

From Instagram to Apps: Going Beyond House Museums

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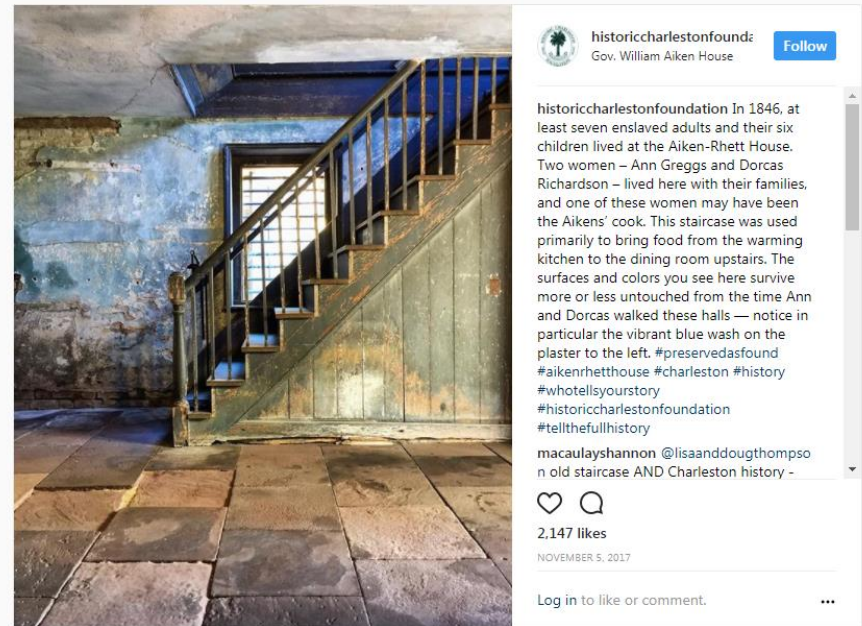
Instagram - @historiccharlestonfoundation

- ▶ Started in 2013
- ▶ Now has 55,000 plus followers
- ▶ “Reverent irreverence”
- ▶ Demographics of Instagram followers



The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Photo taken of the Aiken-Rhett House backstairs
- ▶ Photo used to tell the story of the enslaved people at the Aiken-Rhett House, especially the cooks, using specifics
- ▶ 17 comments and 2,147 likes



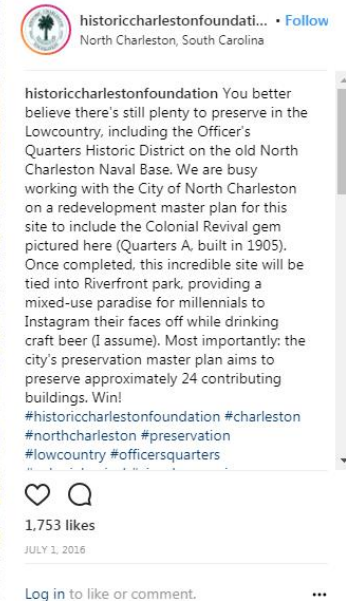
The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Photo taken of the Aiken-Rhett House decorated for Christmas
- ▶ 55 comments and 3,122 likes



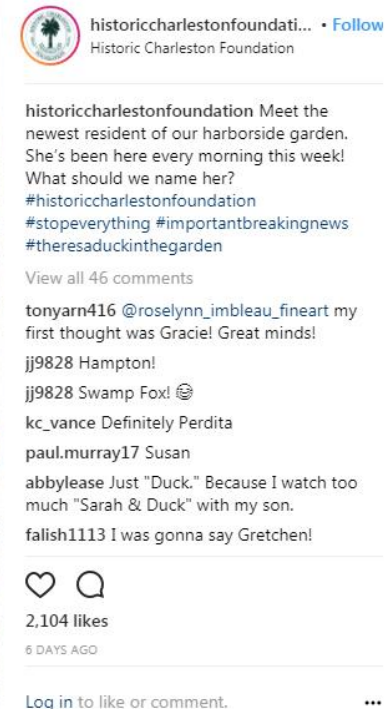
The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Photo taken of the former Charleston Naval Base
- ▶ Discussion of development in Charleston
- ▶ 46 comments and 1,753 likes



The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Photo taken of a duck outside the Foundation's headquarters
- ▶ 46 comments and 2,104 likes



The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Instagram part of a giveaway promotion for Festival of House and Gardens
- ▶ 29 comments and 2,664 likes



historiccharlestonfoundation Ever wish you could go beyond the garden gate at your favorite historic house? Here's your chance! We've teamed up with local gals @charlestonweekender @charlestonshopcurator and @hillheady — follow them for your chance to win tickets to our Festival of Houses & Gardens happening now through April 21. Festival proceeds benefit our preservation initiatives! 📸 @libbywilliamsphotos #festivalofhousesandgardens #charleston #historiccharlestonfoundation

View all 29 comments

bnewillis15 Just got back from Charleston on Monday...always have withdrawals 😊

caston__says @mandycaston

charlestonweekender Can't wait to see who wins!!!



2,664 likes

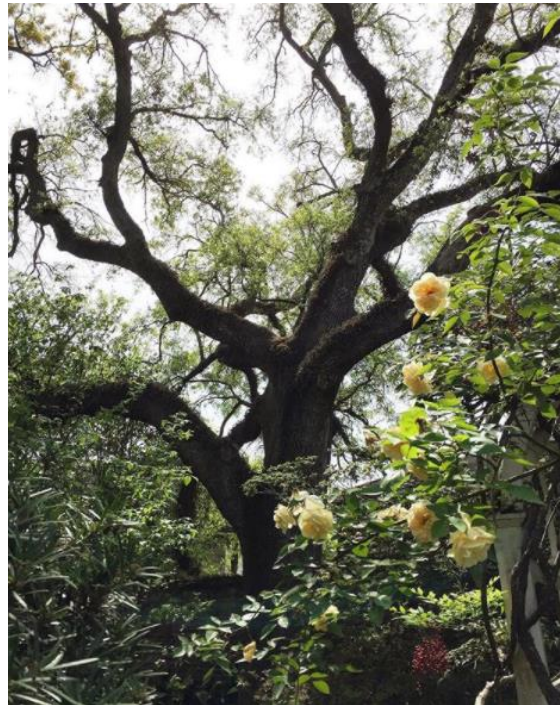
APRIL 4

Log in to like or comment.



The Instagram Approach - Example

- ▶ Image of garden in the Nathaniel Russell House
- ▶ Using image to tell the story of Phillip Noisette
- ▶ 14 comments and 1,411 likes



What makes a successful Instagram?

- ▶ Have one voice – death by committee
- ▶ Importance of a good photograph
- ▶ Importance of a good story
- ▶ What is not being told?
- ▶ Experiment!
- ▶ How to attract followers?



Instagram & The App

► Context:

- Declining visitation to our traditional restored house museum; the Nathaniel Russell House
- Rising visitation to non-traditional house museums e.g. McLeod Plantation, the Aiken-Rhett House
- Success of the Instagram account

► Thoughts:

- Traditional docent-led tour of a restored historic house no longer working
- Desire for a fuller picture of Charleston
- Need to engage with audience in non-traditional ways

The Plan...

- ▶ Working with New York-based museum consulting company Museum Hack
 - ▶ Approach is to disrupt the traditional museum model
 - ▶ Develop the Historic Charleston Foundation App, free to download from the App Store
 - ▶ Seek to include all the stories in the app, including African American history, women's history, working class history, stories missed out from the traditional tours of Charleston
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The App: An Overview

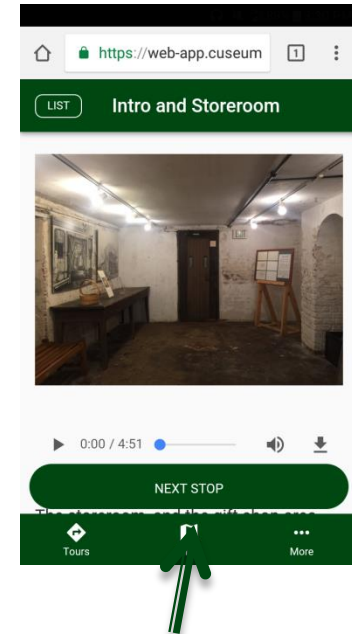
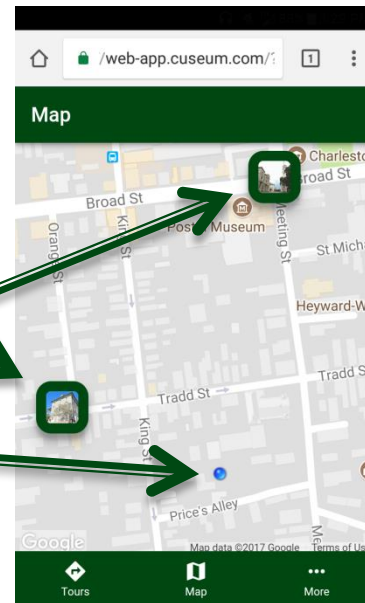
- ▶ Audio Guides
 - Three audio guides: one for each house museum plus one for Charleston looking at the city through the city's preservation
- ▶ Text Stop Guides
 - 300+ text stops on points of interest throughout the city
 - Geo-location on the app allows people to find the nearest points of interest
- ▶ App-based delivery
 - Devices available at the house museums, hope is that most people will download the app
 - Free guide to Charleston, allows us to draw people to our house museums
 - Free app with a donation button: “public radio model”

Preview of the App



App Landing Page

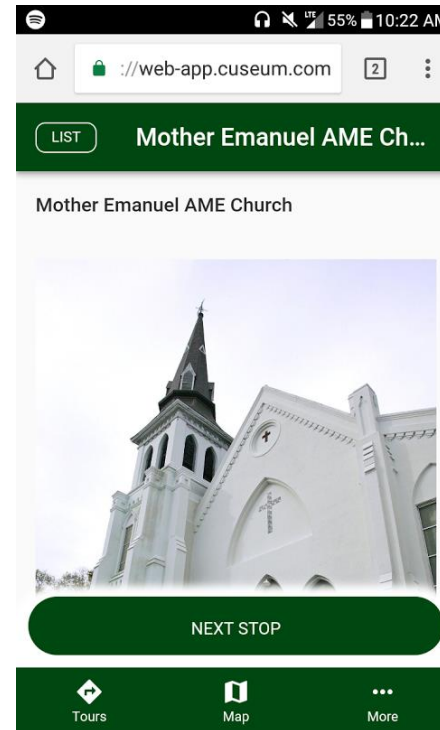
App Map with:
Points of
Interest
and Geo-
location



Starting page for
Aiken-Rhett
House audio guide

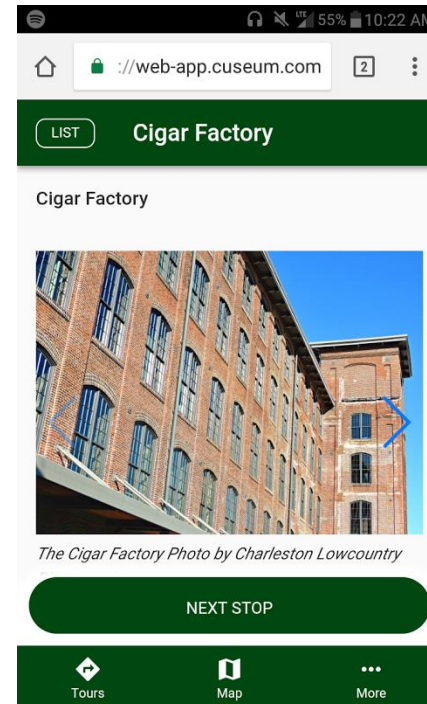
City Guide – Stories Told

- ▶ Mother Emanuel AME Church
 - Telling the history of the oldest AME congregation in the US South
 - Discusses the murders on June 17, 2015
 - Uses both narrative and interviews with Dudley Gregorie, councilman for Charleston District 6 and trustee of Emanuel AME



City Guide – Stories Told

- ▶ Cigar Factory
 - Telling the story of the Cigar Factory strike, where *We Shall Overcome* was first used as a Civil Rights anthem
 - Telling the story of the rehabilitation of the structure
 - Using both narrative and audio samples



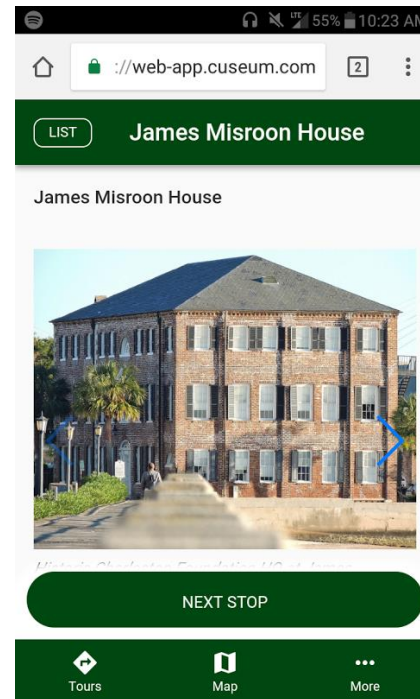
City Guide – Stories Told

- ▶ Grimke Sisters House
 - Telling the story of the Grimke Sisters, scions of a prominent planter, who became outspoken abolitionists
 - Telling the story through narrative

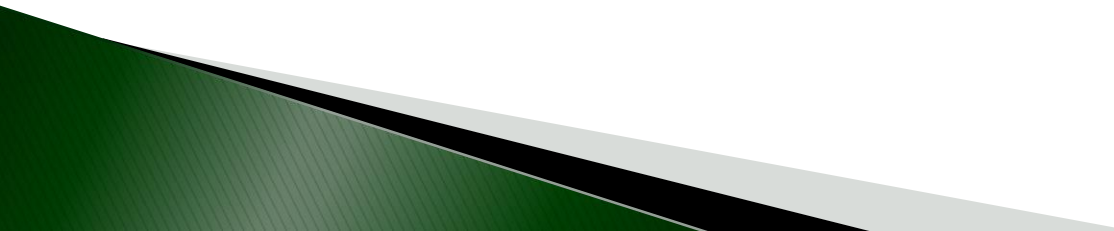


City Guide – Stories Told

- ▶ James Misroon House
 - Now headquarters of Historic Charleston Foundation
 - Tells the story of Robert Scott Smalls, an enslaved pilot who escaped in 1862 and later became a politician
 - Tells the story of Historic Charleston Foundation
 - Uses both interviews and narrative



The Challenges

- ▶ Museum Hack are storytellers, not historians
 - ▶ Internal discussions over the direction of the organization
 - ▶ Technology challenges such as providing WiFi and devices
 - ▶ Institutional inertia – “if it isn’t broken don’t fix it.”
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Any Questions?

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