



COLLECTION STUDY

Hosmer House

Prepared for the Town of Sudbury Historical
Commission

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Hosmer House Collection Study Report

BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, AND RESEARCH

This report is delivered in accordance with an RFP issued by the Sudbury Historical Commission (SHC) for a "Collection Study" of Hosmer House. Erin Richardson, PhD, Founder and Principal of Frank + Glory (F+G), engaged in multiple streams of research to complete this work to align with SHC's requirements for project deliverables. All research undertaken for this project focused either on details that provide additional context and provenance for the current contents of the house or on models that will help the Sudbury Historical Commission improve its capacity to care for and share those contents with Sudbury residents now and in the future.

Research was undertaken in three areas:

- Historical: Context for the property and its inhabitants, the circumstances of Florence Hosmer's will and her relationship with John Powers and the Town of Sudbury, information about Zoie Morse who lived at Hosmer House from 1952 until her death in 1968 – the longest of anyone unrelated to Florence. Research in this area is focused on explaining the current contents of the house and is not a comprehensive history of the house, the family, or its individual members.
- Material culture: Findings from two weeks spent with the collection conducting an inventory of the contents of the property (see separate Inventory Report submitted to the Collection Study Task Force of the Historical Commission on June 5, 2024).
- Operational: Research exploring how other Massachusetts municipalities operate historic house museums. This research informed section 2.8 Recommendations for collection governance and administration.

The report is organized to answer Tasks 3 (Background Research), 4 (Preliminary Assessment and Recommendations) and 7 (Draft Collection Study Report) of the RFP. Task 4 is divided into two sections: (I) a description of current conditions, (II) Recommendations. Task 3 is included in 1.2 – Apparent history and significance of the collections and 2.8 recommendations for governance and administration. Simultaneous to the Collection Study, SHC also commissioned a Historic Structure Report and Historic Landscape Report; those significant reports are prepared by Architectural Preservation Studio (APS). The consultant teams made efforts to align their reports and recommendations. For example, this report (and the inventory report) makes use of the room, window, and door numbers assigned by APS (see Appendix 1).

1. DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS

1.1 An overall description of the nature, type, and number of items in the collection.

The inventory report (submitted in early June 2024) provides a list of objects inside Hosmer House at the time the record was made (April-May 2024). There are approximately 2,630 objects or groups of objects inside the house, not including boxes of manuscript materials, publications, and photography. This paper-based material, Florence Hosmer's artwork, and food service tools and equipment make up the bulk of the building's contents.

It is not possible, at this stage, to provide a specific count of individual items for the following reasons:

- Scope of collection statement and accessioned collection: A formal definition of what constitutes "the collection" has not yet been written. For the purposes of this project, it includes most of the contents of the house in 2024, excluding items clearly present to support SHC programming (21st century holiday decorations, folding tables and chairs, etc.) Refer to the Recommendations section for information about creating a collection management policy – a document that includes the scope of collection statement and rationale and criteria for accessioning objects into the collection.
- Item-level inventory: An item-level inventory of the contents of Hosmer House does not yet exist, and the project's budget did not allow for the creation of an item-level inventory. Refer to the Recommendations section for more information about creating an inventory. Provisions for regular inventory are part of a Collection Management Policy.
- Numbered items: Materials at Hosmer House are not numbered or cataloged (described). This information would have been helpful in matching items to previously generated lists of the contents of the house. Those lists (1978 appraisal inventory, and others) did not use consistent terminology or level of detail.
- Quantification of collections is not always helpful: Types and kinds of individual items is not generally a recommended manner of approaching a accumulation of "the stuff of life" assembled by an individual over a long period. While reporting "x quantity" of ceramics, silver, textiles, etc. is sometimes useful for comprehensive, professionally assembled collections in museums where connoisseurship is the focus (a decorative arts museum, for example), the method is not often useful in understanding a collection that represents one person's lived experience of nearly 100 years. Further, most objects in museums are, in fact, mixed-material. An upholstered sofa is made of wood, textile, and metal fasteners so a function-based category (i.e. furniture) might be useful; materials-based category (i.e. ceramics) could include food preparation equipment, bathroom fixtures, a table service, lighting fixtures, and objects of countless other functions. Quantities can lead to questions like "why do we need so many teacups?" which is the right question for some museums that may have inadvertently collected too many examples over time, but the wrong question for collections like that of the Hosmer House where the contents constitute a primary source document from which to learn about the inhabitants.

- Primary source material is not ready for use: The most important contents of Hosmer House are manuscripts (letters, diaries, receipts, bank books, lists, etc.) and photographs¹. These materials do not yet exhibit enough physical or intellectual control for use as part of this Collection Study, but materials have the potential to provide a wealth of context for interpreting the house, its contents, and lives of its inhabitants.

In the context of this kind of primary source archival material, physical control means that the stewarding repository (Town of Sudbury) knows what the materials are and where they are housed; intellectual control means that the repository has created documentation about the collection that helps users access the informational content of the materials.² A finding aid is one type of intellectual control. Although some of these materials have been filed, lack of a finding aid means that a user cannot readily understand where to find information contained in the files. The recommendations section includes information about improving physical and intellectual control of these materials to enable future research.

1.2 Apparent history and significance of the collection

This section is divided into three parts that help to contextualize the contents of the house as observed in the 2024 inventory. While Florence has been associated with the house for 80 years of her life, she did not live there full-time. Further, when occupied, the house seems to always have had at least two occupants: Florence and/or other Hosmer family members and/or boarders. Zoie Morse, friend of the family and Florence in particular, moved into Hosmer House in 1952 and brought a large quantity of furniture and possessions with her. Finally, the house contents were further impacted when the Town of Sudbury assumed responsibility for the property after Florence's death in 1978.

1.2.1 Hosmer family residents and their possessions

The contents of Hosmer House are significant for their relationship to the Hosmer Family, and specifically to Florence Hosmer (1880-1978), the person with the longest tenure in the dwelling (see Appendix 2 for more detail). Her life is likely to be well documented in the unprocessed manuscript materials and photography, especially when those are used to contextualize her artistic output, travels throughout New England, personal relationships, and life in Sudbury.

Many "historic house museums with complete contents" include multiple generations of family accumulation because the family often owned the property for hundreds of years, passing it to subsequent generations. Examples of this type include Historic Cherry Hill in Albany, NY, The Codman Estate in Lincoln, MA, and Wyck in Philadelphia, PA. However, Hosmer House does not share this history.

¹ Approximately 80-90 linear feet of manuscript material and approximately 30-40 linear feet of photography were found in repurposed boxes throughout the house during the 2024 inventory and the materials were grouped together for the first time in S-09 (see inventory report). All materials are unprocessed (not prepared for use).

² Society of American Archivists (n.d.). Dictionary. Accessed July 15, 2024 at <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/physical-control.html>

The Hosmers (Edwin, Abigail³ and their children Alice, Albert (Burt or Bert), Winifred (Fred), and Florence) were the third owners of the property beginning in September 1897. The house sat on a nine-acre lot and was purchased with a mortgage⁴. It is not known if the purchase included any contents already in the dwelling, but it did include "all hay in barn [,] hay wagon [,] plow [,] some small [illegible illegible] wood near west wall."⁵ Neither is it known what the Hosmers brought with them from their previous residence in Woodstock, CT. The family survived a fire more than 15 years prior to moving to Sudbury (in the early 1880s⁶) that may have caused the loss of their movable possessions. About 15 years later, the family was living in Walnut Cottage (at an unidentified Connecticut location) which consisted of two rooms; it was unlikely to hold much furniture or possessions in addition to four or five adults.⁷

At the time he purchased Hosmer House, Edwin was 56 and Abigail was 51; they moved to their final residence well into middle age along with all their adult children. Alice and Burt were in their late 20s, Fred and Florence were older teenagers (18 and 17, respectively). Edwin died 14 years later in 1910 (he was 70), and Abby followed him in 1914 when she was 67. The Hosmer heads-of-household had relatively short tenures in the house, especially when compared with the life-long, multi-generation tenures of some of the families in other historic houses that have become museums. Because of the fire and other family circumstances, the Hosmers did not have generations of family heirlooms and lacked considerable wealth.

Three years later, in early June 1900, the Federal Census enumerator recorded five of the Hosmers as residents of Hosmer House (Edwin, Abigail, Alice, Albert, and Florence). The property was not operating as a farm in 1900 and Edwin's occupation was not listed as "farmer"; it is recorded as a house and the Agricultural Questionnaire required for farms was not completed. According to other census records, at no time during the Hosmers ownership did the property operate as a farm. While the family may have maintained a substantial garden, horses for transportation, cows for milk, and chickens for eggs, they did not operate a farm as a sole income source. In the 1900 census Edwin was recorded as a "Boarding House Keeper;" indeed, one border, Florence Sherman, a 24-year-old teacher, was recorded as a resident as well.

In the 1910 Federal census, Abby Hosmer had become the head of the house with daughters Alice (43) and Florence (29). Abby is listed as having her "own income" while Alice was a public-school teacher and Florence a drawing teacher. Edwin had died just prior to the enumerator's mid-April visit.⁸

By the 1920 census Alice (63) was recorded as the head of the household. Florence was also a resident along with Margeret Sample, a 59-year-old housekeeper. Alice was still serving as a public-school teacher and Florence was self-employed as a Landscape

³ Sometimes shortened to Abby or Abbie in other US Census records.

⁴ 1900 US Census, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, population schedule, Sudbury Township, Sudbury, p. 75, enumeration district 964, sheet 1-B, dwelling 5, family 6, Edwin B. Hosmer and Abbie L. Hosmer; National Archives and Records Administration, FamilySearch

⁵ Memorandum of Agreement, 1896 Between Ella Willis and Albert E. Hosmer.

⁶ Casey, H. *My Dear Girl: The Art of Florence Hosmer* (New York: Black Lawrence Press, 2011), 15.

⁷ Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 16-17.

⁸ 1910 US Census, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, population schedule, Sudbury Town, enumeration district 1026, sheet 6-B, lines 65-67.

and Portrait Artist. Margaret Sample was born in Nova Scotia and came to the US in 1901; 19 years later she held "alien resident" status; she had not become an American citizen. Although she was listed as a housekeeper for a "private family" not clear if that family was Alice and Florence, or if she also served other families in addition to the Hosmers, or Alice and Florence alone.⁹ Alice died of colon cancer on November 3, 1924, at age 57.¹⁰

Although she was present at Hosmer House for federal censuses and toward the end of her life, Alice taught at a public school in Weston, MA for decades. In 1913 she was a teacher at the Intermediate school in Weston and lived at home (a long travel distance).¹¹ Two years later she had moved into the Teachers' Lodge¹² on Central Ave in Weston.¹³ By 1917 she was the Principal at Centre Grammar school.¹⁴

It does not appear that Fred and Burt spent long stretches of time in the house, though the brothers' belongings seem to have returned to Sudbury at some point in their lives. For example, Burt's music books and teaching materials from his position at Muskingum College are in the attic, but he's buried in Oak Grove Cemetery on Martha's Vinyard where he and his second wife Eugenie made their last home. Fred was married and was working as a shoe salesman for W. L. Douglas Shoes in Brockton, MA when he completed his WWI draft registration card in 1917 at age 39. Later, Fred and Mary, his wife, lived in Wellesley, then Weston (near Alice), and by 1926 has moved to Cambridge.¹⁵ They divorced in 1928.¹⁶

Although children may have visited the house (especially Florence's nieces and nephews), it is certain none lived there during the Hosmers' ownership. However, the presence of boarders in the house was commonplace beginning in 1897 and lasting well into Florence's old age.

While Sudbury may have been Florence's permanent residence, she travelled and made temporary homes all over New England in New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, and Boston and Provincetown, Massachusetts. In her later years, she stayed more often at Sudbury than other locations.

⁹ 1920 US Census, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, population schedule, Sudbury Town, enumeration district 467, sheet 3-B, lines 96-98.

¹⁰ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 1924 (filed 3 November). "Standard Certificate of Death: Alice Lillian Hosmer." Office of the Secretary, Division of Vital Statistics, Volume 83, page 191. FamilySearch <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:6ZD5-KT72> accessed 2024-06-27.

¹¹ The Waltham suburban directory containing general directories of the residents, businesses, town officers, etc. of Weston, Wayland, Cochituate and Lincoln, Mass. 1913, pg. 50.

¹² This boarding house at 334 Boston Post Road, Weston was owned by the Weston School District. Weston Historical Society. *The Teachers' Lodge: Unmarried Teachers Had a Home Thanks to Horace Sears*. Weston Historical Society Newsletter, Spring 2021, pg. 4.

¹³ The Waltham suburban directory for Weston, Wayland, Cochituate and Lincoln. 1915. pg. 67.

¹⁴ The Waltham suburban directory for Weston, Wayland, Cochituate and Lincoln. 1917. pg. 59.

¹⁵ The Waltham suburban directories 1915 - 1926.

¹⁶ Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 99-100.

Objects, publications, manuscripts, and photographs are likely related to Florence's role as the executor of Burt's, and possibly Fred's, estate, rather than from a long period of residence in the house. Both men were married¹⁷ with children and careers (Burt in music and teaching, and Fred in nursing, sales, and other temporary money-making schemes).

1.2.2 Zoie Morse and Tree Tops

In 1952, Florence's friend Zoie Mabel Morse (sometimes Zoe) moved to Hosmer House. She lived there until her death in 1968. Zoie seems to have been known to the family since the early 1900s. It is not known how or when Zoie entered the Hosmer family's life but a reference to her is included in a letter from Bert to Florence in 1938¹⁸; she was a friend of Bert's second wife Eugenie.¹⁹ Bert, Eugenie, and Zoie all lived in Providence, Rhode Island in the 1930s. At some point, Zoie became a good friend of Florence as well. Zoie is often listed as an artisan and was possibly a jeweler.²⁰ Earlier in her life, Zoie owned The Studio Shop in Providence in the general neighborhood of Brown University, and Tree Tops (a Gift Shop and Tea Room) on Bradford Street near Kendall Lane in Provincetown, MA. In 1952, after many decades of ownership, she sold Tree Tops and came to live at Hosmer House full-time²¹. See Appendix 3 for more information about Zoie.

The connection between Zoie Morse, Tree Tops, and the 2024 contents of Hosmer House cannot be over-emphasized. Comparing photographs of the interior of Tree Tops from a series of photos taken there in the 1920s or 1930s,²² to the furniture and furnishings remaining in Hosmer House, shows that a good portion of Florence's possessions in 1978 were furniture and furnishings that came with Zoie's move to Sudbury after she sold the Provincetown business. (See Zoie Mabel Morse Chronology for more information.)

1.2.3 Changes since 1978

The contents of Hosmer House in 2024 represents some of the house's furnishings when Florence died in 1978. The most notable differences between the contents of Hosmer House in 2024 and the inventory conducted by Carl Stinson in 1978²³ is the quantity of furniture and representation of evolving communication and entertainment technology.

In 1978 the space now known as the ballroom (S-09) was subdivided into two furnished rental accommodations. Because a minimum of two people seem to have been in residence (unless Florence closed the house due to her travels²⁴), there was a lot of

¹⁷ Fred married Mary Boyden in 1902; they divorced in 1928. Burt (44) married Stella Burns (39) in 1915 in Muskingum, Ohio where he was teaching at Muskingum College. After Stella died in 1934 (in Wheaton, IL), Burt remarried Eugenie Hunt (b. 1873), a longtime family friend, in 1936.

¹⁸ Letter from Hosmer B. to Hosmer, F., November 1938, in Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 130.

¹⁹ Letter from Morse Z. to Hosmer, F., June 1951, in Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 114.

²⁰ Letter from E. [unidentified in Casey] to F. Hosmer, after May 1968, in Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 134-135.

²¹ "Miss Zoie Morse of Providence, Rhode Island, and Provincetown is making her home with Miss Florence Hosmer," *Concord Enterprise*, October 16, 1952. www.newspapers.com

²² These photographs are part of the unprocessed documentary materials assembled during the 2024 inventory.

²³ Stinson, Carl. *Inventory and Appraisal of Household Furnishings and Personal Property of Florence Hosmer*. August 1978.

²⁴ Casey, *My Dear Girl*, 130.

furniture. In 1978, there were eight beds in the house, nearly 100 chairs, five televisions, and multiple radios²⁵. Using photographs of the interior of the house in comparison to the 1966²⁶ and 1978 appraisal inventory lists, the location and use of the objects may be discovered. Florence and Zoie were evidently big fans of television. Florence was quoted in the *Concord Enterprise* in 1962 "You know, we [she and Zoie] stay up to midnight watching TV."²⁷ This later period (1950s through 1970s) will likely be the recommended period of significance for the house in a future interpretive planning process. This is the period during which the most has been recorded in photographs, correspondence, and diaries, and for which there is adequate original content.

The Town of Sudbury and Historical Commission, in preparing to open the house to the public, disposed of some of the house's contents after Florence's death, likely to remove the evidence of her declining years. As noted, Stinson recorded much more furniture in the house in 1978 than is present in 2024 (see Inventory Report). The sale of goods by the SHC, as approved by the Select Board, continued with three "yard sales" (1985²⁸, 1987²⁹, 2011³⁰). In 1999 approximately 25 paintings and works on paper were consigned with Skinner, Incorporated and sold as one lot at a March 17, 2000, auction.

1.3 Overall physical condition of the materials.

In general, the physical condition of the materials inside Hosmer House are good. It is apparent that the SHC has taken reasonable care of the contents. The house is clean, and the objects on view are free of dust. In many cases, guidance from a museum professionals would dramatically increase the overall health and sustainability of the house's contents. The findings presented below can be addressed by consulting the appropriate professionals outlined in the Recommendations section.

- Case furniture: All case furniture (chests of drawers, desks, and others) contains objects. Some drawers are holding more weight than their construction methods will support. Joinery in many drawers is loose or completely broken. This makes it difficult to open the drawers. (See Appendix , pg. 3)
- Object handling practices: It is clear from the condition of some furniture that the objects have been moved or used without appropriate object handling methods. Many of the overfilled drawers mentioned above are in poor condition because the drawer front and handles have been used to pull the extra weight of the drawer contents forward. Because the contents exceed the weight the drawer was designed to hold, opening the drawers causing joint separation and complete detachment in some instances. Further, the leg joints on many pieces of furniture are broken or completely separated (especially the blanket chest in S-08 and the sofa in S-09) from pulling or dragging the item rather than lifting it up and setting it back down.

²⁵ Stinson, *Inventory and Appraisal*.

²⁶ Unidentified author. 1966 inventory list. Found in the Historical Commission paper files in 2024.

²⁷ Article on Florence Hosmer as a resident of Sudbury, MA, *Concord Enterprise*, September 13, 1962. www.newspaper.com

²⁸ "Hosmer sale offers souvenirs," *The Sudbury Town Crier*, March 21, 1985, p. 3.

²⁹ MacLean, L. to Board of Selectmen, Sudbury, MA, June 16, 1987.

³⁰ MacLean, L. to Valente, M., June 7, 2011.

- Object Marking: The numbering system used by Stinson in 1978 consisted of numbered stickers either adhered to the objects with their native adhesive or taped on with pressure-sensitive tape (like Scotch[®] tape or similar). These stickers and/or tape were intended to be temporary, but many are still in place. In addition, the numbers assigned to Florence Hosmer's paintings are applied to the back of those works with permanent marker. In instances of two-sided works (oil sketches where the front and back of the board were used) the mark is on the work itself.
- Light Levels: While most rooms of the house have room darkening roller shades, it is not clear that these are always drawn. Some windows may be missing these shades. Extreme light damage and fading is most noticeable in F-03. This room has a southern exposure meaning it gets sunlight most of the day. The finish of the furniture nearest the window is irreparably damaged and significant fading has already occurred. (See Appendix 3, pg. 1)
- Pest management: Protein based textiles (wool, silk) throughout the house show evidence of webbing clothes moth and/or carpet beetle damage. Several rodent nests were discovered in drawers containing textiles, particularly in the chest-of-drawers stored in S-05 (though at the time of inventory, the drawers had been placed in S-03). The age of this damage cannot be determined without an Integrated Pest Management System in place. The items have not been isolated. No live pests were observed during the inventory. (See Appendix 3, p. 5)
- Archival preservation materials: Objects not on view are generally not protected from each other, excessive handling, or breakage. Since most stored items are inside case furniture, each time a drawer is opened materials are jostled into each other. Heavy items were found to be stored on top of fragile materials (paperweights inside baskets, books on top of textiles, etc.). Some archival housing was purchased recently but there does not seem to be a comprehensive plan for the housing of objects. (See Appendix 3, pg. 6)

1.4 Current environmental conditions related to storage and care.

Overall, environmental conditions inside the house are fair. The building is heated and cooled, and the temperature is controlled by programmable thermostats. While there is no humidity control, the air conditioning system seems to prevent excess humidity in summer. Although the house is likely too dry in the winter, this was not observed because the site visit and inventory occurred in spring.

A mini-split unit installed in S-04 to regulate the temperature in that space (it is not served by the AC system in the main block of the house) failed in 2023 causing a mold outbreak. The response to this situation was generally well-administered. The contents of the room not in the three vertical filing cabinets or the flat file unit were removed to S-09 and the mold was abated. While object relocation could have been more careful and the temporary storage better organized and safer, the response was good overall.

The contents of the house do not seem to have been excessively harmed by lack of complete HVAC control. Excessive light exposure remains the primary immediate concern (see above and recommendations)

1.5 Overall assessment and conclusions.

Overall, the Sudbury Historical Commission had managed to achieve only the minimum recommended physical care of the Hosmer House collection. Throughout the evaluation it became clear that in the 46 years since Florence Hosmer's death, the SHC has not received much professional advice or training in museum operations or collection management and care, engaged in planning for management and care of the contents of the house, or engaged in comprehensive interpretive planning for use of the structure and its contents. Since 1978, an abundance of resources has been made available by service organizations about starting and running a museum and best practices for caring for collections. Accessing those resources might have helped the Town of Sudbury and the SCH:

- Create and adopt essential museum governance policies: The SHC is currently missing all core governance documents required to operate a museum³¹. These core documents are appropriate for museums of all sizes, disciplines, and governance structures.
 - Mission Statement
 - Code of Ethics³²
 - Collection Management Policy
 - Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan³³
 - Strategic Plan

The lack of these documents makes it nearly impossible to perform this evaluation as requested by SHC. The Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, and Collection Management Policy all work together to ensure that Hosmer House has a purpose for the residents of Sudbury, that the SHC ensures all its activities related to Hosmer House are in service of that purpose, that it is planning for operational sustainability, and that it is effectively developing, caring for, and providing access to the collection.

- Minimize harm to primary source documentation: While the physical condition of the nearly 110-130 linear feet of manuscript materials and photographs is fair, physical and intellectual control does not exist (see footnote 2). An untrained researcher changed the original order of the materials by filing them according to author and date without tracking the material's original location, has separated documents from other relevant materials nearby. The lack of an appraisal, assessment, processing plan and resulting finding aid shows that a professional archivist was not consulted as part of the project. John Powers, executor of Florence's estate, wrote to the Selectmen in 1979

³¹ American Alliance of Museums. Core Documents. Accessed June 15, 2024. <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/core-documents/>

³² The Town of Sudbury maintains a Code of Conduct for all Committee Members, but it requires only conformance to Massachusetts ethics guidelines, and is not specific to museum operation. Code of Conduct for Town of Sudbury Committees whose members are appointed by the Sudbury Board of Selectmen or the Sudbury Town Manager (2021).

³³ While the Town of Sudbury does have such a plan, and a Fire Safety Protocol was adopted for Hosmer House in 2018, a complete Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan one specific to Hosmer House that includes preparedness and response for the contents of the house is required.

about the jurisdiction over archival material and that the assessment and arrangement of these papers be undertaken by a professional archivist³⁴.

- Engage in evidence-based interpretation: Despite the abundance of documentation present in the house including correspondence, diaries, photographs, notes, lists, and other materials, this documentation has not been optimally used. For example, the Hosmer House Docent Manual (2019) contains many factual inaccuracies and no references to the abundant primary source material. In fairness, John Powers, Florence's executor, was adamant in his cautions about the private nature of the papers that deal "with very personal pieces of the lives of those involved ... and should be considered highly sensitive."³⁵ This warning (which was repeated a few times in his 1979 message to the Selectmen) may have been interpreted as "do not disturb the papers." Nevertheless, 45 years is too long to have ignored the vast quantity of evidence that could have been supporting interpretation of the house.
- Keep the contents of the house intact until further research can be accomplished: Because no policies are in place (see Recommendations) to govern the collection, the Town of Sudbury and SHC have disposed of some materials since 1978 as previously discussed in Section 1.2.3.
- Create a baseline inventory: While SHC has generally kept on top of Florence's paintings, the remainder of the house contents have not received the same attention. The 2024 inventory seems and Inventory Report to be the first comprehensive effort at creating a list of the house's contents since the 1978 Stinson Appraisal Inventory. Depending on size, most museums complete inventories of their holdings once every ten years. An inventory process can be eased by facilitated with an object numbering system (see Recommendations).
- Create a conservation priority list: Many paintings in the house have been "restored." This work appears to be accomplished at the direction of donors who select works for restoration and framing. No documentation of this process as to methods, materials, and practitioners was found. When materials were framed or re-framed, the work's inventory number (paintings are the only numbered materials) was covered, impeding future tracking of the object. Due to lack of any interpretive or conservation plan, it is not possible to know which works are most in need of conservation, or which conservation efforts would best support an interpretation plan.

³⁴ Powers, J. "Hosmer House: A planned approach to securing for the Town of Sudbury and its inhabitants the historic legacy of a past age", January 1, 1979, p. 14-16.

³⁵ Powers, "Hosmer House," p 14-15.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The SHC requested recommendations in seven specific areas. However, recommendations in many of those areas cannot be made because they rely on policies and practices not yet in place. The below sections constitute the requested recommendations, some of which simply refer to other recommendations. Research-based recommendations to improve the operational sustainability of the collections via strengthened governance are offered in made for governance and administration section 2.8. While not requested as part of the RFP, suggestions to improve security for the collection are offered in section 2.9 because this area of operation is commonly addressed in any collection assessment. For a prioritized list of recommendations from this report, refer to Appendix 4: Priority Actions,

2.1 Recommendations for the expertise and qualifications for consultants expected to undertake necessary future work.

The recommendations in this section can be accomplished with the following types of professional consultants, in order of need:

- Triage archivist: This person should have received training at an American Library Association-accredited school of Information or Library Science, should have earned a concentration in archives or have equivalent experience. Experience with 20th century family papers is required. Tasks: triage, house, and relocate manuscript materials and photographs (see Appendix 3) to a climate controlled off-site storage location; assist with finding a long-term solution to these materials, either with a local university special collections department or at the Goodnow Library. Once a solution to storage location is determined, SHC and the Town must employ additional archivists to process (arrange, describe, house) these information collections.
- Preventative conservation professional: Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, MA is a nonprofit organization that provides many services including preservation assessments. Tasks: Make recommendations for room darkening roller shades and UV-filtering shades, develop policies for their use.
- Museum management and planning consultant: This person should be a seasoned professional with several successful references from museums governed by municipalities. They should have developed multiple mission statements and strategic plans for the same type of organization. The person should advise on sustainable governance models and help the SHC and Town transition to a model with the greatest chance of long-term success. Tasks: Governance, Mission, Strategic Plan.
- Collections management consultant: This person should have multiple years of experience working with unmanaged collections and a track record of developing and applying collection management policies where they have not previously existed. Tasks: Collection Management Policy development.
- Registrar and/or object cataloger/collection manager: Each of these professionals should have proven experience with previously unmanaged collections and multiple years of experience. A registrar is responsible for administrative control of the collection. That person adds objects to a database after they have been accepted for the collection and maintains their documentation. A cataloger describes accessioned objects, photographs them, reports on condition and location. Tasks: After governance is determined and a Collection Management Policy is in place, these professionals

institute a numbering system and document the three-dimensional collection within a collection management system.

2.2 Preliminary recommendations for cataloging and documentation.

Only accessioned objects should be cataloged. A Collection Management Policy (CMP) will outline criteria for items that should be accessioned (formally added to the collection). Refer to 2.8.3 for more information about creating a CMP for Hosmer House.

2.3 Preliminary recommendations for conservation.

Because conservation frequently requires significant investment of resources, only accessioned objects should be conserved. As noted in section 2.2, a CMP will outline criteria for items that should be accessioned (formally added to the collection) and the same Policy will also specify the qualifications of people who should perform conservation work and the documentation that should accompany any conservation treatment. Refer to 2.8.3 for more information about creating a CMP for Hosmer House. A Conservation Priority List, developed in conjunction with a conservator, can help prioritize how resources available for conservation should be spent. When determining which items to conserve, both interpretive use of the work, as well as the work's condition should be taken into account. For example, a painting may be in very poor condition, but its interpretation and research use may be minimal. That work can be stored so as to prevent further deterioration while conservation resources can be used for work in better condition but essential to regular programming.

2.4 Preliminary recommendations for storage and care.

The below recommendations for collection care should be undertaken immediately (by the end of 2024) under the specific guidance of the professionals noted in 2.1:

- Emergency triage housing for manuscript materials and photographs. Engage a professional archivist to provide basic temporary archival housing for the manuscript materials and photographs until they can be appraised, arranged, and described. Rent climate-controlled offsite storage for these materials and use the archivist's recommended method of relocating the materials to that secure space. It is recommended that no further movement to the archival materials be made until the SHC seeks the advice of a professional archivist.
- Light control: Working with a preventative conservation professional, purchase and install room-darkening shades and U-V filtering shades for all windows in Hosmer House. While some window have such room-darkening shades, none have U-V filtering shades. It is a good idea to replace existing room darkening shades rather than just adding them to windows without them. A uniform type throughout will make their use easier; uniform installation date will ease maintenance and future replacement. Create a policy regarding when to raise and lower the shades, provide training for all volunteers. The shades should be drawn whenever the house is closed to the public

2.5 Preliminary recommendations for emergency management.

As noted, the response to the mold outbreak was generally satisfactory. Nevertheless, improvement in emergency response would further integrate Hosmer House into the Town of Sudbury's Emergency Response Plan. The Hosmer House Fire Safety Protocol addresses safety for staff, volunteers, and visitors only, and only in the event of a fire. A complete preparedness and response plan will also address preventative measures and salvage steps for the collection in the event of a variety of emergencies including: breaches of security, flood, fire (originating inside the house and also wildfire), high winds, and other weather events related to the changing climate. Consider a program like dPlan|ArtsReady , offered through the Northeast Document Conservation Center to guide the process. This recommendation is not an immediate priority.

2.6 Preliminary recommendations for display and exhibition.

Hosmer House does not have an interpretive plan, so it is difficult to recommend display and exhibition methods. An interpretive plan is usually developed with external guidance from a consultant and outlines what stories the museum will tell and why those are chosen. It also outlines what kinds of improvements the museum may need to engage in to make that interpretation possible. These improvements may include displaying different objects, conducting new research, redesigning tours, and other measures. In the short term, SHC can make the following changes to its practices regarding objects on view:

- Limit handling: Do not handle objects unless necessary; do so only when wearing nitrile gloves.
- Add nothing: In the short term, place a moratorium on adding new materials to the house's contents and on moving items around the house.
- Document movement: If it becomes imperative that materials must be relocated, SHC must document why, when, and what was moved, its original location and the location to which it was moved. This will help with future inventory projects.

2.7 Preliminary recommendations for deaccessioning.

Deaccession is a process only available to accessioned collection materials. Accession and Deaccession criteria and processes are outlined in a CMP (refer to section 2.8.3). The term deaccession is sometimes inaccurately used to combine two separate processes – deaccession and disposal. Both processes are governed by a CMP. Deaccession is an administrative action indicating that an accessioned object is no longer appropriate for the museum's collection. Disposal is an operational action taken to remove the deaccessioned object from the museum's property. The many options for disposal of deaccessioned objects include transfer to another organization, return to a rightful owner, sale at auction, and witnessed destruction when condition warrants, and other outcomes. The process for removing unaccessioned items from the museum varies depending on the object's provenance. Until a collection management policy is in place, SHC should refrain from disposing of any materials that might have been part of the contents of the house when Florence died.

2.8 Recommendations for collection governance and administration

These suggestions are provided here because it is unusual for an appointed municipal committee to directly manage a museum's collection. Typically, members of such committees carry out governance functions. In the case of Hosmer House and the Sudbury Historical Commission, commission members are asked to directly carry out duties requiring technical skills which they do not often possess (volunteer management, event planning and administration, historic house interpretation, collection care). Further investigating the suggestions below may result in a structure that better supports management of the collection.

2.8.1 Museum governance models

The SHC has cared for, but not effectively managed, the contents of Hosmer House during the last 46 years and lack of professional attention has caused harm to the body of materials in Florence's bequest (lack of care for manuscripts and photographs, sale of house contents, etc.). The governance models below all retain SHC oversight of Hosmer House's contents but delegate management to a professional or professional entity. One significant benefit of partnering with another independent nonprofit is an increase in eligibility for grant funds as each entity can apply for funds for which they are eligible; some funds are available only to municipalities, others are available only to non-governmental entities. The examples from other Massachusetts municipalities footnoted below were received in response to an inquiry posted on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's listserv in June 2024.

- Designate a Hosmer House sub-committee of the Historic Commission and hire a Museum Manager. This recommendation was made in the Historic Preservation Plan.³⁶ While it is a step in the right direction, the arrangement is not likely to yield the best results. First, it is operationally difficult for an employee to report to an appointed committee. Second, if the Museum Manager position is developed, it is unlikely that the person's line manager in Town government would know much about the job's responsibilities. Third, a part-time position in a high-cost-of-living area is unlikely to yield a qualified applicant pool; people in the role are not likely to have long tenures. The role may not be attractive to potential applicants.
- Public library partnership: Goodnow Library is an excellent public library and local community resource. If SHC is interested in pursuing a Museum Manager solution, seating this person in the public library has a stronger chance of success and the likely benefit of more coordinated programming across the two entities. Museums and libraries are similar in their operations; archives management and museum collection management share many commonalities. The library may also assist in temporary or long-term storage and access solutions for the manuscript and photograph materials.
- Museum management agreement: The Town of Sudbury might enter into a long-term lease and/or Museum Management Agreement with an organization like the Sudbury Historical Society. This model requires a contract that spells out the

³⁶ Heritage Strategies (2022). Communitywide Historic Preservation Plan: Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts. p. 13.

responsibility of the contracted entity. The entity would then report to the SHC and take on all collection management responsibilities including staff employment and oversight. This is the most common model used in situations of municipally owned museums.³⁷

- Start a sole-support organization (friends' group): Friends' groups (a separately incorporated non-profit organization) are quite common when museums are owned by a municipality.³⁸ The group can be responsible for a variety of activities, fundraising primary among them, but can also extend to collection management, education programming and other public programs. Relationships between friends' groups and municipalities are governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).³⁹

2.8.2 Mission and Strategic Plan

To effectively manage the collection, the Sudbury Historic Commission must first determine what the purpose of the museum is and then sketch out a plan as to how it will fulfil that purpose. A good mission statement is relevant to the community served, concise, achievable, and inspirational. It is the litmus test against which all activities are checked. A good contemporary strategic plan is also short, achievable, appropriately resourced, and includes accountability measures.

These two documents will help to ensure that the Town of Sudbury and SHC are effectively using resources and positioning Hosmer House and its collection for the best possible outcome.

2.8.3 Collection Management Policy (CMP)

A CMP outlines the authority and processes by which an organization's collection is developed, stewarded, and made accessible to its public through means such as exhibition, reproduction, research, curriculum development, and other initiatives. The organization's governing authority (in this case the Sudbury Historical Commission) adopts the CMP and it binds all members of town government, staff, and volunteers to ethical and transparent behavior regarding the collection on behalf of the public it benefits. If the SHC chooses to engage in one of the governance models above, the CMP would include that entity as part of collection management responsibilities.

The CMP will designate persons authorized to handle the collection, specify how to accession items (add them to the collection). It will also specify how to deaccession items (remove accessioned items from the collection) prior to determining the disposition of those items through sale or another means such as transfer to another organization. In the case of bequests, the museum (in this case the Town) determines which items from the bequest will be added to the collection at the time they are available. Collection Management Policies prevent any third party (donor, bequestor, etc.) from dictating what becomes part of the museum's collection. The accession

³⁷ Scituate's Historical Commission uses this model to operate multiple historic properties as museums with reported good results and to operate Jacobs Farmhouse owned by the Town of Norwell with less-than-desirable results.

³⁸ This model is used in Leicester, MA to operate 1768 Swan Tavern; Goodnow Library's Friends' Group has supported many of the library's initiatives in its 30 years since incorporation.

³⁹ For more information about friends' groups, refer to American Association for State and Local History (2023) History Organizations and Friends Groups: A Practical Guide for Success.

process ensures that each object added to the collection meets specific criteria in support of the organization's mission and future operational sustainability.

2.9 Recommendations for security and access

The following recommendations will improve security and access-tracking for the building, and therefore access to the collection:

- Keys to Hosmer House are controlled by the Town of Sudbury. While the house is fitted with an electronic security system, everyone currently uses the same key code. Each person with a key should be issued a separate code. Although there is a sign-in sheet near the keypad, it relies on people taking time to sign in and accurately note the date and time. Individual key codes would enable automatic recording of keyholders' entry and access.
- Install an electronic contact on the south bulkhead door. Although this door is infrequently used, it was left open during the architects' site visit. The fact that it was open did not trigger a fault when the system was armed at the end of the day.
- Require background checks for all SHC members, especially those with keys to the building. SHC members have more contact with the public in their volunteer roles.

APPENDIX 1: ROOM NAMES

The numbers below match the Architectural Preservation Studio drawings in the Historic Structure Report.

Room #	Previous room names
F-01	Front hall, downstairs hall
F-02	Living room, parlor
F-03	Dining room, original kitchen
F-04	Back entry
F-05	Kitchen
F-06	Downstairs bathroom
F-07	Office, Alice's sitting room
F-08	Store room
S-01	Upstairs hall
S-02	Florence's Room, Master bedroom
S-03	Fred's room, Zoie's room, Southeast bedroom
S-04	Servant's room, art room
S-05	Back hall
S-06	Upstairs bathroom
S-07	Alice's bathroom
S08	Alice's bedroom; Children's room
S-09	Ballroom
A-01	Attic
B-01	Basement - main area
D05	Northeast china closet F-03
D04	Northwest china closet in F-03
D07	Southeast closet in F-03

APPENDIX 2: HOSMER FAMILY MEMBER AGES AT SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Family member	Birth	1896	1910	1912	1924	1948	1952	1957	1959	1968	1978
		House purchase	Edwin's death	Abigail's death	Alice's death	Fred's death	Zoe's relocation	Burt's death	Agreement with Sudbury	Zoe's death	Florence's death
Edwin (father)	1840	56	70	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Abigail (mother)	1845	51	65	67	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Alice	1867	29	43	45	57	--	--	--	--	--	--
Burt	1871	25	39	41	53	77	81	86	--	--	--
Fred	1879	18	32	34	45	69	--	--	--	--	--
Florece	1880	17	31	33	44	68	72	77	79	88	98

APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHS OF CONDITIONS



Fading and finish damage evident in S-03



Unprocessed boxes of historic photographs found throughout Hosmer House (in closets and case furniture) during the 2024 inventory. These materials were consolidated into S-09 during the inventory and should be evaluated by a professional archivist, then transferred to off-site storage.



Examples of overfilled drawers showing conditions that do not support preservation.



Unprocessed boxes of manuscript material found throughout Hosmer House (in closets and case furniture) during the 2024 inventory. These materials were consolidated into S-09 during the inventory and should be evaluated by a professional archivist, then transferred to off-site storage.



Detail of the condition of the interior of one of the boxes of manuscript materials found during the 2024 inventory showing poor housing conditions, rodent droppings, and recently discarded candy wrappers.



Interior of closet D07 in F-03 (dining room) showing the variety of box types containing photographs and manuscript materials. Boxes are also stacked haphazardly, and some materials are outside of containers. The materials were removed to S-09 during the 2024 inventory (see previous page of this appendix).



Examples of manuscript materials disassociated from context and placed in acidic materials.



Photograph of the interior of Zoie Morse's Tree Tops in Provincetown, MA (undated, probably 1920s). Nearly all objects in this photograph are currently at Hosmer House.

APPENDIX 4: PRIORITY ACTIONS

Below are all recommendations from Section 2, ordered by priority. Refer back to the indicated section for more details.

Urgent:

It is recommended that these items be addressed in this order.

- 1) **Triage archivist and offsite storage for primary source materials:** Engage an archivist to provide basic temporary archival housing for the manuscript materials and photographs until they can be appraised, arranged, and described. This person should assist in identifying a suitable storage location and oversee movement of the materials. (See sections 2.1 and 2.4 for more detail)
- 2) **Light control:** Add or replace room-darkening roller shades; add UV filtering shades. (See sections 2.1 and 2.4 for more detail)

High Priority:

It is recommended that these items be addressed in this order or concurrently

- **Strategic Plan:** Engage a consultant to work with SHC and the Town in affirming or adjusting governance and administration of Hosmer House and creating a Strategic Plan (See sections 2.1 and 2.8 for more detail)
- **Collection Management Policy:** Engage a consultant to work with the Town and SHC to write and adopt this document. (See sections 2.1 and 2.8 for more detail)

Lower priority:

These recommendations can be addressed in any order or concurrently. Note that some items have other priorities as prerequisites.

- **Accession and catalog objects:** Hire a collection professional to work with the SCH and Town to accession items into the collection. The professional should then catalog the items. (See section 2.1 and 2.2 for more detail.) Note this can only be accomplished after a Collection Management Policy has been adopted by the Town.
- **Conservation Priority List:** engage a conservator to evaluate the condition of accessioned materials and create a list of significant items requiring conservation. This can only be accomplished after items have been added to the collection and is ideally accomplished after an interpretive plan is complete so that conservation resources are used for items important to the site's interpretation. (See section 2.3 for more detail)
- **Comprehensive emergency response plan:** Starting with the Town's plan and the Fire Safety Plan for Hosmer House, create a comprehensive plan that addresses the collection. (See section 2.5 for more detail)