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ARCH1900 – Response Paper 1

09/22/09

**A Comparison of Site Reports**

The Beaudry site report begins with an introduction to the general background of the area and history of the site, including a detailed listing of the various land-owners. The next section was the research framework, which was the first section in the Gibson site report. I found the Beaudry site report’s historical background to be valuable in both catching the interest of the reader and providing an easy way for the author to reference time periods and personages without confusing the reader as much. However, with the amount of detail given it was still hard to keep the timeline straight. The author could have referenced the historical background in more detail during the presentations of the findings in order to help the reader keep the history straight.

After the research methods, the Gibson report went into a description of the present land use and environment. Then the Gibson report summarizes its findings by going through the history of the site, from the proto-historic point though the present again. Within each time period, the Gibson report breaks up findings by site or area when applicable. Additionally, the Gibson report contains summaries highlighting the more important of the findings. The Beaudry report summarizes its findings by site instead of by time period. This gave the Beaudry report a rather scattered feeling, and made synthesizing a mental concept of the site as a whole for each period of history difficult. However, tracing the evolution of the specific parts of the site through time was easier.

The Gibson report provides a much clearer image of the history of its site, by looking at the findings on a larger scale (looking at the entirety of the site for each time period instead of looking only at very small sections of the site at a time). However, it seems important to note that the two site reports are inherently different in their purpose. The Gibson report was created to summarize previous archaeological and historical findings for a much more detailed site (the Gibson report is examining a city block, with multiple households and businesses as well as pre-historic and proto-historic land use by Native American peoples, as compared to the Beaudry site which is one household and farm). The Gibson report was created to provide recommendations for modern use and conservation of the land, which was being threatened by development. On the other hand, the Beaudry site was already being preserved and was not in any danger of development. Instead, the Beaudry report was created to summarize recent archaeological findings obtained from digs at the site.

Therefore, while the two reports presented their findings in a significantly different way, each manner was fitting to the information that each author had to present. Since Beaudry was working on a much more detailed scale, writing up her findings area by area provided the readers with a decent understanding of these details, even if the report did not to a good job summarizing the overall findings about the different time periods. The Gibson report was working with much broader material – both looking at a much longer time period and at more material in terms of buildings and finds. Additionally the Gibson report had a clear aim – to convince people of the archaeological value of the land and the need to preserve it. Because of both of these reasons, the Gibson report needed to provide a much clearer and broader picture than the Beaudry report, hence the presentation by time period and especially the summaries.

Our site-report for the John Brown House should have elements of both these site reports. Clearly, our site report needs to contain a summary of the research methods near the beginning, as both the Gibson and Beaudry reports did. I think our report should also include a historical background like the Beaudry report did, in order to draw readers in as well as provide them with a frame of reference for our findings. Since we are looking at a site more along the scale of the Beaudry site, it makes sense to keep our findings organized by area at least to some degree. However, the Beaudry report lacked the clear overall picture which the Gibson report provided, which would also benefit our own report. An ideal format seems to be presenting the findings by time period while carefully maintaining the location of the finds in reference to finds from other time periods in order to provide the sense of evolution which the Beaudry report provided. Alternatively, the finds could be presented by location then at the end of the report a summary of the time periods, similar to the one found in the Gibson report) could be provided. It seems most important to maintain structure in the site report, in order not to confuse the reader. At times, both the Gibson report and the Beaudry report became confusing or hard to follow due to losing some of their structure. Our report should start with a background followed by a summary of our research methods. Then our findings should be presented in an orderly fashion, followed by a summary which puts the findings into the historical context provided by our background.