

Alison Kisselgof

From: Carolyn Stoeber <cstoeber@chilmarkma.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 15, 2024 1:52 PM
To: cstoeber@chilmarkma.gov; 'Alison Kisselgof'
Subject: Environmental controls in the vault?

(queued up in January 2024 to review when there is plenty of time to consider the project before FY 26 applications are due – Oct 2024)

Allison,

- 1) Would the historical commission like to pursue CPA funding to ensure the appropriate environment for storage in the vault? Are there any records/documents in particular that need special attention for preserving (like the City of Columbus Bible)? (see below)
- 2) Would the historical commission be interested in a joint project with the cemetery commission to preserve any group of documents (ex: Plot Leases?) associated with the cemetery that might be considered historic by the commission for historic research purposes?

Thanks

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Reference information:

...the Society of American Archivists defines the term “historic” as “noteworthy among past events or old things” and goes on to note that the term “historic” connotes significance, whereas “historical” implies nothing more than age.

To determine significance of documents commissions can refer generally to the National Register Criteria: Is the document associated with a significant event or person? Does it have distinctive characteristics or yield important information?

It is important to remember that, per MGL c.44B Section 6, “The community preservation funds shall not replace existing operating funds, only augment them.” You’ll want to be careful that you are not using CPA funds to pay for expenditures or staff that are included in the municipality’s general budget, as you would be in violation of Section 6. Nor can you pay for a municipality’s records retention efforts by the Town Clerk. Long before CPA, the state set standards for retention of contemporary municipal records, and those expenses are the responsibility of the general fund of a city or town.

First Ensure a Quality Storage Environment

Before a community considers funding the preservation of individual documents, it should first ensure that the quality and environment of the storage area and containers meet archival standards. Appropriate environmental controls in the records’ storage areas are generally considered the most cost-efficient preservation step that can be taken for a large quantity of records. Furthermore, it does no good to spend funds on conservation work only to return the documents to conditions which would continue the deterioration of the materials.

Additionally, for document preservation as with any type of CPA project, it is wise to determine the level of need for the project – for example, what condition are the documents in and what is their level of risk for deterioration?

Project Example: Mendon Preserves the Declaration of Independence

As reported by the **Milford Daily News in March 2009**, Mendon Town Meeting approved the appropriation of \$80,000 of CPA funds to resolve humidity and drainage problems in the vault where records, which date to the 17th century and include a copy of the Declaration of Independence, are stored. The photograph on the left shows Mendon’s copy of the Declaration of Independence. Peter Denton of Mendon’s Community Preservation Committee explains that he was glad to support the project because there was a clear need to remove the mold and stop the deterioration of the pages. “If they continue to get moldy they will be unreadable,” said Mr. Denton.

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