



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Planning for enhanced educator access to digitized collections

Institution: Noah Webster House, Inc.

Project Director: Sheila Daley

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society:
Planning for enhanced educator access to digitized collections

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

The grant would support planning and pilot work exploring how local teachers can best make use of digitized items from the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society (NWH&WHHS) collections. The proposed activities include focus groups with local teachers and curriculum specialists, evaluation of usability requirements for primary source kits or lesson plans, digitization prioritization and planning, and digital reformatting of select materials for creation of teacher resources for pilot study.

This project falls under the NEH's call for proposals for planning and pilot projects related to the theme "A More Perfect Union." The NWH&WHHS seeks funds to consult with the town historian and with an archivist to create a digitization plan for materials in the NWH&WHHS collections, with emphasis on creating enhanced access for educators and students to support US, state, and local history, geography, and civics education. With input from local social studies teachers and curriculum specialists, facilitated by the town historian and former history teacher, the consulting archivist will produce a digitization plan for portions of the museum's American history manuscript and ephemera collections and a usability plan for future development of a digital access tool tailored for teachers' needs. The consulting historian will work with these plans to produce two pilot lesson plans with primary source kits. This project will aim to broaden the scope of primary source documents available to local teachers by gathering information on usability requirements, coding items according to curriculum related access points, prioritizing accessible items in the collections for pilot study, and devising sets of complementary or related materials for sustained research by advanced students and in independent studies. Digitized items will be used in local history web content and as facsimiles in house tours and museum programs, as well as in lesson plan kits, to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence.

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

The core holding of the NWH&WHHS is the historic house, birthplace of Noah Webster. The house comprises a four-room structure, built c. 1748 with a lean-to added in 1787, and its furnishings and grounds. It is furnished as it might have been in 1774, the year Webster left home for Yale College, with original and reproduction items from the inventories of similar West Hartford families. Staff use reproduction artifacts to demonstrate 18th century New England life and culture, and all objects conform to this period. Furnishings include approximately 65 pieces of furniture and 600 decorative art objects.

The Noah Webster Collection comprises over 200 original editions of Webster's books including his dictionaries, Blue-Back Speller, Geography book, History book, and 2-volume History of Epidemic and Pestilential Diseases; objects including his desk, an early 19th century ring believed to hold locks of the Websters' hair encased in crystal, a card table, two clocks, a bust, and numerous glassware and china; and 25 original documents including legal records, correspondence, and ephemera, dated 1778-1845.

3D object collections related to local area history represent individuals, organizations and official town functions. One important example is the original headstone of Bristow, a slave who bought his freedom from the Hooker family, whose home is also an historic house museum. In addition, the NWH&WHHS holds approximately 400 items in its collection of memorabilia belonging to town residents; approximately 600 pieces of clothing and accessories; and 50 large quilts and woven textiles. The Goodwin Pottery Collection includes 30 major pieces from this local firm, which flourished in the 19th century, and a scrapbook assembled by a traveling salesman. The museum holds hundreds of artifacts unearthed in archeological digs on its grounds, spanning the 18th through the early 20th century.

The Butler Family Collection comprises 6 linear ft. of 18th and 19th century correspondence, legal documents, land deeds, financial records, and ephemera. The collection includes multiple estate

inventories for Revolutionary War soldiers and receipts and ephemera from the period. Several bound volumes account for business in the family's cider mill and shop (1750s-1830s) and record recipes for dyeing wool, cooking, and making medicines. In one account book, Revolutionary War Captain Abraham Sedgwick is recorded ordering hundreds of pounds of pork for his men, and the book's owner records a variety of currency including "cash of the new emission" and Continental dollars. In a noteworthy receipt, Zacheus Butler, later lieutenant in the state's first regiment of light horse, purchases a buckskin outfit from a tailor by bartering 78 pounds of cheese, 8 ½ pounds of pork fat, and 7 ¾ pounds of butter – plus a remainder in cash. Extensive records chart the routes, inventories, and travails of wagon peddlers. Hundreds of letters document movement west in the early 19th century and the challenges posed by developments in transportation and industry. Letters from an early white settler in Michigan Territory to his father in Connecticut illuminate complex relationships between the settlers and Native Americans.

This proposal aligns with the NEH special initiative, "A More Perfect Union," as the materials document early American social, political, geographical, and linguistic development and can support civics education. A c. 1830 map of the US, carried by a West Hartford resident on his way to Michigan Territory, can enhance a geography lesson by illustrating the state of US mapmakers' knowledge between the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Donner Party; the map includes a "supposed river" connecting the Great Salt Lake to San Francisco Bay. The map is printed on onion skin paper, hand-colored, folds to pocket size between marbled covers, and is stained with what looks like either blood or tobacco juice. We hope consulting with teachers and educators will bring to light innovative ideas about digitizing materials like these to preserve their artifactual value and maximize potential for student engagement, as well as framing devices and external resources we could include in a digital delivery system for enhanced access.

Other local history collections contain notable items as well, access to which will be supported by the proposed pilot investigation using the Butler Family Collection. For example, the Beach Family Collection includes a veterinarian's oversize notebook from the 1890s and extensive diaries. The Foote-Hayman Collection includes 4 boxes related to the military service of Elliott Stanley Foote, including approximately 400 letters exchanged between Foote and his family in West Hartford while he served in France in WWI; his wartime diary; Army edition gospels; and Foote's discharge papers, pay book, and pension correspondence. The collection also includes other family correspondence, 15 19th century photographs, and significant printed ephemera related to two sea voyages to Europe. The George J. Bowles World War II Correspondence Collection includes 179 letters sent between Bowles, 2nd Lieutenant in the 65th bombardment squadron whose plane crashed into the ocean en route to Papua New Guinea, and his mother and friends between 1942 and 1943.

3. How are these humanities collections used?

The museum's collections are frequently used by scholars writing about Noah Webster for a variety of audiences. Recent publications involving research at the museum include *The Life and Times of Noah Webster, an American Patriot* (1998) by Harlow G. Unger; *Noah Webster: Weaver of Words* (2009) by Pegi Shea, ill. Monica Vachula; *Noah Webster: Forgotten Founding Father* (2011) by Joshua C. Kendall; and *Noah Webster's Fighting Words* (2017) by Tracy Nelson Maurer and Mircea Catusanu. Kendall presented a 2014 public lecture on his work at the Hartford Public Library on Webster's birthday.

Other scholars have used the collections for published works and programs related to the town's local history. Nelson Burr, the previous town historian and author of *West Hartford: from Colonial Parish to Modern Suburb* (1976), used collections held by the NWH&WHHS in his research and later donated his notes and drafts to the archives. Wilson H. Faude, formerly curator of the Mark Twain House and executive director of the Old State House, conducted research in the archives of the NWH&WHHS for his *West Hartford* (2004), part of the Images of America series. Miriam Butterworth and Richard Woodworth used the collections to research their commemorative *Celebrate West Hartford* (2001).

Dr. Tracey Wilson, West Hartford's Town Historian and retired Conard High School history teacher, used the collection to write many articles about the town which originally appeared in *West Hartford Life*, West Hartford's monthly magazine. In 2017, Dr. Wilson selected a compilation of 140 essays and published a limited-edition book, *Life in West Hartford*, including photographs from the collection.

NWH&WHHS collections related to historic houses inform the West Hartford House Tours, held each fall since 2016. Mary Donohue, award winning historic preservationist, architectural historian, and author, reprised her lecture "Big Houses, Big Architects, Big Stories" for an evening lecture in 2016 and has given an annual public lecture since then featuring information about the architecture and development of the neighborhoods featured in the house tour. Eugene Leach, Emeritus Professor of History and American Studies at Trinity College, gave a talk entitled, "Luna Park: A 20th century story of Amusement and Morality" that he prepared using research here. David Corrigan, curator of the Museum of Connecticut History, presented a talk on Goodwin Pottery at the NWH&WHHS and the CT State Library in 2016, based on research in the archives, as well as a talk on WWI which was presented at the museum. The collection was used in his research and items were on display for the evening of the lecture.

In June 2018, a carefully constructed consortium of history organizations came together for the kickoff of a three-year project that will serve as a model for the field and, through its research and outcomes, have a lasting impact on how history organizations do their work and engage with their communities. As one of only eleven Institute of Museum and Library Services Leadership Grants awarded in the fall of 2017, the *Unvarnished: Moving History Organizations to Interpret De Facto Segregation in the Northern and Western United States* will dig deeper into de facto segregation in six communities around the US. The NWH&WHHS is one of the six organizations participating in the project. The collection will be used to demonstrate de facto segregation and red lining practices in town.

The Butler Family Collection, described in section 2, was the focus of a master's thesis at Trinity College by Lael Smith in 1984, entitled *Affairs of the Heart: A Study of Husbands and Wives*. We have published limited selections from the collection on our local history blog, partially inspiring our current focus on standards-based digitization as we seek to enhance our local history website content.

The collections are used for museum programming, like our cemetery tours that draw on stories from the archives and dinner events with menus based on historic cookbooks. The Hatheway Collection includes accumulated research related to a 1970s project to create a map of West Hartford in 1777, used regularly in museum tours. A newer program the project will benefit is our digital tour of the museum. The tour allows museum patrons to learn about the objects in the historic house on a tablet, at their own pace and in a format accessible to those with many kinds of disabilities. It is narrated in English and Spanish. We plan to expand this accessibility-oriented program to include structured digital exhibits as we pursue priority digitization of materials appropriate for young audiences and students.

The collections are also used for outreach programs to schools. The museum won the CT Humanities Council's Wilbur Cross Award in 2006 for its exhibit on the life of the freed slave, Bristow, a Revolutionary era local agricultural expert, now on permanent loan to Bristow Middle School. Dr. Tracy Wilson taught a regular class on local history and brought students to the archives for research for approximately 30 years, until her retirement in 2016. Wilson has conducted research for public lectures and for articles published in town magazines and other publications, and serves as an Ex-Officio Trustee of the museum. The NWH&WHHS runs a high school history essay contest, the Meyer Prize for Excellence in History, to encourage local students to conduct archival research. We plan to develop our offerings to area schools by digitizing materials and creating enhanced access for educators.

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

The NWH&WHHS is located in the restored birthplace and childhood home of Noah Webster. The house was restored by the Noah Webster Foundation, a private 501(c)(3) organization, and opened as

a museum in 1965. In 1970, the West Hartford Historical Society merged with the Foundation. Today, the museum includes the historic house, the Jodik Education Center with a working reproduction open hearth, 2 exhibit galleries, the Hamilton Gallery, and the Visitor Reception Center including a museum shop, one-room schoolhouse theater, and long-term exhibit on Noah Webster. Its holdings include decorative arts, manuscripts, books, and ephemera related to Webster and to the local community. The museum employs 3 full-time, 19 part-time, and 27 volunteer staff, and operates on a budget of \$354,000 per year.

The museum is open 7 days a week, and each year serves over 5,000 school children and thousands of visitors from around the world. We offer many free-of-charge educational experiences to at-risk children, as well as numerous workshops, summer camps, and a history club for young people.

The mission of the NWH&WHHS is to preserve, interpret and champion Noah Webster's legacy and birthplace, as well as the evolving history of West Hartford, the town that nurtured him. The museum's philosophy is that people learn best in a friendly and comfortable environment where they are invited to join in, and most of our programs include hands-on activities and discussion.

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

The NWH&WHHS is fortunate to have worked with several professional consultants throughout the years. In 1985, Mary Todd Glaser conducted a survey of unbound paper artifacts and Shereyn Ogden provided recommendations for rare book conservation treatments, both through the NEDCC.

In 2019, as part of a previous PAG-SI grant project, Leah Early (as an emerging professional trained by Rachel Onuf) interpreted temperature and relative humidity data, collected with grant-funded PEM2 loggers, and submitted a report with analysis and recommendations for improving the museum's HVAC for collections preservation. That spring as part of the same grant project, Leah Early provided staff training on digitization standards, safe handling of bound and unbound manuscripts during digitization, and digital preservation. In 2018, we contracted with Valerie J. Kinkade of Museum and Collector Resource, LLC, to design custom shelving as part of our current renovation plan.

6. What is the importance of this project to your institution?

This project aligns with priorities in our 2018-2021 strategic plan, which emphasizes planning for collections digitization, working closely with our users and audience, and expanding town history resources on our website. The museum is currently fundraising to complete another element of the strategic plan, a full renovation of the archives storage area including custom storage shelving, dedicated digitization and processing workstations, and new HVAC informed by environmental monitoring data collected and interpreted as part of a previous PAG-SI grant described in section 5. The renovated space will reopen as the West Hartford History Center, an expanded vision for our local historical society collections and services. A major projected outreach activity of the center is to work with social studies teachers to develop primary source kits and lessons for curriculum goals at multiple grade levels.

We believe selections from the collection, as described in section 2, can serve as "hooks" for students studying US history and as a corpus for advanced students or those conducting independent studies or sustained research projects, including National History Day projects. The requested funding would allow us to explore teachers' needs and practices to maximize the utility of the digitized set and individual items for multiple grade levels and varying complexity of assignments. For example, we will evaluate whether selections from the cider mill account books can be paired with assignments on the Stamp Act or the Currency Act, and how the frontier letters can complement assignments on westward expansion, industrialization, the railroad, and Native American displacement and treaties.

Additionally, if funded, this project will support the museum's planned commemorative activities for the 2026 Anniversary of American independence by identifying and prioritizing digitization of appropriate collection items for use in the house tour, on our website, and in museum programming.

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

Project Consultants:

Tracey Wilson is West Hartford's Town Historian. She taught History in the West Hartford Public Schools for 38 years. She earned her BA and MA in History from Trinity College, Hartford and her PhD in History from Brown University. She has worked with NWH&WHHS on exhibits, research and educational programs for over 30 years. Her current public history project is called Witness Stones West Hartford. She and her partners are researching enslaved people in West Hartford, conducting professional development with 8th grade public school teachers, and having students learn and write the stories, and then installing stones to commemorate those lost to history. This opens the door to our witness of the history of slavery on which this town was founded.

Leah Early is the Archivist for the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford, located in West Hartford, and a volunteer processing archivist with the NWH&WHHS focusing on local history collections. In 2018-9, she developed and taught a workshop at the museum on best practices in digitization of manuscripts informed by the 2016 FADGI guidelines. Early holds an MS-LIS from Simmons University and a BA from Reed College.

Project Staff:

Jennifer DiCola Matos holds a BA in History and Art History from the University of St. Joseph and an MA in American Civilization from Brown University, and is the Executive Director of the NWH&WHHS. She has over 15 years of experience in museums in the Greater Hartford area, including at the Connecticut Historical Society, Wadsworth Atheneum, and Connecticut's Old State House. Matos oversees daily operations of the museum from soup to nuts in addition to managing 7 regular employees.

Sheila Daley is the Curator and Director of Special Projects at the NWH&WHHS, and will direct the project and benefit from the staff training. She has worked at the museum since 2000. She holds a BA from the University of Saint Joseph in Art History and Social Science and an MA in American Studies from Trinity College. Prior to coming to the museum, she worked for many years as the Assistant Archivist at Cigna and in the Public Relations office of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT.

Elizabeth Sweeney is the Director of Education at the NWH&WHHS and has been since January 2014. Beth was a Museum Teacher for 14 years, and the Assistant to the Director of Education for two years prior to her role as Education Coordinator. Elizabeth studied at the University of CT and Saint Joseph's College in West Hartford.

8. Plan of work

9/2020: Tracey Wilson and Leah Early will design a survey for social studies teachers exploring use of primary source materials and factors supporting their use, including an invitation for further participation.

11/2020: The 1st meeting will be held, presenting the results of the survey and the proposed project.

11/2020-12/2020: Leah Early will develop a draft plan for enhanced access to digital materials, incorporating the results of the first meeting and survey.

1/2021: The 2nd meeting will be held, to refine identified focus areas and present potential pilot projects.

2/2021-5/2021: Leah Early will reformat selected materials for pilot study of enhanced access strategies and refine the usability plan based on educators' input.

5/2021: The 3rd meeting of teachers will be held to select materials and refine enhanced access strategies.

5/2021-7/2021: Tracey Wilson and Leah Early will create pilot lesson kits using pilot selections.

5/2021-9/2021: Leah Early will finalize the usability requirements and produce a digitization plan including digital preservation strategies and costs for the portion of the collection selected.

8/2021-9/2021: A 4th meeting will be held to present the pilot project in anticipation of the school year.