

Project Abstract:

A significant portion of the artifacts that comprise Easton's cultural heritage are personal documents and possessions of the families that make up our community. Through this grant, the Ames Free Library will run a day long digitization event in conjunction with many community partners to educate our community members on best practices to preserve their cultural treasures for successive generations, promote cultural exchange and foster a shared community identity. By adopting Digital Public Library of America standards and using Digital Commonwealth as a repository, we can ensure valuable cultural history is easily accessible to communities nationally. Several programs augmenting the digitization event will take place following the initial event and will explore in more depth the cultural histories within our community through curated collections, lectures, walking tours of historical landmarks, expert guests, film viewings and oral history events.

Narrative

A. What is the significance of this event to the community's members and its cultural institutions?

With assistance from this grant, the Ames Free Library will provide a public space for community members to share their personal and family histories in the larger context of our shared community history. With NEH's help, we have the opportunity to ensure an open record of our history for future generations, to preserve our valuable community heritage against the ravages of time, and create a community cultural history repository available to all. We will inform and educate community members on the importance of preserving personal family heritage and the necessity of resident participation in forming community culture and identity. By highlighting the concept of community heritage and the personal connections between all members of the community, we hope to promote intergenerational collaboration and communication and foster bonds between community members.

First incorporated in 1725, Easton has a long history that shapes our community identity to this day. The town boasts many historic structures, including Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, The Old Colony Railroad Station, the Ames Gate Lodge, the F.L. Ames Gardener's Cottage and Ames Free Library which are designed by famed architect H.H. Richardson. The Richardson-designed Old Colony Railroad Station houses the Easton Historical Society, whose members generously offer their historical expertise and vast store of knowledge to the community. These long-time collaborators with the library are an integral partner in this endeavor.

Of all the families that have settled here, the Ames family is arguably the most influential in Easton's history. Notable family members include Oakes Ames, a key figure in the Crédit Mobilier of America scandal, and Oliver Ames, governor of Massachusetts from 1887-1890. Through the years, the Ames Family has shaped Easton's economy and landscape, being responsible for the presence of our five H.H. Richardson designed buildings. Ames family members still reside in Easton, playing an active role in the community. Ames family members have voiced their strong support for this endeavor and personal collections of documents, photographs, paintings, books, and other historical objects of note will be made available for digitization through their generosity. But they aren't the only family in town. Many residents can trace their line back to the original families that settled here or the many families that worked in the Ames Shovel Works. Each descendant is a source of family heritage intrinsic to our shared histories. These incredible items and colorful histories are worth preserving and sharing with the world, but people are often unaware of the importance of such materials in their possession. Having a community event such as this, we can ensure that family histories are preserved and shared.

The official motto of the Ames Free Library is "Where the community connects," and distilled down to the bare essence of things, that is precisely what this grant will enable; the nurturing of

community connections from generations past to those here in the present and moving forward into Easton's future.

B. What arrangements need to be made to digitize the public's cultural heritage materials, to get information for the metadata describing each item, and to provide access to the digital copies?

Through technology acquisition and training, with the expert advice of our digitization consultant and the Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials, created by the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative, we will purchase technologies that are capable of digitizing a variety of material formats. Prior to any public event, staff involved in digitization and metadata collection efforts will be subject to training on the various devices that will be used, the appropriate means of handling materials and the collection of metadata. The Ames Free Library will be able to digitize photographs, negatives, documents, books and other bound items and create digital records for physical items.

In order to ensure high standards are met, we will adhere to metadata standards used by Digital Public Library of America with the intent of making all records available to the broadest range of possible individuals. With the advice of Tom Blake, Digital Projects Manager of the Boston Public Library, we have selected the well supported and well documented library descriptive schema, MARC, AACR2 content standards, and LCSH authorized vocabulary. By adopting these standards and schema, we can ensure records maintain the high level of standards necessary for participation in the Digital Public Library of America through our local Service Hub, Digital Commonwealth. These standards will provide a superior means of documenting the metadata of these precious heritage items. In the interest of fair and open use and in adherence to DPLA digital item standards, all digitized item metadata will be made available under a Creative Commons 0 license.

For all participants who bring items for digitization, copies will be provided via USB drive. Any digital record to be shared will require collection of appropriate metadata from the item holder as well as signed consent and deed of gift forms. If an individual is unable to give sufficient data for a MARC record but consents to use of the digital record, the Easton Historical Society will labor to ascertain additional needed information at a later time. Individuals that decline to consent to our use of digital records will still be provided digital copies via USB drive and the original digital record will be expunged from our systems.

Once all digital items, their metadata, and corresponding consent forms have been collected and reviewed, they will be submitted to our local DPLA Service Hub, Digital Commonwealth, at the Boston Public Library for direct ingestion into their repository system. Duplicate copies of all digital records and corresponding consent forms will be stored locally on two external hard drives at the Ames Free Library for record redundancy.

All equipment purchased through this grant will be kept at the Ames Free Library and made available for use by the public during all open library hours and during regular free digitization and preservation classes and programs.

C. In digitizing and providing access to the public's historical materials, what plans will be in place to deal with intellectual property rights and the permissions process?

All digital records created during our Common Heritage Digitization Event will require both a signed consent form as well as a completed deed of gift in order for the Ames Free Library to retain and share a copy of the digital record. All participants who bring in family heritage items to be digitized on the day of the event will be provided upon entry a USB drive, these two forms, as well as a brief explanation of the Creative Commons 0 license, the purpose of the event, and how we intend to use the data we collect. At the time of digitization, the operative assisting the participant will review the forms, answer any questions that might arise, and collect completed forms at the time of metadata collection. In addition, our trained operatives will assess items to ensure no violation of intellectual property rights. Physical forms will be kept on file at the Ames Free Library, digitized and stored on two external hard drives for redundancy purposes. After the day long digitization event and prior to direct ingestion into the Digital Commonwealth repository, all digital records will be reviewed by a team from the Easton Historical Society with an eye for accuracy and potential intellectual property issues. Any records flagged by this review process will be held and investigated further. If it is determined that the item cannot be included in an open repository, all reasonable efforts will be made to notify the holder of the original object and the digital record will be excluded from ingestion into the repository.

D. What kind or kinds of public programming are proposed?

In support of our exploration of community heritage and preservation efforts we will offer several programs during the day long digitization and preservation kick-off. Additionally, several events throughout the months following the initial event are planned.

The Ames Free Library is fortunate to be situated in an area that contains several historically significant structures and locations within walking distance. Local historian and head of the Easton Genealogy Club, Ed Hands, will be leading multiple guided walking tours throughout the day sharing his knowledge of Easton's storied past while giving participants up close access to several buildings that have been intimately involved in Easton's history. Plans are also in place to provide an audio recording and tour map available for download via the Library's website for those who wish to perform a self-guided tour on their own time.

Another program on offer both on the initial digitization day and in encore events is entitled *Share Your History*. With assistance from the Easton Historical Society, who will provide expertise and historical knowledge, and Easton Community Access Television, who will air the program on their local cable access channel, community members will be invited to tell us the stories surrounding their family heritage items. Our experts will then provide additional information about a given item in the context of the town's collective history. All recorded

programs will be made available to stream on Easton Community Access Television's website and physical copies will be cataloged and added to the library's holdings for patron check-out.

The Ames Free Library will curate a revolving collection to be displayed at the library for the general public to enjoy. This revolving collection will consist primarily of items owned by individuals within the community with supplemental items being borrowed from the Easton Historical Society. Included with the items on display will be information cards explaining their story and QR codes linking to the corresponding digital records found in the repository.

We intend to host a program about basic preservation with speaker Gregor Trinkaus-Randall. Currently the Preservation Specialist at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and member of several archivist organizations including the Society of American Archivists and the New England Archivists, Mr. Trinkaus-Randall is a leader in the field of preservation and his writings on this subject has been extensively published.

Additional programming and film screenings will be implemented after the initial event, the content of which will be dictated by the materials community members bring to the day of digitization. All programs will share a focus on the importance of individual family heritage materials and their preservation and the broader community heritage we all share in Easton.

E. What is the plan of work for the project?

With the disbursement of funds, the project director and the Digitization Consultant will purchase digitization equipment and preservation materials, allowing a period of two weeks to complete. This time frame includes determining appropriate technologies, purchasing them, receiving shipped items, installing these technologies and testing their functions. After completion, the program director and digitization adviser will oversee training of Historical Society volunteers and library staff in the use of machinery and handling of heritage items. In the three months leading up to the event, library assistants will ensure advertisements are sent out through the library's weekly newsletter, press releases to local newspapers, announcements on the Ames Free Library's website and Easton Historical Society's website, and on local cable access channels. Posters designed by the library's graphic designer will be distributed to all public boards throughout Easton, to Easton Public Schools, Town Hall, and displayed at the many organizations and businesses the Ames Free Library has a relationship with. Refresher training on proper material handling and equipment use will be given one week prior to the event. One final test of equipment and event set up will take place the day before the event, taking an estimated 5 hours to complete with the combined efforts of the program director and library assistants.

The event will take place in June of 2016. A shuttle operated by the Easton Council on Aging will provide free transit service to the Ames Free Library several times throughout the day to ensure traditionally underserved and elderly persons can participate in this community event. Library assistants and volunteers from the Easton Historical Society will greet incoming

community members and direct them to points of interest. Every participant will be provided a printed summary of the event and a schedule of the day. Attendees can then sign up for a walking tour, spend time in our film screening room, record a brief oral history about their life or family history and digitize their family heritage items. While supplies last, participants will be given a preservation kit consisting of common preservation tools and enclosures such as stablo pencils, preservation enclosures and cotton gloves as well as a best practices preservation guide. Digitization of photos, negatives, physical items, documents and bound items will occur in a dedicated room and be overseen by the project's digitization advisor. Trained volunteers comprising of Easton Historical Society members and archive students from the Simmons College Library Science Program will provide a consent form and deed of gift to each individual wishing to digitize heritage items. Special attention will be given to ensure all participants are aware sharing of their heritage item records is completely voluntary and not required to have their items processed and receive digital copies. Volunteers will then collect appropriate metadata and digitize items. Once digitized, records will be stored on a USB drive and given to the item holder. If consent was not given, no other copy will be made. If consent is received, a copy of the digital record will be saved to local storage devices for inclusion in the repository. A recording space will be established in order to record oral histories from the community. An audio engineer from Easton Community Access Television will supervise. Individuals will also be able to share the stories of their family heritage items in a dedicated room and, with the help of Easton Historical Society members, gain further insight into the story of their possessions. With the permission of participants, these exchanges will be recorded by Easton Community Access Television, aired on community access television, uploaded to the Ames Free Library website, and physical copies will be made available for check out at the library.

After the event has concluded, Historical Society members and library staff will review collected digital records and documents of permission to determine if each item is appropriate for inclusion in the Digital Commonwealth repository. We are allotting 3 months for this process with the understanding that the number of records we acquire may increase or decrease the time it takes for review based on volume. Upon completion of a thorough review, all digital records that have been determined to not violate intellectual property rights and have collected the necessary minimum amount of metadata will be submitted to the DPLA local service hub, Digital Commonwealth, for direct ingestion into their repository. Notices will be prominently displayed in library advertisements, publications and websites once items are available for viewing in the repository by the public.

Additional organized digitization activities run by library staff will occur on a monthly basis. These programs will be free and open to all. All equipment acquired through this grant will be made available to the public to use proceeding the organized event. All programs occurring after the initial event will be organized by the project director with the assistance of the library's programming coordinator. It is the intent of the Ames Free Library to make community digitization and preservation efforts a major focus of library programming as we move forward and the equipment acquired through this grant will ensure our community members have fair and open access to the tools necessary for this important endeavor.