



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning and Development
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David B. Cohen
Mayor

December 10, 2009

Community Preservation Committee
c/o Alice Ingerson
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

RE: Preservation of 19th & Early 20th Century Newton Documents/Collections

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members:

The Newton Historical Commission voted unanimously at its last hearing on November 24, 2009 to support the application before the CPC for preservation of 19th & Early 20th Century Newton Documents/Collections. The preservation of these kinds of artifacts and documents with their historical ties to the City of Newton is at the very core of our Commission's existence.

As outlined in the proposal, this project is in line with the Newton Comprehensive Plan as well as the Library's long term planning goals as well. We sincerely hope that the CPC will give this project a favorable vote.

Sincerely,

Brian Lever, Senior Preservation Planner
Newton Historical Commission Staff

Newton Historical Commission
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459
Email: blever@ci.newton.ma.us
www.ci.newton.ma.us

Samuel Francis Smith Homestead Society, Inc.

62 Tyler Terrace
Newton Centre, MA 02159-1814
(617) 527-1312

October 22, 2009

Ms. Nancy Grisson, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA

Dear Ms. Grisson:

I am writing in support of the proposal for a CPA Project by the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton at the Jackson Homestead and the Newton City Clerk's office.

Along with my concern for the preservation and digitization of the other archival materials proposed for the project by Historic Newton, I feel particular importance should attach to the manuscript and source notes for the Rev. Samuel Francis Smith's History of Newton (1880). Many of his sources inevitably evaporated in the decades afterwards. He is a figure of national importance, best known for his words in the patriotic hymn America ("My country, 'Tis of Thee.").

Very truly yours,
Wheaton Wilbur
President, S. F. S. H. S.

14 Trowbridge Street
Newton, MA 02459
October 23, 2009

Community Preservation Committee
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you in support of the grant application to preserve 19th and early 20th Century Newton Documents. The residents of Newton are fortunate that those who came before us had the foresight to preserve these city directories, manuscripts, photos, and maps that capture life in our city in the previous two centuries and help us to understand those who built our community.

There is need, however, for action to ensure that these materials will continue to be available to future generations. First, some of the items are in need of repair and preservation so that they are in one piece and legible and will remain that way. Once the selected items are preserved, they will be ready to be viewed by scholars and other occasional users, but they will not be able to withstand constant use by the citizens of Newton. Digitizing the materials and making them available on the internet is the second crucial step that will enable everyone who is interested to access them.

I am the president of the Library Board of Trustees, and I appreciate that this project will help the library to fulfill its mission of making information available to the public in “an accessible and equitable manner.” Once these photographs and maps are online, they may serve as a gateway for people to discover more about the history of Newton; people who see the digitized materials may be inspired to go to the Newton Collection in the library or to the Jackson Homestead to learn more from additional sources.

In addition, this project is of particular interest to me because it involves the collaboration of three city organizations: Historic Newton, the office of the Newton City Clerk, and the library. Bringing individual pieces of history together on the internet from their current locations in the separate departments will create one citywide collection and will set a wonderful precedent for future cooperative work.

I hope that your committee will approve the application, and I look forward to watching as the phases of this work are implemented over the coming year. Please contact me if I can provide any assistance.

Sincerely,

Beth Wilkinson

617-969-4443
Bethwilkinson@mac.com

October 14, 2009

Ms. Nancy Grissom.
Chair of the Community Preservation Committee,
Newton City Hall,
1000 Commonwealth Ave,
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Ms. Grissom,

This letter adds my support for the proposed project to digitize material that illuminates Newton's history. I write as the owner of a historic house in Newton Corner (one that was included on the very first house tour), as the president of the Rebecca Pomroy Foundation, which is deeply rooted in Newton's history, and as a keenly interested amateur researcher of Newton's history.

From my point of view, digital archives have made it much easier to pursue questions about local history. I well remember developing pictures in my darkroom for the Jackson Homestead publication about Newton Corner in the 1970s. The process was difficult and tedious and only a very few pictures could be published. Google books and similar projects have transformed our ability to learn about the past and made it far easier for amateurs like me to pursue our interests and share our work with others.

Newton's archives are invaluable because of the city's rich political and social history. I believe that understanding this history can illuminate the deep roots of our interest in education and equal rights. I'm especially pleased that the material to be digitized includes material from the Allen School and maps that are otherwise unavailable.

In addition, I think it would be of great benefit to have a digital version of Samuel Francis Smith's draft of his history of Newton. I have found this book to be extremely useful both in its digital version on line and in print form. It is a prodigious work of scholarship that gives a thorough account of Newton's early history and a valuable contemporary account of Newton in the late 19th century. The original manuscript is too fragile for public use, but a digitized version would make it easily available to anyone who is interested in seeing Dr. Smith's thinking as he compiled his work.

Again, I think that CPA funding of this proposed project would be most helpful for preserving important parts of our history, and I am glad to lend my support.

Yours,



Lawrence Zuckerman
276 Franklin Street
Newton 02458