

Date 14 Dec 2007
received:

City of Newton



David B. Cohen
Mayor

Newton, Massachusetts COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PROPOSAL

Submit to:

Alice E. Ingerson, Community Preservation Program Manager
Newton Planning and Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Ave., Newton, MA 02459
aingerson@newtonma.gov 617.796.1144



*Proposals MUST follow instructions in the current Community Preservation Handbook, available upon request and online at www.ci.newton.ma.gov/cpa.
Incomplete proposals will NOT be considered.*

Project CONTACTS	Name & title / affiliation, mailing address, email, daytime phone, & any other way we should contact you (fax, mobile phone, ...) Please star (*) name of the project manager, who will track budget & submit updates. Use additional sheets if you have more than 2 project contacts.				
Cynthia Stone, Director, Newton History Museum 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA 0246058 cstone@newtonma.gov	*Susan Abele, Curator of Manuscripts and Photographs Newton History Museum 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02458 sabele@newtonma.gov				
Project TITLE	<i>Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project</i>				
Project LOCATION	Address and/or assessors parcel identification no. <i>Newton History Museum, 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02458</i>				
Funding Categories	Check all that apply.	COMMUNITY HOUSING	HISTORIC RESOURCES X	OPEN SPACE	RECREATION
Project BUDGET	Identify major cost categories, total CP funds requested, and total project cost. Archive Expansion: HC Access Upgrade \$65455; Renovation of Current Archive \$42752; Expansion of Archive Storage 117625; Temporary Archive Storage \$10000, all subject to inflation (\$39242), contingency (\$48295), and soft costs (\$57954), plus cataloging of collection (\$13164) for a total of \$394,564. We are requesting \$357,400 from the CPA for this project.				
Project SUMMARY	This description will be used in public announcements, websites, press releases, etc. Explain BRIEFLY what the project will accomplish & how, as well as how it will benefit the community as a whole.				

The Newton History Museum's two-dimensional collections, which include maps and plans, more than 2,000 photographs, and over 6,000 Historic Property Survey Files, are essential resources for historical research in this City. These collections are presently crammed into the 17th-century post-and-beam wing of the Jackson Homestead, which lacks effective climate control and fire protection. Despite the best efforts for care and preservation, these collections of irreplaceable documents and photographs are at risk.

The *Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project* seeks funds to rehabilitate the library/storage area, expand collections storage into an adjacent storage area in the wing, install compact shelving in the new space to relieve current over-crowded conditions, and to provide space for future collecting. Remodeling will include insulating the wing to improve climate control and provide long-range energy savings and installation of a fire suppression system. Relocating existing heating and cooling (HVAC) units in the garage will allow us to maximize space for compact shelving and improve HVAC functions. It also will provide the opportunity to upgrade the accessible entrance for the museum.

The need to preserve and properly store irreplaceable collection materials is the overriding goal of this project. Newton's "historic resources" include the Museum's archival collections, which are used by homeowners and neighborhood activists, architects and real estate professionals, city departments and mass media, as well as students, scholars, and genealogists. The archives are also used by educators in the schools and elsewhere in Newton to teach local history as the context for understanding American History. The Newton community in its very broadest sense is the beneficiary of this project, which supports the concept of "planning with history" articulated in Newton's Comprehensive Plan (April 2007).

1. HOW WILL CP FUNDS BE USED?	Check all that apply.	COMMUNITY HOUSING	HISTORIC RESOURCES	OPEN SPACE	RECREATION
	allowable IF resource was acquired or created with CP funds	acquire			
create			NOT ALLOWABLE		
preserve			X		
support			NOT ALLOWABLE	NOT ALLOWABLE	NOT ALLOWABLE
	rehabilitate/restore		X		

Please answer questions 2-5 on ONE PAGE. As our spacing suggestions, #2 is the most critical question. Attach supporting information on separate pages if needed (see attachments checklist).

2. NEEDS & PRIORITIES: How does this project address needs & priorities identified in existing citywide plans starting with the *Community Preservation Plan*? Other examples: *Comprehensive Plan, Open Space Plan, Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment, Consolidated Plan for Housing & Community Development*, etc. (cite document title, date & page if you have them).

Newton’s Comprehensive Plan envisions that by 2015 Newton will be nationally recognized for its innovative, community-based approach to “planning with history.” The FY08 Newton Community Preservation Plan (NCPP) identifies the Newton History Museum as “a guiding force in creating and maintaining public awareness of the need to preserve Newton’s historic resources.” Together, these two plans highlight the need to use historical resources as a planning tool and the role of the Newton History Museum in that process.

Through its programs and exhibitions, the Newton History Museum at The Jackson Homestead has a unique opportunity to synthesize information to entertain and to educate. Drawing on its collections, the Museum can provide the primary material needed for informed decision-making. In support of these objectives, preserving its collections and making them accessible becomes a critical responsibility for the Museum and for the City.

The Jackson Homestead was listed on the NR (1978) and has been designated as a local Landmark. Rehabilitation of the Jackson Homestead wing for the purpose of improved collections storage and fire safety meets many of the goals of the NCPP. The project “builds on and preserves existing resources” and considers “both current and future needs” of the collection as well as of the mission of the organization. Most importantly, it helps to preserve collection materials that are “unique and irreplaceable historic resources.”

3. FUNDING LEVERAGE: What additional funding sources are committed or under consideration? Attach commitment letters, if available, and describe any other attempts to secure funding for this project.

The Newton Historical Society has received an anonymous donation from an individual donor of \$24,000 toward this project. In addition, the Museum anticipates an in-kind contribution of time to catalogue the collection while it is in off-site storage. This will improve intellectual control over the collection. Cataloging is valued at a minimum of \$13,164. The total match is \$37,164.

4. PROJECT EVALUATION & FOLLOWUP: How will the project's impact be documented & evaluated? How will assets (buildings, landscapes ...) that are created or preserved be cared for after the project is finished?

Creation of a modern, climate-controlled, fire-safe archive with adequate storage and room for growth will be a significant accomplishment for the city-owned Newton History Museum and its private partner, the Newton Historical Society. Evaluation will be measured in numbers: linear feet of new storage, regulated climate control, documents preserved, and people served, but the true evaluation will come with preservation of the public trust and public appreciation for services to the community generated by this project.

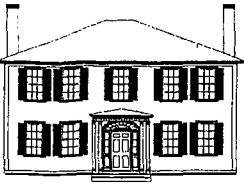
The Newton History Museum, also known as The Jackson Homestead, was established as a City department in 1950. The City has supported the museum for almost sixty years and in that time the Museum has grown to become a substantial community resource. The collection is and will continue to be cared for by the Curator of Manuscripts and Photographs at the Museum. As a public/private partnership, the Newton History Museum and the Newton Historical Society are committed to the goal of mutual support, education, and service to the City.

5. COMMUNITY SUPPORT & CONTACTS: We welcome letters of support (attach separately).

- Ellen Fitzpatrick, Professor, University of New Hampshire, 20 Foster St., Newton, MA 02460, 617-527-5701
- Peter Kastner, 49 Woodbine Street, Auburndale, MA 617-943-8795
- John Stewart, 23 Pierepont Road, Newton, MA 02462
- Claudia Wu, 25 Sewall Street, West Newton, MA 02465
- Bev Droz, for Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities, 617-796-1290
- John Rodman for Newton Historical Commission – meeting December 18, 2007, letter to come

Project MILESTONES If this project is funded, what critical milestones should we use to track its progress? Please do NOT list more than 8 milestones! If & when your project is funded, CP staff will work with you to add missing steps or participants.

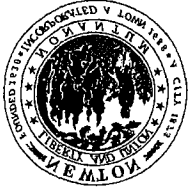
Milestone	Assistance required	Start date	Completion date	Cost
<i>BIG steps, SHORT descriptions!</i>	<i>Other organizations or City depts. & what they must do to complete this step (raise funds, issue permits, etc.).</i>	<i>year & season</i>	<i>year & season</i>	<i>estimate</i>
1. Hire Designer	Purchasing Department	June 2008	July 2008	60% of soft costs: \$34770
2. Prepare Bid Documents Resolve all permit issues	Purchasing Department Inspectional Services, Architectural Access Board	July 2008	November 2008	See above
3. Award GC contract	Purchasing Department	November 2008	March 2008	Museum staff—soft costs
4. Move Archival Collections to temporary storage location – store up to 4 to 6 months Catalogue collection while in storage	W. B. Meyer , Library Relocation Service	March 2009	March 2009	\$11600 \$13164 for cataloging
5. Construction	Public Building Department Contractor TBD	March 2009	June 2009	\$345470
6. Return Archival Collections	W. B. Meyer , Library Relocation Service	June 2009	June 2009	See #4
7				



NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM

at The Jackson Homestead

David B. Cohen, Mayor
Cynthia Stone, Director



Judith Jacobson, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02458

Dear Judy,

We are pleased to submit this proposal for preservation of and access to the Newton History Museum's Archives. These archives have too long been housed inappropriately in cramped, unsafe conditions. For many years the Museum has wanted to address this situation, but has been unable to identify funding. Last year's precedent by the CPC of funding improved housing for the city's archives encouraged us to apply to you for this important project.

The Archives of the Newton History Museum include a wide range of materials including photographs, maps, plans, journals, papers, and historic property surveys. These materials are the basis for many of the exhibits and programs conducted by the Museum within its walls and in the city's public spaces. In addition they are utilized broadly by Newton residents, planning professionals and city employees to research historic buildings and properties. The archives are a critical resource for both Newton's Comprehensive Plan and the Community Preservation Plan.

At present the Archives are housed in kitchen cabinets and boxes in the 17th century wing of the Jackson Homestead. This wing has neither fire suppression nor insulation and temperatures in the winter often get down to the low fifties. Boxes of archival material are piled literally to the ceiling making access to this valuable material difficult. By expanding the space for the archives, housing them properly in compact archival-appropriate storage, and cataloguing them, we will both better preserve them and make them more readily available for research.

Thank you so very much for consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Stone
Director Newton History Museum

	Newton History Museum Archives and Access Project							
	City of Newton and The Newton Historical Society							
	527 Washington St., Newton							
	12/14/2007							
				Inflation	Contingency	Soft Costs		
Line #	Description		Budget [1]	2 yrs @ 8%	at 20%	at 20% [2]	Total [3]	
Uses								
1	Archive Expansion:							
2	- HC Access Upgrade		65455					
3	- Renovation of Current Archive		42752					
4	-Expansion of Archive Storage		117625					
5	- Temp. Arch. Storage:[4]		10000					
6	Subtotal:		235,832	39,242	48,295	57,954	381,400	
7	Cataloging of collection						13,164	
	Total						394,564	
Sources								
8	CPA Request						357,400	
9	Cataloging In-Kind						13,164	
10	Contribution to Archives Project by Anonymous Donor						24,000	
	Total						394,564	
Notes:								
1	includes 25% markup for GC costs							
2	provides 12% A&E Fee plus 5% NHS Staff Oversight/Mgmt. of construction and 3% NHS Staff for project development							
3	rows and columns may not add due to rounding							
4	Temporary Archive Storage and rolling shelving system is exempted from contingency and soft cost multipliers							



UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

November 27, 2007

Ms. Judith Jacobson
Chair
Community Preservation Committee
City of Newton
Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Jacobson:

I write to endorse in the strongest possible terms the Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project.

I have been a resident of Newton for nearly thirty years and for much of that time have taken an interest in the City's history not only as a professional historian but also as a homeowner with a growing awareness of the need for historic preservation. My initial encounter with the Jackson Homestead many years ago gave ample evidence of the difficulties itemized in the proposal before you. I have visited many archives in the course of my career but was truly unprepared for what I found when I first visited the Jackson Homestead. There crowded among overflowing files, boxes, books, maps, photographs, artifacts and countless other source materials was the remarkable Susan Abele. She was very gracious about helping me research the history of my house, had absolute mastery of the city's history, and was completely organized. However, it was only her heroic skills that gave any order or hope of access to the City's rich collection of historical research material. Conditions have only become more challenging—the space more crowded, the collection more at risk — since my early foray into the Museum many years ago.

Indeed, although Susan is one of the most capable archivists I have ever met, she and the staff at the Newton History Museum are working in conditions that make it extraordinarily difficult to preserve documents and artifacts that are crucial to the preservation of Newton's history. Appropriate storage facilities, climate control, and collection management are a *sine qua non* for any historical archive. Newton has wonderful historical resources but stands to squander them if the conditions extant at the city's History Museum are not addressed. In a very real sense, historic preservation in the city of Newton depends on the proper maintenance of the historic survey materials,

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

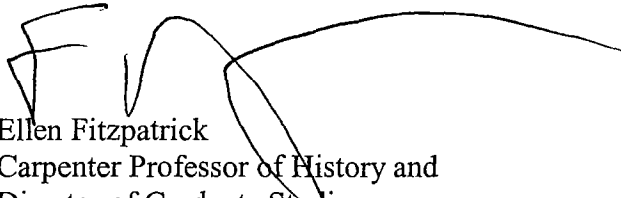
Department of History

Horton Social Science Center 20 College Road Durham, New Hampshire 03824-3586 603-862-1764 603-862-1502 fax

photographs, maps and documents housed (poorly at the moment) in the History Museum. For without these materials, it is impossible to research, document, and provide a rationale for historic preservation activities in the City. There can be no historic preservation without the preservation of the documentary evidence of the City's history. Therefore, it is a very wise investment of resources to take as a primary and urgent task the rehabilitation and improvement of the City's historic archive. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this undertaking.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like me to elaborate on these remarks. As a historian and a citizen, I believe firmly that few, if any, projects have as much long-term potential to advance the preservation of Newton's history as the proposal before you.

Sincerely,



Ellen Fitzpatrick
Carpenter Professor of History and
Director of Graduate Studies

Peter Kastner
49 Woodbine Street
Auburndale, Massachusetts 02466

November 30, 2007

Judith Jacobson, Chair
Newton Community Preservation Committee
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Center, Massachusetts 02159

RE: Support of *Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project*

Dear Chair Jacobson:

For the past several years I have had the opportunity to use the resources of the Newton History Museum for Newton organizations and most recently for my business of publishing prints of historical maps. While visiting the Newton History Museum and I have been impressed by the range and quality of their programs and collections and their innovative use of very limited space to conduct programs and store their large collections.

I am sure that many citizens of Newton will come forward to talk about the value of the Newton Museum to the quality of life in our city and I would just like to write about the value of providing adequate safe space for the Museum's Archives in order to attract future donations to the museum's collection.

I am asked occasionally by friends and clients to suggest where they might donate individual collections. As a general rule I recommend that they think about giving the collection to their local library or historical association. As a first step I recommend that they visit the selected institution to make sure that the institution has the space and resources to preserve the collection and to make the collection available to scholars and the community. All most all donors will take due diligence to make sure that they are intrusting their collection to an institution that will be able to preserve their gift. The provision of adequate space to the Newton History Museum is a necessary condition to be able to attract private donors to grow the collection.

Therefore, I strongly request that the Community Preservation Committee approve the Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project for funding.

Sincerely


Peter Kastner

Cc. Newton History Museum

Claudia Sauermann Wu
25 Sewall Street
West Newton, MA 02465
617-965-7665
claudiaswu@netscape.net

December 12, 2007

Community Preservation Committee
Newton City Hall
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Members of the Community Preservation Committee:

I am writing in support of the Newton History Museum's application to the Community Preservation Committee for its Archives Preservation and Access Project.

The Newton History Museum's Archives house the myriad of papers, photographs and plans that help us understand the development of our city and the lives of the people who lived here. Currently housed in the 17th century, post and beam wing of the Jackson Homestead, these collections of unique and irreplaceable documents and photographs are at risk. Over 2,000 photographs, 6,000 Historic Property Surveys, business papers, organizational records, school records and items of social and cultural interest are stored in areas that are overcrowded and not climate controlled. Indeed, some are not even fully accessible to the Museum's archivist or researchers because of lack of space.

Money from Newton's CPA fund would allow for rehabilitation of the library/storage area, expansion of collections storage, installation of compact shelving to relieve current over-crowded conditions, and provide space for future collecting. Remodeling will include insulating the historic wing to improve climate control and provide long-range energy savings. This work would also provide the opportunity to upgrade the accessible entrance for the museum.

I realize that this is a large expenditure at a time when there are so many other competing needs for CPA funds, but it is essential that this collection be properly cared for and be made available for research. From the letter of a mill girl describing the deplorable conditions of the Petty Mill in Newton Upper Falls to the plans for the development of Oak Hill Park, the collection represents some of the most important documents the City has. Hundreds of people use these resources either for their own personal research, or to learn more about Newton and the development of metropolitan Boston. At a time when researchers (including school children) are increasingly turning to the internet for information, it is so important that we preserve the primary sources that inform our understanding of history. We are fortunate to have such an abundance of information about our past; we need to ensure that it is protected, preserved and can be added to for years to come.

I thank you for your consideration of the Newton History Museum's proposal.

Sincerely,


Claudia Sauermann Wu

City of Newton



Mayor David B. Cohen

Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities

Established 1975

Department of Health & Human Services

Human & Volunteer Services Division

Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459

Beverly Droz, Division Director, 617-796-1290

Douglas Sweet, Acting Chairperson

December 10, 2007

**To: Judith Jacobson, Chairperson
Community Preservation Committee**

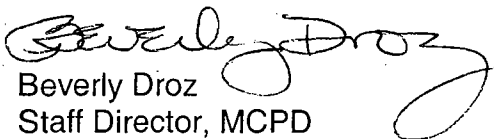
The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities would like to express its support for the Newton History Museum as it presents the *Newton History Museum Preservation and Access Project* to your Community Preservation Committee.

We have reviewed the goal of this project and the draft proposal, and our members are encouraged by the thought and planning that has gone into this project with regards to both accessibility and overall issues.

The current accessible entrance is open to the weather and is a catchall for trash. By enclosing this area, the History Museum can create a clean, well-lighted and more welcoming entrance for those needing to use the lift, while at the same time using the other end to house their HVAC system.

We believe the Newton History Museum will continue in good faith to address necessary accessibility issues. We urge your committee's support of their project. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,


Beverly Droz
Staff Director, MCPD

December 14, 2007

To: Judith Jacobson, Chair, CPC

From: John Stewart

Re: Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project

I am writing in support of this proposal.

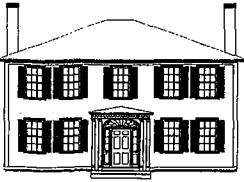
Finding solutions to the challenges of preserving and making accessible (for research and exhibition) collections of historically valuable material can be a daunting task. The costs are always considerable because the space must be physically secure and environmentally sound. Most material, even paper, deteriorates in a relatively few decades if not kept under reasonably perfect temperature and humidity controls.

I have long been concerned with some of the collections at the Newton History Museum because clearly they are not kept under ideal conditions. I spent most of my active career with the National Archives and Records Administration and while I am far from an expert in the design and construction of archival space, I had several occasions to be somewhat involved in the creation of new facilities, most notably at the Kennedy Library.

In the past month I spent several hours reviewing papers in a collection at the History Museum. While the work space assigned to me was reasonably comfortable, it was crowded and in the middle of a fairly busy area. It is hard to imagine how the museum could accommodate several researchers at the same time.

I must admit I am not familiar with the details of the space to be used for this proposed facility. My guess is that, in the long-range scheme of things, it is a compromise in terms of what is really needed. I hope the city can go ahead with this proposal and I also hope the search for a more comprehensive solution to the space needs of the Newton History Museum will remain on the agenda.

John Stewart
23 Pierrepont Road
Newton MA 02462
johnstewart@alum.bu.edu
617 969 0950



NEWTON HISTORY MUSEUM

at The Jackson Homestead

David B. Cohen, Mayor
Cynthia Stone, Director



A letter of support has been requested from the Newton Historical Commission. The Commission will hear the matter on December 18, 2007 and their response will be forwarded to the CPC after that meeting.

November 14, 2007

John Rodman, Chairman
Newton Historical Commission
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02458

Dear John

The Newton History Museum will be sending the *Newton History Museum Preservation and Access Project* to the Community Preservation Committee on December 14, 2007. The goal of this project is to remodel and expand the Museum's Library and Document Storage area in order to relieve serious overcrowding that threatens the safety of collection and limits delivery of service to the community. Attached is a draft summary of the project proposal. If you and your board are willing, we would be pleased to have your letter of support for the project.

With kind regards,

Susan D. Abele
Curator of Manuscripts and Photographs
encl.

City of Newton



David B. Cohen
Mayor

Inspectional Services Department

John D. Lojek, Commissioner
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459-1449
Telephone: (617) 796-1060
Fax: (617) 796-1086
www.ci.newton.ma.us

Building/Zoning Inspectors
(617) 796-1060
Zoning Board of Appeals
(617) 796-1060
Plumbing and Gas Division
(617) 796-1070
Electrical Division
(617) 796-1075

December 12, 2007

Judith Jacobson, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Chairman Jacobson:

At the request of the Newton History Museum, I reviewed the proposed archives construction project and cosmetic improvements that are planned for the area housing the accessible public museum entrance. A site visit of December 11, 2007 found the existing accessible public entrance code compliant, however the project as planned will trigger an accessibility design review of the entire building.

In accordance with 780 CMR 3409.0 Historic Building Mass. State Building Code—Sixth Edition, the Museum is classified as a totally preserved building and therefore required to comply with accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. The Museum has been advised that if necessary, it may seek a variance from the Mass. Architectural Access Board.

We will continue to advise the Museum in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John P. DeToma".

John DeToma
Chief Building Inspector

City of Newton



PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

A. NICHOLAS PARNELL, AIA, COMMISSIONER

Telephone (617) 796-1600

FAX (617) 796-1601

52 ELLIOT STREET

NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461-1605

David B. Cohen
Mayor

December 13, 2007

Judith Jacobson, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, Ma 02458

Dear Ms. Jacobson:

I understand that the Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead is applying for CPA funding to improve access to and preservation of the archives it houses. I have visited the history museum and know first-hand how cramped the conditions are in the archives. I have been hearing for many years about their need to preserve the collection through temperature stabilization and fire suppression. As Commissioner of Public Buildings, I heartily endorse this project and am pleased to lend the help of my department in any capacity necessary.

Thank you for giving their proposal the consideration it deserves.

Sincerely,

A. Nicholas Parnell, AIA
Commissioner of Public Buildings

Floor Plans

Elevation and Plan of Compact Shelving

Existing Space Use

Proposed Space Use

Newton History Museum

Date: 9/13/07

Scale:

Revisions:

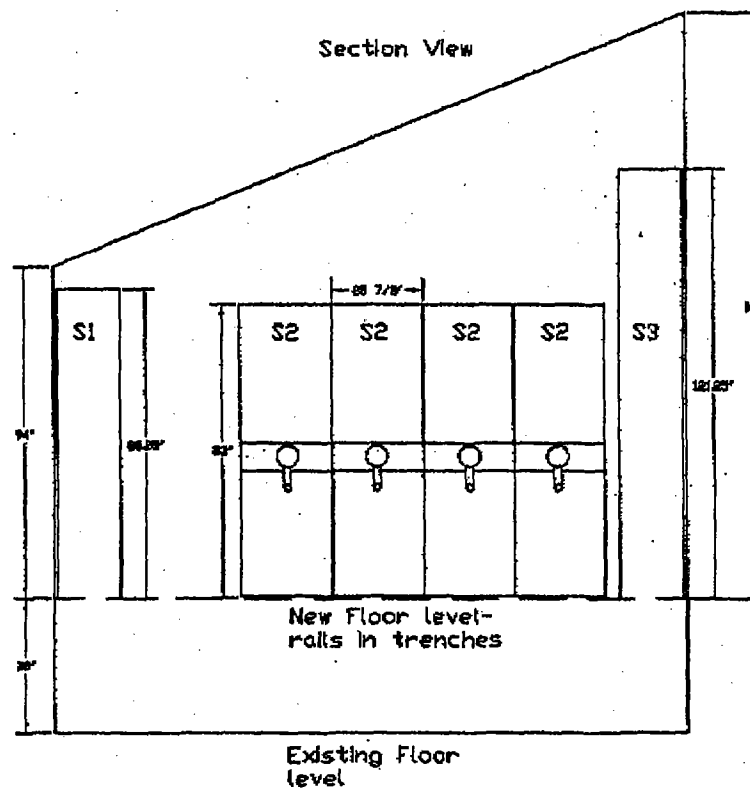
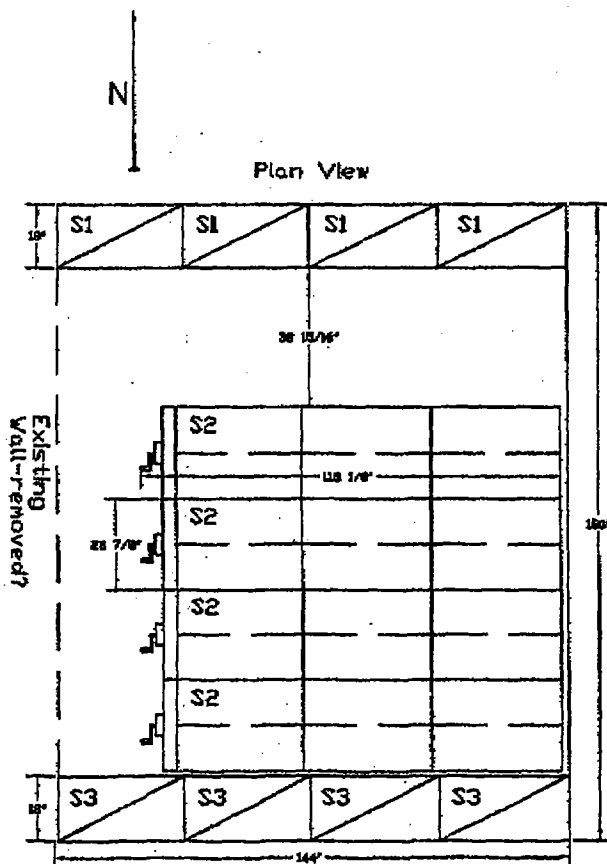
Notes:



Tucker Library Interiors, LLC

55 So Commercial St
Manchester, NH 03101
Tl 603-666-7030
Ft 603-666-7032

www.tuckerlibraryinteriors.com



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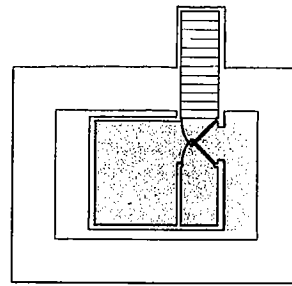
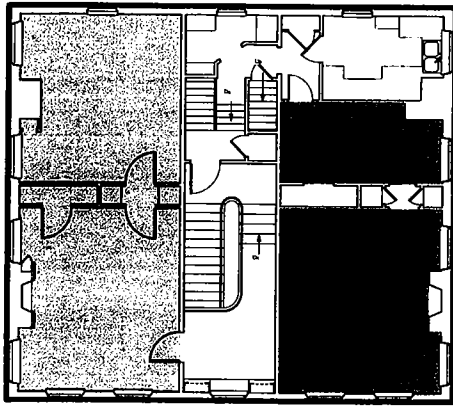
Sheet 1

Detail from Space Plan Study for The Jackson Homestead, August 14, 2007

The Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Plan was developed as part of a Space Plan Study completed in August 2007.

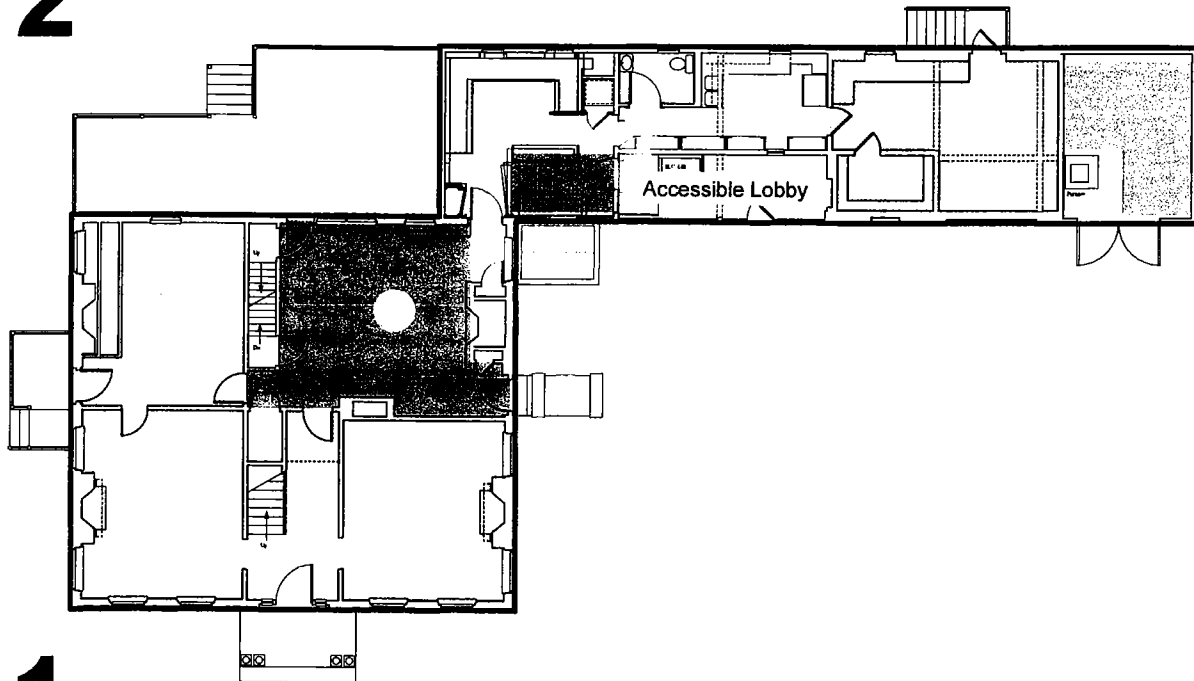
The following two pages, **Existing Space Use** and **Proposed Space Use** pertain the building as a whole.

For the location of this project see #1, the first floor plans shown on both pages. The Archive area is in green, collections storage is in brown.

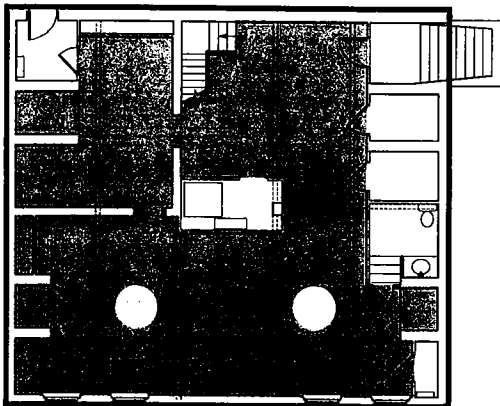


Attic

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







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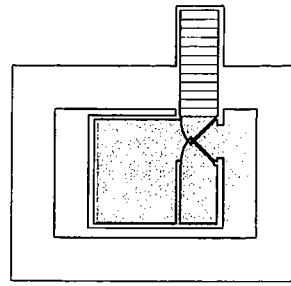
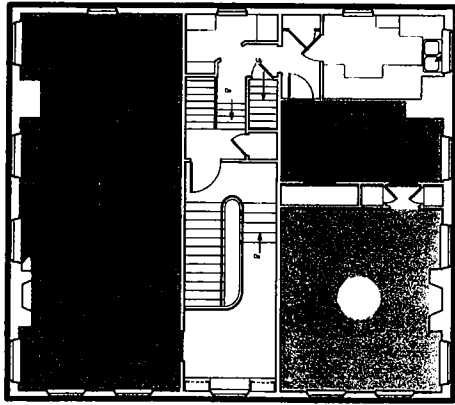


Existing Space Use

LEGEND

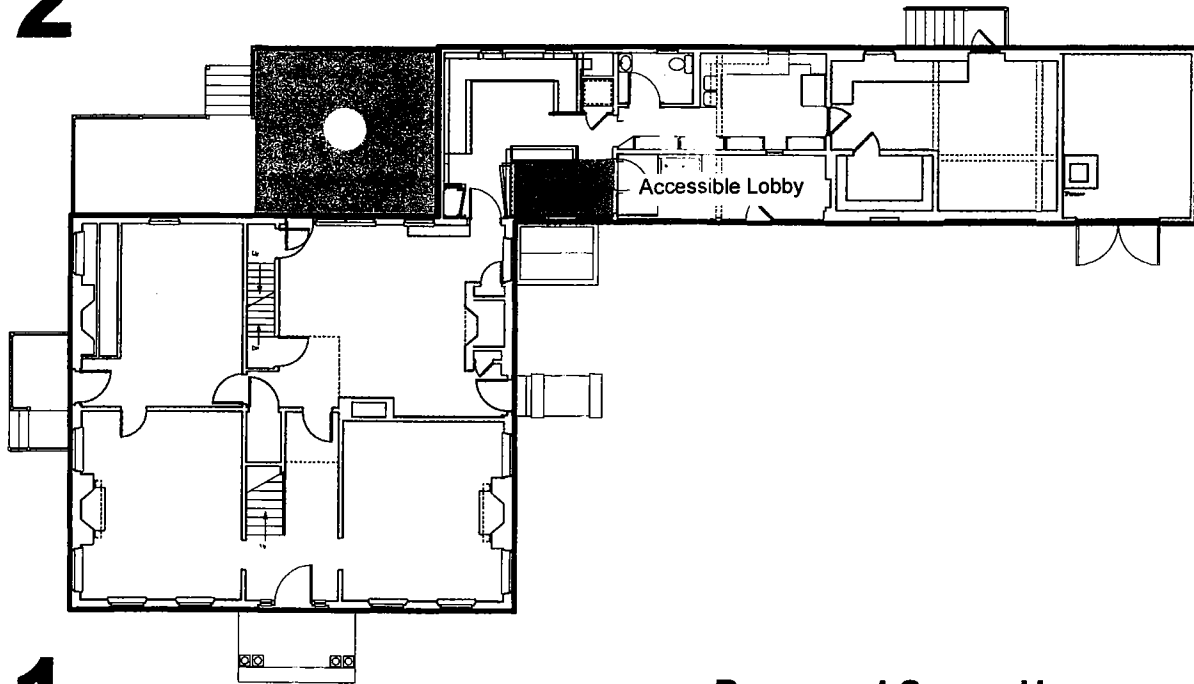
-  MEETING
-  EDUCATIONAL
-  EXHIBIT
-  STAFF
-  ARCHIVE
-  COLLECTIONS STORAGE

B

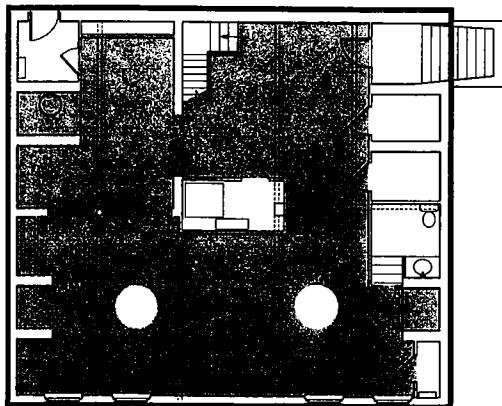


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







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Proposed Space Use

LEGEND

-  MEETING
-  EDUCATIONAL
-  EXHIBIT
-  STAFF
-  ARCHIVE
-  COLLECTIONS STORAGE

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NEWTON TAB

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At the Newton History Museum, curator Susan Abele retrieves a box of photographs in her office, which doubles as a library, storage and work room. PHOTO BY KATE FLOCK

TOO MUCH HISTORY

By Bernie Smith
STAFF WRITER

The Newton History Museum collects artifacts from various eras in American history. In the coming years, it will have to tackle the final frontier: space.

While the museum continues to receive donations every year, the available space in the Jackson Homestead, where it has been based since the city purchased the house in 1950, has remained constant. As a result, the rooms above and below the main exhibit areas on the first floor are crammed with objects — many of which have never been available for public viewing.

A tour of the museum's office spaces and work rooms, its attic and the tucked-away closets, reveals some hidden gems, as well as the cramped conditions. In one room, for instance, eight desks were stuffed into a small room, where at least six workers were busy typing away on computers.

A small room behind Director David Olson's office — a room that may have once served as a miniature bathroom — was converted into a work room where exhibits are put together before being displayed. Many of the museum's unframed paintings and



Museum Director David Olson and Curator Susan Abele review recent donations in a room used for cataloging and storage.

maps are stored in the long, wide, but shallow drawers underneath the room's worktable.

Old candlesticks and miniature figurines

of silver, pewter and brass — some dating back to the 17th century — are stuffed into drawers opposite the landing where stairs

MUSEUM, page 11

Space a premium at Jackson Homestead

MUSEUM, from page 1

lead to the house's attic. Between the rafters on that staircase are rows and rows of large, framed paintings.

The attic itself, which is neither heated nor air conditioned, is limited in what it can store, but there is a treasure trove of old China sets, precious porcelain objects, rows of glassware items, as well as items that are more difficult to categorize, such as an 18th-century tin reflecting oven and spit, decades- and century-old children's sleds and a Civil War-era bas relief sculpted by renowned artist Darius Cobb.

Tucked away behind the museum's gift shop on the first floor is curator Susan Abele's office, where the museum stores most of its two-dimensional objects: maps, old photographs and other documents. It is here where one can look up how much the city's budget was in 1898 (\$2.7 million) or how much the superintendent was paid then (\$3,699.22 a year).

The museum is in the process of cataloging everything in its collection, including all 11,500 three-dimensional objects, as well as thousands of old maps, photographs and other documents. With the help of a three-year grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent federal agency that supports museums and libraries, the Newton History Museum was able to hire a professional curator, Eleanor Mish, to research and compose a detailed description of many items in the



STAFF PHOTO BY KATE FLOCK

Shella Sibley, curator for objects and education at the Newton History Museum, works with a school group on May 11.

“The museum is also looking into how and where it can expand.”

collection into a giant database.

So far, all but 300 of the three-dimensional objects are entered with at least a name and brief description, and more than 6,000 items have complete descriptions. But with Mish's grant set to expire

at the end of June, Olson said that project will be significantly scaled back.

The museum is also looking into how and where it can expand. It recently hired a Watertown architect firm, Solomon and Bauer, to determine its spacing, furniture, electrical, and heating and humidity needs are for the next 20 years. But Olson concedes plans to open a second branch of the museum are a long way off.

For more information on membership, upcoming programs and exhibits, call 617-796-1450 or

visit the Newton History Museum online at www.newtonhistorymuseum.org.

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