

HUNTER-DAWSON STATE HISTORIC SITE

PREAMBLE AND MISSION STATEMENT

September 2021

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The Hunter-Dawson house and the period outbuildings on site are illustrative of the lifestyle of a southeast Missouri merchant/entrepreneur prior to the Civil War. William Hunter and his wife Amanda Watson Hunter planned the house, but William died in April of 1859 before construction could begin. The house exhibits Georgian, Greek Revival and Italianate architectural features and took nearly a year to construct, being finished in May of 1860. The widowed Amanda and her seven surviving children moved into the house, which was occupied continually by her descendants until 1958.

William Hunter originally emigrated from Virginia to Potosi, Missouri, moving to New Madrid in 1833. Here he went to work at a fur trading post operated by Robert Goah Watson who had operated the business as early as 1805. This post was one of the few businesses that remained after the New Madrid earthquake of 1811-12. In 1836, William Hunter married one of Robert Watson's daughters, Amanda. The marriage produced nine children, seven of which would live to adulthood.

William worked for Watson until Watson's death in 1855. Upon the death of Robert Watson, William, on behalf of Amanda, inherited one-half interest in the store and other property. William expanded his holdings to include approximately 15,000 acres in three states. Hunter also owned a substantial amount of land in and around New Madrid and became a major financier for individuals purchasing land in town. The family enslaved thirty-six people, who were essential to the family's financial success and operations of various enterprises.

After William's death, Amanda and her brother continued to run the family's enterprises, which included the store, a gristmill and a lumber mill. Through the extension of personal credit to many people in the area, the community of New Madrid retained some semblance of solvency during the Civil War.

During this conflict, life in New Madrid changed drastically. Although distinctly Southern in its character, the town was divided by Union and Confederate sympathies. To date, no documentation has been found to show a direct involvement of this site in the Battle of Island No. 10 or the Siege of New Madrid, but the war's impact on the whole region cannot be denied. The Hunter family and their home survived the war relatively unscathed. William Colson Hunter, a son, returned unharmed from fighting for the Confederacy. Economic life and the social order were altered by the emancipation of enslaved people. The family, like the nation, recovered and returned again to its farming and business operations.

Five slave houses were present on the Hunter farm in 1860. The location of the slave houses are unknown. After emancipation, a formerly enslaved woman named Phyllis, appears in the 1870 census with the family. Today, a room in the back ell of the house is interpreted as Phyllis' room.

On Christmas Eve, 1874, William and Amanda's youngest daughter, Ella was married to William Dawson. Among the Dawson family ancestors were Francois LeSieur, one of the two French traders to settle New Madrid originally in the 1780s and Pierre Antoine Laforge, who served as a French interpreter at Fort Celeste after the Spanish succession. Upon Amanda's death in 1876, the house was left to Ella and William Dawson who lived there until their deaths. While in residence, William served three terms in the Missouri State Legislature and in 1884 was elected to the United States House of Representatives and served on the planning committee for the 1893 World's Fair Exposition in Chicago, Illinois.

The house, as the core of the farm, still reflects the grand lifestyle enjoyed by the successful Bootheel merchant/entrepreneur prior to the Civil War. The relatively unchanged condition of the house was most likely due to the fact that it remained in the same family over the years. Adding to the significance of the site is the artifact collection that came with it. The state received the vast majority of Amanda's original furnishings. The original Mitchell and Rammelsberg furniture invoice that survived and remained with the family adds to the importance of the collection. It is also believed that the site possesses the largest *in situ* collection of Mitchell and Rammelsburg furniture in the nation.

MISSION STATEMENT:

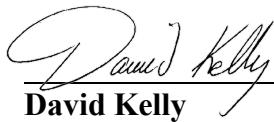
The mission of the Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site is to interpret the culture within the Missouri Bootheel as represented by the Hunter and Dawson families in middle- to late- 19th century Victorian America. This will be accomplished through the preservation and interpretation of original structures and landscape features; and the conservation, preservation and interpretation of the site's history and collection.

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APPROVED BY:



David Kelly
Director, Missouri State Parks

9/27/21
Date



Terry Bruns
Program Director, Planning and Development

10/13/2021
Date



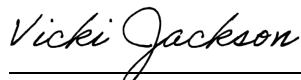
Greg Combs
Director, Eastern Region

11/29/21
Date



Maria Potter
Deputy Regional Director, Eastern Region

10-13-21
Date



Vicki Jackson
Natural Resource Manager

10/13/21
Date

HUNTER-DAWSON STATE HISTORIC SITE

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

September 2021

Location: New Madrid County
Established: 1967
Size: 19.80 Acres

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INTRODUCTION

Located in New Madrid County, north of the Kentucky Bend of the Mississippi River, the Hunter-Dawson house and the period outbuildings on site are illustrative of the lifestyle of a southeast Missouri merchant/entrepreneur prior to the Civil War. The house exhibits Georgian, Greek Revival and Italianate architectural features and took nearly a year to construct, being finished in May of 1860. The widowed Amanda Watson Hunter and her seven surviving children moved into the house, which was occupied continually by her descendants until 1958.

The family enslaved thirty-six people, who were essential to the family's financial success and operations of various enterprises. During the Civil War, the Hunter family and their home survived relatively unscathed. Economic life and the social order were altered by the emancipation of enslaved people. The family, like the nation, recovered and returned again to its farming and business operations.

The house, as the core of the farm, still reflects the grand lifestyle enjoyed by the successful Bootheel merchant/entrepreneur. The relatively unchanged condition of the house was most likely due to the fact that it remained in the same family over the years. Adding to the significance of the site is the artifact collection that came with it. The state received the vast majority of Amanda's original furnishings. The original Mitchell and Rammelsberg furniture invoice that survived and remained with the family adds to the importance of the collection. It is also believed that the site possesses the largest *in situ* collection of Mitchell and Rammelsberg furniture in the nation.

SITE GOALS

- Preserve and interpret the cultural resources located within the site's boundaries;
- Provide recreational opportunities and public use facilities compatible with the site's mission, resources, and public needs;
- Provide adequate orientation and interpretive facilities to enhance visitor experience;
- Provide administrative support facilities to ensure successful operation and maintenance of the site.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

- Missouri Bootheel as represented by the Hunter and Dawson families in middle- to late-19th century Victorian America;
- Victorian Society and Decorative Arts;
- Southeast Missouri experience during the Civil War;
- Slavery and emancipation;
- Mississippi River influence in Southeast Missouri; and
- New Madrid Earthquake.

SITE STRUCTURES

The Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site consists of three historic and four support structures on 19.80 acres. The historic buildings include the two-story Hunter-Dawson House, a Greek revival privy, and Granary, all circa 1860 and original to the property. Support structures include a Pole Barn, Residence, Service Building, and Storage Building.

Existing Facilities

- Hunter-Dawson House* (1860)
- Greek Revival Privy* (1860)
- Granary* (1860)
- Pole Barn (1919)
- Residence (acquired 1966)
- Service Building (1989)
- Storage Building (1994)
- White Frame House (to be demolished)
- Park Office (mobile unit to be removed)

**listed on the National Register of Historic Places
Please reference the CAMP Inventory for further information*

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

To best support preservation and interpretation efforts, development objectives should be carefully considered, ensuring they are compatible with the historic site's significant resources.

Visitor Center Area

A new visitor center area is to be constructed east of the Hunter-Dawson Home, outside of the interpretive area, in the open field. Development is to be located close to Dawson Road, preserving the viewshed (view from back “L” of house) and open-space. The new site office should be oriented so that staff can easily observe the Hunter-Dawson Home from within. Parking will be located east of the office and will include ADA, general, and bus parking. An ADA trail is to be developed leading from the office/parking area to the Hunter-Dawson Home. In addition, a trailhead is to be developed for the non-paved trail loop. Additional features for the area may include but are not limited to picnic tables and interpretive paneling. No known archaeological concerns exist in the proposed visitor center area. An archaeological survey with shovel testing (in-house) will be required before construction.

Day-Use Area

The parcel south of Dawson Road, where the current site office resides, will be designated as a day-use area. This area will utilize existing infrastructure for overflow parking.

Non-Paved Trail Loop

A non-paved trail loop will be constructed in the open field and has potential for connection to the nearby City Park trail system.

PROJECT PHASING

1. Development of visitor center area with new site office.
2. Non-paved trail loop construction.
3. Day-use area designation and removal of mobile office.

Resource and environmental clearances will be required before on-site modifications and development occur.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH GOALS

- Update and/or completion of the General Management Plan.
- Continued documentary research and exploration of the historic site’s cultural and natural resources.

ACQUISITION UNITS

If offered, acquisition of adjacent property may be pursued only through willing sellers or donors. To be considered, units should enhance the mission of Missouri State Parks through one of the following categories:

- Resource preservation and protection
- Recreational access and opportunity
- Management facilitation

CONTEXTUAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Public Input

Public input is an integral part of the CDP process. The following includes input opportunities throughout the planning process.

1. September 10, 2020: CDP Public Meeting #1 held at Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site
 - a. September 11, 2020 to October 12, 2020: Public input opportunity #1
2. July 8, 2021: CDP Public Meeting #2 held at Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site
 - a. July 8, 2021 to August 6, 2021: Public input opportunity #2

CDP Team Members

- Greg Combs – Eastern Regional Director
- Maria Potter – Eastern Region Deputy Regional Director
- Vicki Jackson – Natural Resource Manager
- Matthew Davis – Historian/Resource Interpreter
- Chad Hovis – East Construction Unit Project Supervisor
- Ken McCarty – Natural Resource Program Director
- Mike Ohnersorgen – Cultural Resource Management Program Director
- Kim Dillon – Cultural Resource Management Section Chief
- Rachel Campbell - Archaeologist
- Terry Bruns – Planning and Development Program Director
- Don Stier – Design Section Chief
- Ryan Dunwoody – Planning Section Chief
- Jeremy Robinson - Planner
- Rebecca Young – Outdoor Recreation Management Section Chief
- Ben Nagy – Trail Coordinator
- Mike Sutherland – Division Director
- David Kelly – Division Deputy Director
- Brian Stith – Division Deputy Director

APPENDIX

- CDP Map
- Public Meeting #1 Survey Results
- Public Meeting #2 Survey Results
- 3D Model of New Office and Parking - P:\PDP\Planning Section\CDPs\HUNT\HUNT Office Layout_final.mp4

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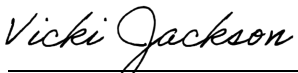
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Maria Potter
Deputy Regional Director, Eastern Region

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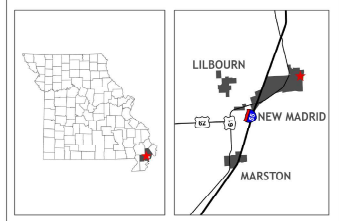
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Projected Coordinate System:
 NAD 1983, UTM Zone 15N
 Contour Interval: 20 Feet
 Absolute Scale: 1:900

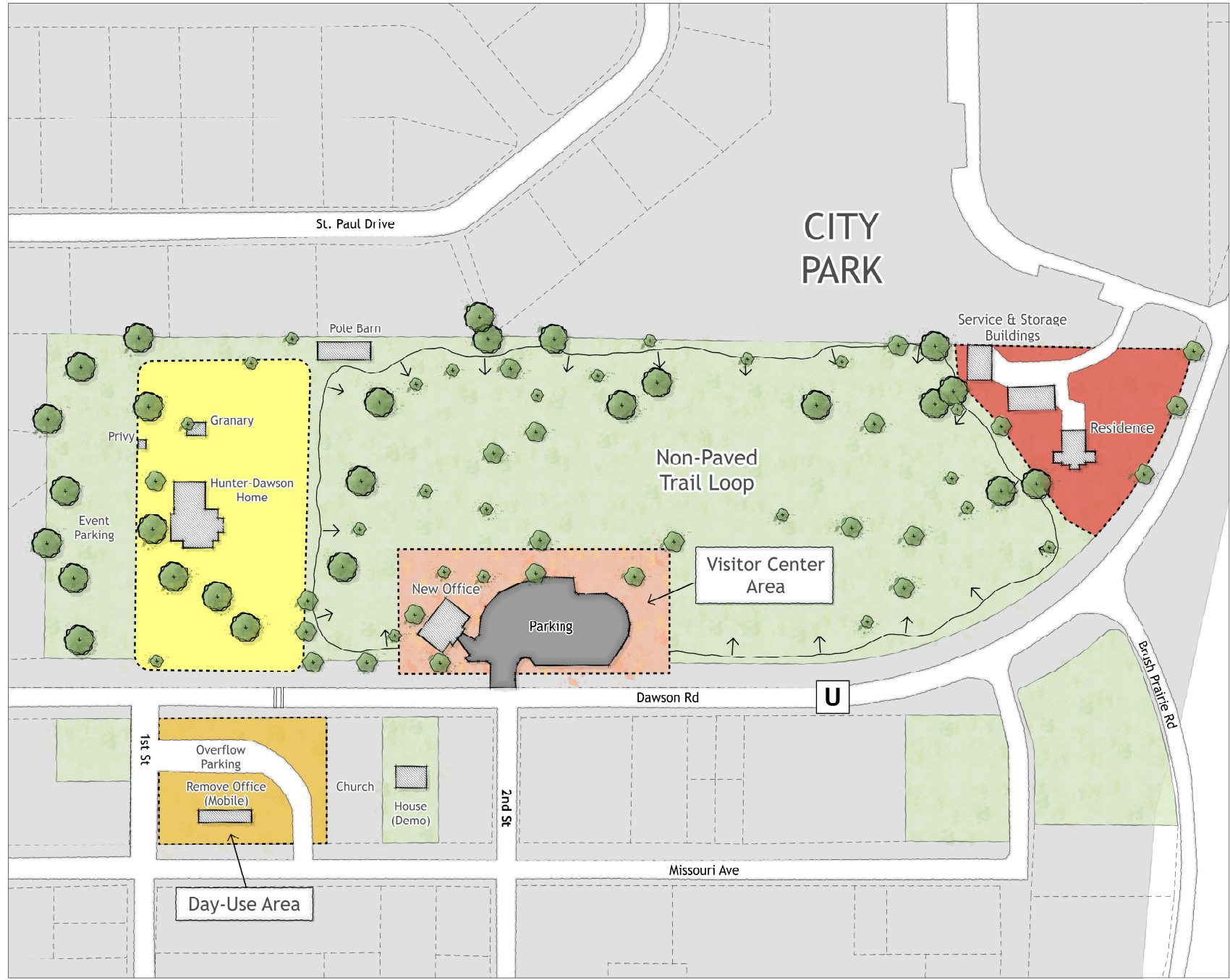


- Tree
- Structure
- Visitor Center Area
- Day-Use Area
- Service Area
- Interpretive Area
- Hunter-Dawson SHS
- City of New Madrid
- Parcel
- Trail Area

CDP: September 2021



Although the data in this data set have been compiled by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, no warranty, expressed or implied, is made by the Department as to the accuracy of the data and related materials. The act of distribution shall not constitute any such warranty, and no responsibility is assumed by the Department in the use of these data or related materials.





**Hunter-Dawson State Historic Site
CDP Survey #1 Results
2020**

Question: What recreational activities and facilities, if any, do you feel are missing and should be added to this park or historic site to enhance the visitor experience?

- **Carriage House**
- Maintenance (grounds, mowing, plant trees)
- Outbuilding restorations
- Living history display (Civil War camp, demonstrations, etc.) – *2 comments*
- **Bigger gift shop**
- Historic site video
- Host weddings/site reservations
- Cooking course with historically correct meals and entertainment
- Ghost tour and exploration
- Vintage handmade shops, classes, events.

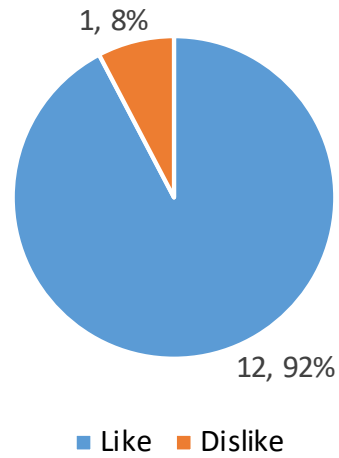
***CDP Related**

n = 11 (# of respondents)

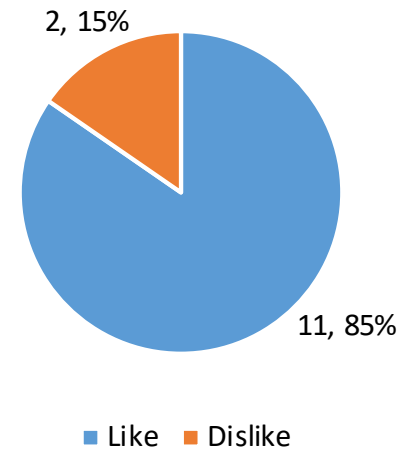
Comments/suggestions regarding Hunter-Dawson SHS:

1. Love the site & their holiday tours

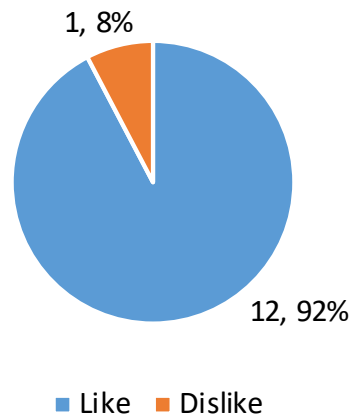
New visitor center area with office and parking



Proposed overflow parking



Non-paved trail loop with possible connection to City Park





CDP alternative comments:

1. This design makes sense. I think the trail loop is an excellent idea. It will be nice for the community to have more walking trails.

Comments/suggestions regarding Hunter-Dawson SHS:

1. Love visiting the site.
2. I think the plans for the new office location is a great idea. It should be on the same side of the busy road as the home.
3. Would it be possible to have a sidewalk along the front of the Hunter-Dawson House or the overflow parking across the street connecting to the non-paved walking trail that would also link up to the city's Main Street sidewalk?
4. A wildflower garden of native flowers and plants.

5. Hunter-Dawson is very interesting and enjoyable to visit. I look forward to visiting again and seeing the improvements.
6. As a historic site you should do as little development as possible.
7. This will greatly enhance the visitor's tour of this great site here in New Madrid.

Comments/suggestions regarding Missouri state parks and historic sites:

1. Also Big Oak Park, our children grew up going to Big Oak, walking around the lake and getting a soda and candy bar at Bennets Store on the way home. Great memories.
2. Some of the natural parks could be given to Conservation. They do a lot better job conserving them.