

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES



SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE

Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions Institution: Town of Winchester

NOTE: This sample narrative conforms to a past set of grant guidelines. Please consult the revised guidelines for 2008 at: <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html>.

A. What activity (or activities) would the grant support?

The Town of Winchester, under the direction of the Town Clerk and with the collaboration of the Winchester Historical Society and the Winchester Public Library, proposes to hire a consultant to conduct a preservation needs assessment of its historical collections. In 2002, these three groups, along with the Winchester Historical Commission, formed the Collaborative for Documenting Winchester's History with the goal of developing a strategic plan to preserve and make accessible the heritage collections in the town. In 2003 a grant from the Massachusetts Historic Records Advisory Board (MHRAB) provided funds to train volunteers to process and catalog collections in the Archival Center. As finding aids are completed, catalog records are created and made available locally on the Past Perfect database and nationally through OCLC. The NEH grant will lay the groundwork for the next step, developing a coordinated plan for the preservation of all collections in the Collaborative.

The consultant will conduct on-site surveys of collections in three sites. Through visits and interviews, she will assess general condition of the collections, organization, housing, security, and storage environment. Her final report will make recommendations for long-term storage, access, preservation and management of the collections, emphasizing coordinated collection development. The three sites are:

Town Hall (a brick building, originally built in 1888 and renovated in 1988 with a new HVAC system). The collections with historical significance are found in:

- Archival Center (one room)
- Two vaults (one high security vault for permanent records of the Town and a second vault used for oversize materials of the Archival Center and the records management program)

- Engineer's Office, which includes a vault
- Building Department
- Town Clerk's Office

The consultant will meet with the Town Clerk, Head of Facilities, Town Engineer, Town Manager, Head of the Building Department, and a representative of the Archival Advisory Committee. She will review other spaces as potential sites for additional storage or research space for users.

Winchester Public Library (originally built in 1932, the building was renovated in 1996 with an addition and new HVAC system). The survey would be restricted to three spaces:

- Town History Room
- Meeting Room (as a potential site for book storage)
- Files of Town records in the Technical Processing area

Interview with the Library Director will be part of the process.

Sanborn House (this residential building was used by the School Department for offices and was recently exceded. The Historical Society has been designated as a long-term lessee.)

The Consultant will visit the building with representatives of the Society and survey the two rooms used for storage of artifacts and costumes. She will assess the feasibility of expanding use of the building to store the archives of community groups. This information will also assist the Society in their planning for use of the building.

The consultant will present her findings and recommendations for improved storage, handling, security, and management to the organizations at a meeting of the Collaborative and in a written report. Information gathered in a preservation survey, combined with skills acquired from the MHRAB survey, will lay the groundwork for a strategic plan for Winchester's documentary heritage.

B. What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?

The Archival Center houses manuscripts, photographs, maps, and documents related to the history of Winchester. Its holdings amount to 160 linear feet of materials housed in document boxes; a four-drawer file cabinet of photographs (in the process of transfer to archival housing); scrapbooks; town directories; and publications about Winchester. The Center has additional space in one vault for a 10-drawer flat file with maps, posters, oversize photographs, and artwork, and 50 linear feet of shelving for historical school and municipal records. The earliest documents include indentures from the 18th century when Winchester was part of Woburn, with the majority of the holdings dating from the late 19th and early 20th century. Examples of collections with national importance include maps and drawings by Ernest Dudley Chase, drawings by Edward Brackett, and the collection of the championship skaters Maribel Vinson Owen and her daughters Maribel and Laurence Owen.

Permanent town records comprise 426 cubic feet, Building Department 160 cu. ft., and the Engineering and Planning Department 360 cu. ft. The survey will focus on historical collections that receive heavy use and are in poor condition: the drawings and plans from the Engineering Department and Building Departments. These are stored in flat files and file cabinets in Town Hall. Of particular concern are the plans and project files dating back to 1890. Together with the photographs in the Archival Center, these are most heavily used for research.

The Library's Local History Room houses an estimated 1,000 volumes related to Winchester genealogy and history. The Library is required by Charter to collect the minutes of all Town Boards and Committees. This collection is currently held in the Technical Services area.

The Historical Society's holdings include costumes and artifacts housed in two rooms in the Sanborn House. Many of these were originally given to the Society along with the manuscripts now in the Archival Center. Artifacts and documents were separated in 1988 when manuscripts, photographs, and art on paper were moved to renovated and more secure space in Town Hall. The new Past Perfect Database will allow these to be linked so that researchers can find both manuscripts and artifacts from Winchester families, organizations, and businesses.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

Unlike its neighbors, Winchester is a relatively young town, incorporated in 1850. What makes its history unique – and a subject of research – is the way it transformed itself into a pastoral bedroom community, one of America's early garden suburbs. Tanneries and railroad yards were replaced with a system of parks and fine architectural developments. The town attracted many notable residents including businessmen Edwin Ginn and William Schraft, governors Edward Everett, Samuel McCall, and John Volpe; architects such as George Rand, F. Patterson Smith, and Royal Barry Wills; artists such as Ernest Dudley Chase, J. Foxcroft Cole and Edward Brackett; athletes such as the championship skating family, the Vinson Owens. Photographs, papers and artwork from many of these can be found in the Archival Center, while Town records hold the history of civic planning and architectural design.

These collections are used for research, publications, exhibitions, educational programs. Originally used by the Winchester community, interest has become more widespread since the development of the Historical Society Website. We anticipate wider use as the Archival Center finding aids are entered into NUCMC and OCLC and the Archival Center develops its home page on the Town Website.

Publications based on Winchester holdings include *Winchester, Massachusetts: Architectural Heritage of a Victorian Town* and *Artists of Winchester, Massachusetts: 1850-1950*, which includes a catalog of artwork and papers of artists held by the Winchester Historical Society, Library, and Archival Center. The Winchester Historical Society publishes a scholarly series, *The Architects of Winchester, Massachusetts* (see appendix). Architectural historian Maureen Meister is making extensive use of the Town Engineering and Building records to identify and date buildings for *Buildings of the U.S.: Metropolitan Boston*, to be published by the Society of Architectural Historians. *Images of America: Winchester* by Frank Sleeper

includes photographs of the class of 1945 along with photographic vignettes of Winchester history from 1914 to 1960.

The Collaborative has developed educational materials, combining the Society's commitment to public programming with the Archival Center's materials. With funding from a local charity and State, it prepared *Children's History of Winchester*, which will be distributed free to schools as part of the third grade curriculum. In April 2004, Winchester celebrated the centennial of Lincoln School with the publication of *Lincoln Elementary School: A Centennial History of the School Building 1904-2004* by historian (and Archival Center volunteer) Ellen Knight, who used Town plans as well as documents and photographs from the Archival Center.

The Town and Historical Society have been active in mounting their materials on the web. The Society has a site on the Winchester Website (a commercial venture) and the Archival Center is included on the Official Town Website. Both sites display historical photographs and give information about Winchester's people and places (see Supporting Documentation).

Two recent exhibitions featured materials from the Archival Center. The Arthur Griffin Center of Photographic Art exhibited "Winchester, Evolution of a New England Town," July – September, 2000. The images can still be seen on the museum's Website (see Supporting Documentation). Artwork, maps, and a unique map-covered chest by Ernest Dudley Chase were exhibited as part of *Greetings from Winchester: The Pictorial Maps of Ernest Dudley Chase* at the Harvard Map Collection during spring 2003.

Research is ongoing. The town itself uses its records as when studying flooding problems as background for its flood-mitigation projects. The Country Club researched its history for a centennial publication. During spring semester 2004, six graduate students from the Boston University Preservation Studies Program used Town records and materials in the Archival Center to document sixty buildings for submission to the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. Some inquiries come from outside the community: PBS used the Archival Center and Town records when a Winchester house was the subject of *This Old House*; a documentary film-maker used the extensive collection on Vinson Owen figure skating family.

D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?

The Town Clerk will oversee the grant in her capacity as public records officer and administrator with responsibility for the preservation of historical documents of Winchester. The Town Clerk's Office is a department within Winchester Town Government and serves as a central information point for the town.

- amount of operating budget in most recently completed fiscal year: [deleted]
- number of full-time paid staff members: 4
- number of part-time paid staff members: 1
- number of volunteers: 4 (in the Archival Center)
- schedule of open hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00-4:00

The Collaborative for Documenting Winchester's History includes the Winchester Historical Society, a private non-profit organization working to promote an awareness of Winchester's rich history, and Winchester Public Library, a department within Winchester Town Government.

G. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment?

In January 1975, NEDCC conducted a survey of Winchester Public Library, including their local history collections. Included with this report is a list of recommendations for conservation treatment of items in the Library's historical collections, prepared by Ed Galvin, Historical Records Coordinator of the Town.

January-June 1988, consultant Andrew Raymond conducted a comprehensive survey of town records, including an inventory by record series, as part of the planning process for storage space in the renovated Town Hall. Recommendations for storage and preservation were included in the final documents. Records with permanent historic value were identified.

H. What is the importance of this project to the institution?

Sixteen years have passed since Andrew Raymond's survey of Winchester records and historic documents, which was done prior to the renovation of Town Hall. It is time to assess the storage areas that were created, review the collections to find out how they have fared, and to see how the records are used. All storage areas are on the ground floor near the Aberjona River, which has had four "fifty year floods" in the past ten years. Thus far the archival records have been spared, but it is important to review Winchester's *Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* to see if the archival records are adequately protected.

The survey follows the MHRAB grant to process and catalog collections in the Archival Center in Town Hall. With improved access comes demand for use, especially as the holdings can be found on the web. The room is small with counter space for one user, and there is no room for expansion as other town organizations and citizens seek to donate their collections to the Town. Another issue is administrative oversight. Currently the Archival Center reports to the Town Manager with oversight of volunteers provided by an unpaid Archival Advisory Committee. Should the Center be part of the Town Clerk's Office with paid staff? If so, should the Archival Center take responsibility for the Town records that are deemed historical by the Town Clerk? Information from the survey would provide guidance. It would also justify funding, which has been lacking for the care of historical collections.

As in most Massachusetts towns, Winchester's historic records are distributed among Town departments and private organizations (the Massachusetts State Archives does not collect local records). The Archival Center is small and collects private records, the Society focuses on public programming and collecting artifacts, the Library handles published materials and fields reference questions. Recognizing the need for towns to take responsibility for their heritage collections, the Massachusetts Historic Records Advisory Board has made development of collaborative approaches like those of Winchester a priority.

In conclusion, this grant project builds upon previous work and is the logical next step in the efforts of the Collaborative to develop a comprehensive plan for the long-term preservation of historical records of Winchester.

I. What are the names and qualifications of the consultant(s) and staff involved in the project?

Melissa Mannon will serve as consultant to the project (letter of agreement, proposal, and vitae in the Supporting Documentation). Ms. Mannon is an archives consultant specializing in the preservation and management of historical records in cultural collections. She has consulted for towns comparable to Winchester in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Her emphasis on community documentation is particularly well suited to our project.

Prior to selecting Ms. Mannon, the Town prepared an RFP and solicited proposals from several possible consultants. The search committee selected Melissa Mannon as consultant after a review of her proposal and samples of comparable project reports prepared for the towns of Essex and Andover. Ms. Mannon served as consultant to Winchester's MHRAB processing/cataloging grant, which was highly successful.

Carolyn Ward, Town Clerk, will serve as project director. Ms. Ward has twenty-four years experience as Town Clerk and oversaw the 1988 survey by Andrew Raymond. A leader in the field of town government, Ms. Ward served as president of the Massachusetts Town Clerks Association in 1988.

Lynda Wills, Library Director, for fourteen years, will represent Winchester Town Library. Gail Sjo, President for eight years, will represent the Winchester Historical Society. Both women served as project directors for the MHRAB grant. Nancy Schrock will represent the Archives Advisory Committee. Ms. Schrock is Chief Conservator of Harvard College Library and a member of the Massachusetts Historic Records Advisory Commission. Copies of resumes for Ms. Ward and the three representatives of the Collaborative are appended to this application.

J. What are the plan of work and timetable for the project?

The project is anticipated to take 4-5 months:

January 2005: Upon notification of receipt of the grant, the Town will contact Melissa Mannon and sign a contract for the project.

February – March 2005: Preliminary planning meeting followed by on-site surveys of the three sites; discussion of preliminary findings

April 2005: Submittal of final report

May 2005: Presentation of findings to the Collaborative with discussion of priorities, coordinated development

June-December: The Collaborative will complete its strategic plan, incorporating the recommendations of the preservation needs assessment, and submit it to the Town Manager and Selectman. This information will be used by the Town Clerk as she prepares the FY06 budget.

Note: The use of consulting services, vendors, or other trade names is being provided for the information and convenience of potential applicants. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement, approval, or favoring by the U.S. Government, or by the National Endowment for the Humanities or any of its employees, of any product, service, or business to the exclusion of any others that may be available. The views and opinions of document authors do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Government, or the National Endowment for the Humanities or any of its employees.