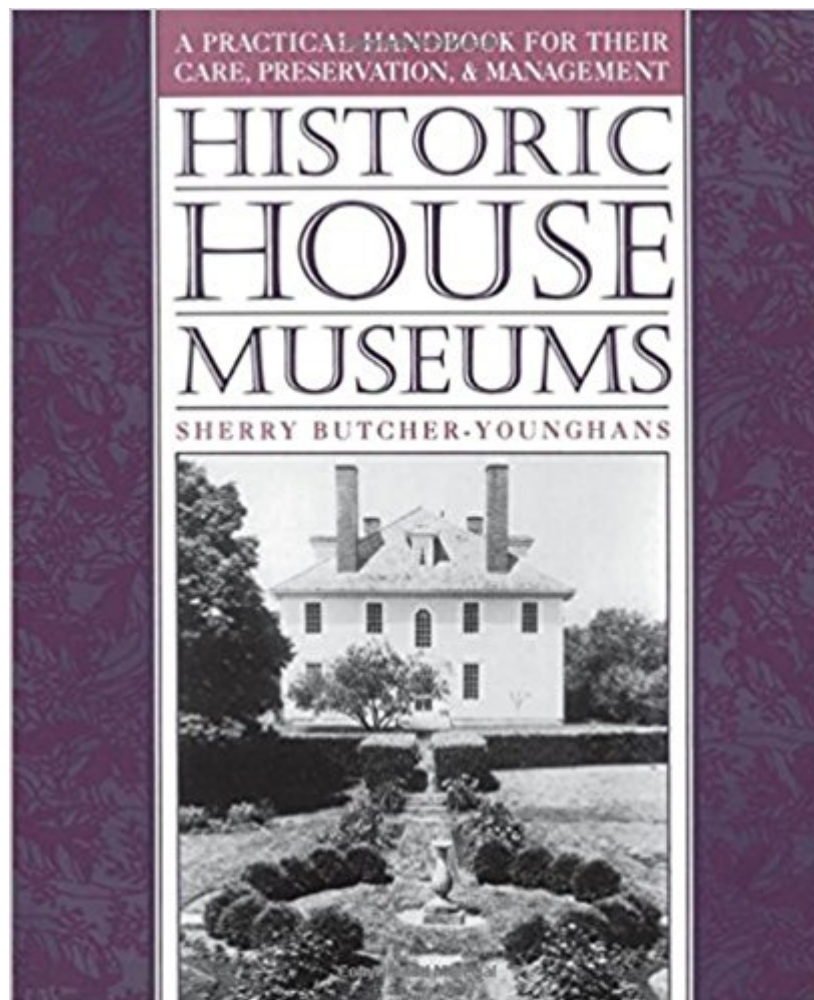




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Historic House Museums: A Practical Handbook For Their Care, Preservation, And Management



Synopsis

Historic house museums can be found in nearly every city in the United States and Canada. These are the homes of the earliest settlers, statesmen, frontiersmen, great writers, artists, architects, and industrial magnates. These are the places, carefully saved and preserved, that represent a cultural heritage. Despite their popularity, it is not uncommon to find museums that are in poor repair, their collections neglected and their staffs grossly overworked. Many are run by well-meaning and hard-working volunteers who have little or no professional training. Often they survive on shoestring budgets and are able to present only limited programs. Serving both as a hands-on guide and reference, this book examines these problems, offering practical advice and solutions which can be easily implemented. Its useful "lessons" include governance, where to find help, care of collections, conservation, security, and interpretation--all designed to increase the professionalism of the historic house museum.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Pulls together a range of information in a handy reference written specially for the nonprofessional house museum staff....Its candid language, extensive subject-specific bibliographies, and lists of additional resources provide a strong foundation on which staff can build a commitment to professional standards for the care and interpretation of historical resources."--Winterthur Portfolio
"This book is invaluable not only to curators of house museums but also for all owners of old houses."--Preservation Notes Newsletter

Historic house museums can be found in nearly every city in the United States and Canada. Serving both as a hands-on guide and reference, this book examines the problems often encountered in the establishment and maintenance of historic house museums, offering practical advice and solutions which can be easily implemented.

This book is a one of a kind and has lots of good suggestions. It was published many years ago so appears a bit dated of course.

I selected this book for a report for a museum studies class -- and because I volunteer at a small "historic house museum". Because such museums often operate with meager staff and an even more meager budget, I expected the book to be something of the "How-to-do-an-exhibition-with-string-and-Scotch-tape" genre. I was very pleasantly surprised to find that, on the contrary, the author presented what seem to be the currently-accepted professional museum standards, with suggestions as to how the small historic house museum can rise to meet them. I was equally pleasantly surprised to find suggestions throughout the book that the museums also recognize their limitations and if they find that they can't meet minimum standards, to consider turning over their collections to an institution that can care for them properly. Information included in the book covers the soup-to-nuts, from the mission statement to housekeeping and with a few minor exceptions (and one surprisingly larger one), the information on caring for the house and items in the collections is virtually identical to that which has been presented to us, by guest professional lecturers, in our grad school classes. One small suggestion which seems to conflict with what I have frequently read and been told was the author's suggestion to use clear nail polish as a base coat in marking objects -- something we were told not to do. The other thing that I would have liked to see left out of the section on cleaning chandeliers was to put several layers of padding and a piece of plywood on a dining room table (if made of "hardwood and in stable condition") beneath the chandelier...then "place a step ladder of suitable size on top of the plywood in order to reach the chandelier". Not on MY dining room table you won't! Other than that very surprising bit of information, I found the book to be an invaluable, thorough and professional reference that is going to be a permanent reference at our small museum -- and it is even printed on acid-free paper, for a longer life!

In historic house museums, the author provided useful information and tips for the operation of a small museum on a shoestring budget. The authors extensive experience in the museum industry is

evident from the suggestions offered. Many resources were listed for the museum staff to consider, however there are no web addresses which severely limits the usefulness of the book.

Good guide for those who work in house museums.

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