

# Chapter 21: Producing Community Audio Tours

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## 1. Sample Step 5: Observation Worksheet

In the following example, a student collected information on her chosen site, “Veterans Memorial Park.”

1. What is the name and location of the site?

Name: Houghton County Veterans Memorial Park

Location: Houghton, Michigan N 47° W 088° or situated between Memorial Drive (M-26), US-41 S, and Bridge Street (on the Yooper Loop). It overlooks the Portage Lift Bridge.

2. When was it built or created?

According to one site, which calls this site “the Houghton County Fatalities Veterans Memorial” the park was dedicated May 30, 1998. Confirmation by this site that the park was dedicated in 1998.

Information from another site explains that the large statue of a Civil War soldier in the park was created by sculptor Frederick Cleveland Hibbard and was located in two previous sites before moving to the park. The statue was first dedicated in 1912 on Pearl Street in Houghton.

A newer, color marker (part of Historic Houghton) notes that it was placed on the site in 2006.

3. What, if anything, do you already know about this place?

I know nothing about it other than it’s called Veterans Park.

4. Have you visited this site previously? If so, how often and/or when (approximate date)?

I drive past it regularly but I’ve never stepped foot on the property.

5. What does this place mean to you?

I support veterans and so I am pleased that we have a dedicated memorial for our county’s veterans. According to one site this memorial is not just for veterans of a specific era or conflict, but is dedicated to deceased veterans of the county from all conflicts, starting with the Civil War. I appreciate that.

6. Considering the visually observable features of your site, how would you describe it in general terms? Such as size, shape, appearance, setting, condition, and other characteristics?

It is a two-acre hillside park with a brick wall with veterans names, including those who were prisoners of war—these are on the interior side of the brick wall. On the exterior portion of the wall, which faces the road, are the words “Veterans Park.” The plaques share the names of fallen veterans from the Civil War to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

There is a fairly new color “Historic Houghton” marker that shares vital information about the park. The largest marker is the statue of the Civil War veteran. On the four sides of the statue’s base are the words: “In memory of the Houghton Company July 1862–July 1865”; “The Houghton Company Campbells [sic] Station, Knoxville, Resaca, Kenesaw [sic], Lost Mountain, Dallas, Atlanta, Columbia, Franklin, Nashville, Fort Anderson”; “The Houghton Company Served three years as CO.1.23n Mich. Infantry”; In memory of the 500 soldiers and Sailors from Houghton County 1861–1865.” There is

also a bronze plaque of Captain Graham Pope, of the 23rd Michigan Volunteer Infantry and bronze seals for each branch of the military. Three flagpoles are on site: the American flag, the Michigan flag, and a Prisoners of War Missing in Action flag. The location is ideal as it has a beautiful view overlooking the lift bridge, the canal.

7. What kind of clues can you find about its age or evolution over time? Where can or did you find this information (observation of site, online research)? List sources.

See #2 and #6.

[http://www.robertfinch14.org/memorials/houghton/veterans\\_memorial.html](http://www.robertfinch14.org/memorials/houghton/veterans_memorial.html)

[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM8Z0N\\_Houghton\\_County\\_Veterans\\_Memorial\\_Park](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WM8Z0N_Houghton_County_Veterans_Memorial_Park)

<http://www.mfhn.com/houghton/vetsmemorial/>

<http://www.ridearoundamerica.com/index.php/mi/938-26061-houghton/677-26061-houghton#photos>

8. How is it being used today? Do you think the current use is different from the original use? How can you tell?

A 2016 newspaper article says there was a Veterans Day memorial ceremony at the park. I am not sure if that happens every year.

<http://www.mininggazette.com/news/local-news/2016/05/they-gave-their-all-copper-country-memorial-day-ceremonies-honor-fallen/>

I have driven by the park and seen people with protest signs.

9. What hypotheses can you make about what people, events, or ways of life this place might have been associated with historically, based on what you can see?

- Memorial Ceremonies for Veterans Day.
- As a place of reflection and reverence for veterans to honor a fallen comrade on the anniversary of their death
- A scenic place for taking photographs of the canal and lift bridge.

10. What kinds of information would you need to confirm or deny your hypotheses?

Maybe an interview with a resident of the community, someone at the courthouse, or someone at the newspaper? It seems likely that some of the knowledge about the site has not been put online.

11. If the place is vacant, can you think of any way it might be adapted for a new use?

Not applicable.

12. If it has been restored, who restored it and why?

Restorations were made to the park July 8, 2016 after a bout of vandalism.

<http://wnmufm.org/post/vandalized-memorials-houghton-park-repaired>

13. If it is open to the public as a historic site, what do visitors learn about why it is important? What should they know?

It is not a recognized historic site as designated by the National Register. It is open to the public as a memorial park. I think they should know what they will see – the plaques,

statues, monuments, and how names are grouped together. I need to visit to answer this question accurately.

14. If your site is a preserved site, how has the place benefited the community? How has preservation contributed to economic growth in the community (i.e. by providing jobs, enabling businesses to stay downtown, creating homes for new companies, encouraging tourism, contributing to community pride, etc.)?

It may encourage tourism because the sculptor of the Civil War statue was quite famous and people interested in Civil War history would probably be interested in visiting. I believe I saw it mentioned in a book from Google Books and a website on "Civil War spots." Of course, since it honors local veterans it is a source of community pride. I wonder though, if any controversy is felt about the statue of the Civil War soldier given the removal of statues that has been happening across the country? I believe mainly the issue has been with confederate statues and memorials but I am not for certain.

It appears that ceremonies celebrating Veterans Day have taken place at the park. I am not certain this is a yearly event but I have found blogs and images showing events from previous years. (Here's a blog post for an event in 2012).

15. How do you think the community would be affected if it were destroyed or substantially altered? What might replace it? How might the character and appearance of the community or neighborhood change? How might the destruction of these places affect the appearance of the community? What stories about the history of the community and its residents would be lost?

The destruction of Veterans Memorial Park would be a big hit to both Houghton and Hancock, as this is the only memorial for veterans of both counties. If a business went in, it would be a big slap in the face to veterans. Most importantly, though, the loss of the memorial park would be the erasure of the dozens of lives scarified in service for our country's freedom. The legacies of the county's veterans would be forgotten and that is not acceptable to me – and I assume – many residents of the county.