

Peter Gittleman

7 Mount Vernon Terrace

Newton, MA 02465

617-964-8979

November 28, 2009

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

Dear Community Preservation Committee Members,

I am writing to you in strong support of the proposal submitted by Historic Newton for a collections storage facility to be located in the Craft Street Stables. As a member of the Historic Newton Museum Council and Education Committee, I have seen the museum storage that is currently available at the Jackson Homestead and it is inadequate for the size and quality of the collection. Much of it is packed away in spaces with poor environmental conditions that put the objects at risk and make it nearly inaccessible to the public. The artifact collection is at the heart of the public mission of the organization and the objects are deteriorating at an unnecessarily rapid rate due to their being stored in places that are excessively hot in the summer, freezing cold in the winter, and reach humidity levels that are damaging to objects and yet ideal environments for bugs and other pests. In addition, the lack of adequate storage makes it very difficult for Historic Newton to continue collecting in order to maintain a collection that reflects the ever-changing makeup of the city's population.

As the manager of thirty-six historic house museums for Historic New England, a regional heritage organization headquartered in Boston, I regularly witness the power of the three-dimensional collection; it is through these objects that the museum visitor is most engaged. Whether through formal exhibitions, school program displays, printed and web publications, or public programs, the objects in any museum's collection are central to its ability to reach the public. I urge you to support this request for an improved collections storage facility so that the people of Newton can continue to rely on Historic Newton to preserve of the city's history through its material culture.

Sincerely,



Peter Gittleman

Newton resident and
Visitor Experience Team Leader for Historic New England, Boston

Russel Feldman
85 Langley Road
Newton, MA 02459
November 19, 2009

Community Preservation Committee
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton Centre, MA 02459

RE: Historic Newton Object Collection Preservation and Access Project

Dear Ms. Grissom and Members of the Community Preservation Committee:

I am writing to strongly encourage you to approve Historic Newton's application to study the use of part of the Crafts Street Stable for our Museum's archive storage and management.

This proposed project serves two critical purposes:

- Proper custody of collections. Currently, much of our collections fill the rooms, attic and enclosed unheated storage areas of The Jackson Homestead. These spaces do not have proper temperature and humidity control to preserve and protect our collections. Also, our collections are so overcrowded that our curators do not have proper access to much of the material.
- Free up the space currently used for collections storage for reuse as staff offices and workshops.

You have recently and very generously supported our Archives expansion and entrance improvements to the Jackson Homestead. Our institutional master plan includes reorganizing our operations within our Museum to make better use of this splendid structure, including reorganizing our second floor area for staff offices and public workshops. Historic Newton's capital campaign includes funds for this renovation, as well as additional public meeting spaces on the first floor.

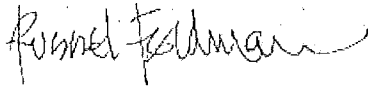
But in order to accomplish these plans, we need to relocate collections storage out of the building. We believe the Crafts Street Stable can house a safe and secure facility to store and manage our collections. It is near to the Jackson Homestead and would make use of an underutilized City structure for a valuable public institution. The proposed study before you would consider this in specific detail and establish the scope and cost of such a project.

I currently serve on both Historic Newton's Collections Committee and its Building & Grounds Committee. I am a practicing architect and have visited the Stables to consider this reuse. From these perspectives I can report that this proposal represents an excellent opportunity to improve collections storage and management. I am also a Trustee of the Homestead and former president of the Historical Society. I believe the planned reuse of the Homestead that this project would allow will significantly improve our staff's ability to serve the public.

Thank you for the substantial support you have so recently provided for our Archives as well as your critical contributions for our other initiatives. We come before you again because Historic Newton is a vital organization, one that is growing in its scope, professionalism and contribution to our community.

I believe that this proposal strongly merits your further support. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronnel Feldman". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Duscha Weisskopf
20 Bartlett Terrace
Newton Centre, 02459

Dear Members of the Community Preservation Committee,

As a former director of the Jackson Homestead, I would like to support this project in the strongest possible terms. The storage of our collections has been a major problem since the 1970s.

It is no exaggeration on my part to say that every possible space in the Jackson Homestead has been put to use for collection storage. That means that by definition much of the storage is sub-par. Valuable items relating to Newton's past were put in the attic and into every closet available. Rare paintings are stored on the walls of the back stairs, which are used daily by the staff to get to their offices. Some of the collection material is stored on shelves in a closet and a ladder must be used to reach them,

When the Jackson Homestead was accredited by the American Association of Museums in 1992 to my great satisfaction (supposedly we were the smallest museum accredited at that time) the reviewers commented on our lack of space - and that was almost twenty years ago. The fact that the Homestead is recognized as having been a station on the Underground Railroad brings many visitors from all over Massachusetts and other states, and the fact that it is very difficult to accommodate them because of storage problems is not only an embarrassment but prevents the excellent staff from allowing visitors to profit from their knowledge.

The space at the City Stables would truly be "a very present help in time of trouble". It is close to the Homestead, the space is wide open and can be made to fit our needs. I earnestly ask you to take this solution into consideration. The Jackson Homestead collections represent a treasure: they ARE Newton's past, and to store them as inadequately as has been the case in the past is simply not responsible. Thank you very much in advance for giving this your attention.

Sincerely,

Duscha Scott Weisskopf

Duscha S. Weisskopf
Director from 1979 to 1994