HR	Conduct further research into the Ashley Family and the enslaved and other members of their household.	ongoing	N	HR		120	60	60	240	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Possible intern or volunteer opportunity.		
2	HR	Explore the possibility of acquiring the Ashley Family account books, which are currently on loan to The Trustees.	1	D	HR		8	0	0	8		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N						
3	HR	Pursue the possibility and conduct, if possible, a systematic and potentially comprehensive archaeological investigation on the original site of the Ashley House.	2	D	HR	RD	0	40	0	40		\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$20,000	C			\$20,000	Staff hours for negotiating with land owner, managing contract and supervising work.		
4	HR	Reconcile the different object catalogs and update the info as needed.	1	C	HR		300	0	0	300	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				300 hours total needed for HRM and intern or other staff.		
5	HR	Review and assess collections for exhibit, storage, conservation, loan or deaccession.	1	N	HR		40	0	0	40	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Will follow completion of furnishings plan. Volunteers can assist but cannot complete task independently.		
6	HR	Recruit and train volunteers to assist with the management and care of collections.	ongoing	D	HR		45	45	45	135	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Approximately 15 hours per year.		
7	HR	Remove the existing shrubbery around the house and yard and decrease the frequency of mowing.	1	D	S		20	0	0	20		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N						
8	HR	Limb up the trees in the parking area to open up the view of the front of the house and to improve sight lines.	1	N	S		20	0	0	20		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N						
9	HR	Clear the vegetation from the stone wall along the road.	ongoing	N	S		0	0	0	0	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Staff hours (20 hrs/year) are accounted for in routine management program.		
10	HR	Limb up the trees along the roadside to open up sight lines.	1	N	S		20	0	0	20		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N						
11	HR	Clear the hedgerow, or a portion of it, directly across the street from the House to open up the view of the fields.	2	D	S		0	120	0	120	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Staff hours assume one week for 3 people. Can be reduced if entire hedgerow is not removed.		
12	HR	Research the fence design and consider replacing the current fence with a more appropriate design to the time period being interpreted.	1	N	HR		8	0	0	8	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N						

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13	HR	Replace the fence.	1	N	S		160	0	0	160	Yes	\$1,200	\$0	\$0	\$1,200	S		\$1,200		Staff hours = 4 people for one week.
14	HR	Remove the existing horseshoe drive.	2	N	S		0	120	0	120		\$0	\$500	\$0	\$500	S		\$500		Will retain portion and convert to two parking spaces (see Recommendation #40).
15	SR	Retain the ell as a private staff residence.	1	N	S		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				This task does not require any time or dollars. Will necessitate the re-routing of tours and the installation of a restroom for staff and visitors (recommendation #39).
16	SR	Fix the leak in the roof and chimney.	1	C	S		20	0	0	20		\$1,800	\$0	\$0	\$1,800	S		\$1,800		Work to be performed by contractor. Staff time for administering contract and supervising work.
17	SR	Repair windows and doors.	1	N	S		20	0	0	20		\$1,500	\$0	\$0	\$1,500	S		\$1,500		Work to be performed by contractor. Staff time for administering contract and supervising work.
18	SR	Upgrade the alarm system.	2	N	S		0	20	0	20		\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	S		\$2,000		
19	SR	Vent the attic above the Main House.	2	N	S		0	16	0	16		\$0	\$600	\$0	\$600	S		\$600		Entails installation by staff of thermostat-controlled fans.
20	SR	Replace the roof on the garage.	3	N	S		0	0	90	90		\$0	\$0	\$8,000	\$8,000	C		\$8,000		Work to be done in-house.
21	SR	Stain the exterior of the house.	2	N	S		0	20	0	20		\$0	\$16,000	\$0	\$16,000	C		\$16,000		To be done by contractor.
22	SR	Reinforce the handrail on the spiral staircase in the Main House.	1	C	S	HR	0	0	0	0		\$3,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,000	S		\$3,000		Will be done by contractor simultaneously with rebuild of front door threshold (see #18). Staff hours included in rec #18.
23	NR	Improve nesting habitat for wood turtles.	1	N	S	EC	10	0	0	10		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				10 hours for initial effort. May involve ongoing management (e.g., predator exclosures).
24	NR	Manage the old field area to increase the population of showy goldenrod (solidago speciosa).	ongoing	C	S	EC	0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Staff hours and cost accounted for in routine management program.
25	NR	Conduct a survey for brown thrasher within suitable habitats on and nearby Bartholomew's Cobble and the Ashley House.	1	N	EC		40	0	0	40	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Opportunity for qualified volunteer.
26	NR	Control invasive species on the property.	ongoing	C	S	EC	0	0	0	0	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				This will be an ongoing effort and, thus, staff hours will be accounted for in routine management program.
27	VM	Expand the visitor parking area at the west end of the property.	1	N	S		64	0	0	64		\$750	\$0	\$0	\$750	S		\$750		Two days for a crew of four to cut trees, grind stumps, move fence and mow grass. Cost for chipper and grinder rental and materials for fence (posts, wire).
28	VM	Relocate the entrance sign closer to the parking area.	1	N	S		2	0	0	2		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				
29	VM	Improve signage along the fence and roadway directing visitors to the parking area.	1	N	S		4	0	0	4		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				
30	VM	Construct and install a bulletin board in the parking area.	1	N	S		40	0	0	40		\$2,000	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	S		\$2,000		
31	VM	Install a ticketing shed in the parking area.	1	N	S		16	0	0	16		\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000	C		\$7,000		Assumes a 12x12 shed with porch is purchased and delivered to site. Staff will construct pad for structure.

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32	VM	Rebuild the existing steps leading from the parking area toward the house.	1	C	S		48	0	0	48	Yes	\$450	\$0	\$0	\$450	S		\$450		Requires 2 staff for 3 days.
33	VM	Create a clearly marked pathway leading visitors from the parking area to the front of the house and to the garage.	1, ongoing	N	S		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				This will be done via regular mowing and, thus, is accounted for in routine management program.
34	VM	Install new directional signage in the parking area and on the grounds.	1	N	S		16	0	0	16		\$150	\$0	\$0	\$150	O	\$150			Cost for posts, signs and lettering. Also includes time to install interpretive sign (recommendation #37).
35	VM	Promote a joint entrance fee with Bartholomew's Cobble.	ongoing	N	All		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				No time or cost associated with this recommendation. Joint fee exists, just needs to be promoted. Information on joint fee will be added to publications and marketing materials.
36	VM	Create and install an interpretive panel along the path from the parking area to the front of the house that describes the current and historical landscapes and provides dates of construction for the existing structures.	3	D	HR	S	0	0	50	50		\$0	\$0	\$750	\$750	S		\$750		Includes design time for E&O and research and writing time for HR staff.
37	VM	Install a bicycle rack in the parking area.	2	D	S		0	16	0	16		\$0	\$200	\$0	\$200	O	\$200			
38	VM	Order and install a portable toilet for the parking area.	2	D	S		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Since this will be an annual task to arrange contract for port-a-john, hours and cost will be accounted for in routine management. Over the long term, consider installing a permanent composting toilet.
39	VM	Create and designate a handicapped-accessible parking space on a portion of the existing horseshoe drive.	2	N	S		0	16	0	16		\$0	\$100	\$0	\$100	O	\$100			
40	VM	Conduct a site analysis that identifies opportunities to increase accessibility and interpretive opportunities for persons of all physical abilities.	3	D	S		0	0	32	32	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Staff will invite a qualified individual to assist informally in assessment. A formal assessment is not needed, since adjustments to the house are not possible.
41	VM	Add information about visiting the Ashley House to the Bartholomew's Cobble visitor brochure and map.	1	N	E&O	HR	24	0	0	24		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Time for HR to write text and E&O to make design changes. Cost of printing to be incurred by the Cobble.
42	E/I	Hire a consultant to work with staff in writing a comprehensive interpretive plan.	1	C	HR	E&O	300	0	0	300		\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$30,000	C			\$30,000	Staff hours is estimate. Cost is an estimate; grant opportunities will be pursued.
43	E/I	Develop a furnishings plan following the completion of an interpretive plan.	1	C	HR		90	0	0	90		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Cost for consultant contribution covered by cost of interpretive plan. No other out-of-pocket expenses required.
44	E/I	Implement the interpretive plan.	ongoing	C	HR		0	0	0	unknown	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	unknown	N				Hours and costs are unknown at this time. Cost will be estimated in interpretive plan.
45	E/I	Convert the garage into an interpretive display area.	1	N	S	SR	180	0	0	180	Yes	\$7,000	\$0	\$0	\$7,000	C			\$7,000	Costs (\$2k) for new door, sheet rock, carpet and painting; \$4k for electrical service and wiring; and \$1k for 4 poster (72"x44") displays. Staff hrs for in-house renovations (120) and design time (60).
46	E/I	Create and distribute a "Mum Bett Trail" interpretive guide.	2	D	HR	E&O	0	50	0	50		\$0	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500	S		\$2,500		Design will be done in-house to resemble other AAHT brochures. Cost is for printing 7,500 brochures.
47	E/I	Organize and hold an annual Mum Bett Day event.	ongoing	D	HR		0	0	0	0	Yes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Associated hours and costs are accounted for in routine management program.

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48	GM	Create a marketing plan for the reservation.	1	C	E&O		80	0	0	80		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Marketing plan will be done in-house by E&O department so no out-of-pocket expense for plan preparation. Specific marketing strategies may incur some cost but those cannot be determined at this stage.
49	GM	Pursue National Historic Landmark status for the Ashley House.	3	D	HR		0	0	100	100		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				
50	GM	Collaborate with other similar institutions to share research and interpretative themes, and to engage in joint marketing and educational programming.	ongoing	N	HR		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Staff hours (20 hrs/year) accounted for in routine management program.
51	GM	Continue to strengthen our partnership with the AAHT.	ongoing	C	HR		0	0	0	0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				Time is accounted for in routine management.
52	GM	Create an emergency preparedness plan.	2	N	HR	S	0	40	0	40		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N				
53	GM	Establish an intern program that recruits graduate students to conduct historical research, educational programming, and other tasks.	3	D	RD	HR	0	0	120	120		\$0	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000	S		\$2,000		Estimated 40 staff hours per year. Cost is \$2,000 per year.
<b>Total</b>							<b>1,695</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>2,705</b>		<b>\$54,850</b>	<b>\$41,900</b>	<b>\$14,750</b>	<b>\$111,500</b>		<b>\$450</b>	<b>\$23,050</b>	<b>\$88,000</b>	