

Town of Orleans Community Preservation Act Application 2027

The Centers for Culture and History in Orleans (CHO) a.k.a. The Orleans Historical Society request \$50,000 to continue the work of the CHO Historic Collections Archive Project.

I. DETAILED NARRATIVE

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Since the CHO's founding in 1958, it has been the main repository for Orleans' historical documents, photographs, recordings and objects. In the past ten years there has been significant restoration work completed on the Meetinghouse and the Hurd Chapel. During the restoration projects, the entire historical collection has been moved several times. The collection has now been safely relocated to the new Hurd Chapel Archive. While digital records of many items in the collection have been done, others need to be updated to reflect their current condition and locations. In addition, many new items have been added to the collection (or are coming to the CHO soon, that need to be catalogued and preserved. Many of these items also need to be re-packaged with archival materials. It is planned that the work will be accomplished by skilled professional archivists augmented by the CHO's dedicated volunteers. This grant request will enable the CHO to build on the previous work of documenting and preserving this important collection of historic artifacts ensuring its availability for generations to come—eventually online.

B. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND PUBLIC BENEFITS

With over 6,000 items in its collection, the CHO is one of Orleans' largest and most trusted repositories of cultural artifacts, historic photographs and archival records. Most of the collection is preserved in the Hurd Chapel, and many are displayed in the 1834 Meetinghouse. Both the Meetinghouse and the CG36500 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We strive to broaden awareness and access to Orleans' history and heritage through the study and exhibition of our collection in an environment that is pleasant, inspiring and accessible to all.

The **VISION** of the CHO is to bring history and culture to life, thus inspiring a shared sense of community and pride in the rich heritage of Orleans. Our **MISSION** is to provide community gathering places for sharing history and culture of the area through education, events, exhibitions and programs that tell stories of its heritage and preservation for the enjoyment and discovery of residents and visitors. Essential to this public dissemination of our shared culture and history is the preservation of the buildings, the CG36500, and all of the artifacts, documents and images in our collection.

According to the Community Preservation Project Application, Guidelines for Project Submission, eligible projects must address one or more of the uses outlined in the Community Preservation Act. We are applying under the Historic Preservation category as our project includes the preservation, accessibility and restoration of the important items in the CHO Collection.

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In addition, this project satisfies requirements per the following:

As stated by the Community Preservation Coalition, November 2002, in the Potential Uses of CPA Funds, funds may be used for preservation of items that “*are significant in the history, architecture, and culture of the town.*”

The Orleans Comprehensive Plan (OCP), Section 12.2, Historic Preservation and Community

Character, Goals & Policies outlines the Goals as: *"To preserve the important historic and cultural features of the Cape landscape and built environment that are critical components of Orleans' heritage and economy" (Page 12-1). "To ensure that future development and redevelopment respect the traditions and character of our historic village centers and outlying rural areas so as to protect the visual character of Orleans consistent with the Cape Cod Commission's Design Manual "Designing the Future to Honor the Past" (Technical Bulletin 96-001) (page 12-2).* The project we are proposing incorporates these Goals. In addition, the OCP identifies the Orleans Historical Society as a resource in Section 12.4.2 under Existing Levels of Protection. (Page 12.11)

Orleans is valued for its small-town nature, coastal location and historic significance. The Meetinghouse Site embodies what the town represents. With the Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel now renovated, we feel it is in the best interests of the community that we continue our preservation efforts on the more than 6,000 items in the CHO Collection with the long-range goal of making items searchable online.

C. PROJECT HISTORY

In 2021, the CHO received a grant from the Massachusetts State Historical Advisory Board (SHRAB) for their Roving Archivist services. The 25-page report that was sent after the visit helped us understand better how to approach the massive re-organization project.

By identifying specific elements within the collection, we have been successful in obtaining grants to work on those sub collections. We have received grants from the Orleans Cultural District (\$1000) for a survey of the Sea Call Farm collection and SHRAB (\$300) for archival supplies we needed for Sea Call Farm, Camp Quanset and our postcard collection. Currently we are applying for a grant from the Cape Cod Antique Dealers Association (\$1000) for digitizing parts of Mr. Fiske's (Sea Call Farm) journals and cataloging dozens of newly found photos.

In the past three years, with the help of a 2021 CPC grant in the amount of \$56,000 and hundreds of volunteer hours, the CHO'S collection has been safely relocated to the Hurd Chapel Archive. The collection is now organized and stored in a clean, stable environment.

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Before the move to the Hurd Chapel



Hurd Chapel Archive after the move

The work accomplished during the process of moving and re-organization has included:

- Categorizing 400 plus banker boxes
- Completing a survey of each box to understand the scope of the items in the collection
- Creating a display of nearly 200 objects in the Archive on felt lined shelves
- Designing and building storage racks to hold hand tools, farm implements, swords, and household tools, allowing them to be stored safely and displayed
- Building frame storage racks for ease of access for over 68 framed pieces
- Updating location records of over 2600 items
- Photographing hundreds of objects and adding them to their record into database
- Identifying boxes of items that need to be accessioned, photographed, and archivally housed



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II. ACTION PLAN, FINANCIAL DATA AND TIMELINE

DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

The CHO's collection is located in several places. The Hurd Chapel Archive contains the bulk of the collection, two off-site storage units house oversized objects, and the Meetinghouse has *[we should not imply that the boat contains items from our collection]* historic items readily available for public view.

The Hurd Chapel Archive has 427 boxes of artifacts on 126 shelves, most 46" wide. That number does not include framed items, items on display or large pieces in off-site storage. Nor does it reflect the Many Sea Call Farm documents, photos and other artifacts to come

Those 427 boxes contain ship's logs, deeds, letters, and ephemera in scrapbooks—some over 200 years old. There are glass plate negatives chronicling life in 1890 Orleans alongside voice recordings of the stories of people who remember Orleans in the 1920s. Photographs of Orleans High School's various sports teams, field trips, and classrooms help us understand what it was like to grow up here long ago. School report cards, early schoolbooks, and diplomas also give us a peek at life here for young people. Camp Quanset History is well represented with photos, horse ribbons, yearbooks, uniforms, pennants, postcards, pins and even a cereal bowl! There are textile boxes full of christening gowns, military and sports uniforms, flags, gloves, handkerchiefs and dresses. Diaries from Sea Call Farm have numerous references to farming and include the excitement of traveling from Hartford to Orleans by train. The 1918 torpedo attack is documented with photos, clippings, letters, and actual pieces of the tugboat, *Perth Amboy*. Items from authors Margaret Stanger and Gladys Taber, including manuscripts, ephemera, and a taxidermized quail are in the archive. Local industry, from fishing and the saltworks, to the Pants Factory and the railroad, is also well documented in old accounting books, menus, fishing gear, postcards, ashtrays, farming equipment, toys, ship models and family Bibles.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

After the reorganization and survey of the collection in the new Hurd Chapel archive, we are prepared to expand and prioritize the next steps in our goal of creating a thorough catalog of the collection. Ideally, each artifact would be accessioned individually, and all items would have rich, searchable keywords and complete data according to professional museum standards. However, while we want to be thorough, we need to keep in mind a level of organization that will be practical in terms of time and money.

In this process of moving and reorganizing, we have identified these areas to focus on next:

1. To make the most effective use of our database, we need trained professionals to update the lexicon, collection, and status fields. This work will help to optimize the search function of the database. The lexicon used is a museum standard used by museums around the world.

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The lexicon field allows us to search similar categories within a collection. For example, if you were curating an exhibit with various armaments, you could search for them using the lexicon field. Without it you would have to search for every armament by name to find them (sword, rifle, bayonet, spear, pistol, etc.) Aside from being time-consuming, you would likely miss related items like a musket ball or a crossbow.

The collection field allows customization of the greater collection by breaking things down into subsets of collections. For example, collection names for the CHO could be Margaret Stanger, Summer Camps, Ship's Logs or U-boat Attack - topics that the public generally wants to see. It allows researcher's requests to be answered quickly and accurately.

2. The contents of 139 boxes and 52 books, scrapbooks, and binders still need to be inventoried, and their new locations need to be noted.

We have designed a simple shelf identification system within the Hurd Chapel that was not possible when the collection was stored in the Meetinghouse. Since it is all brand new, these new shelf locations need to be added to the record of every artifact.

For example, suppose a student is researching the Howard Johnson's restaurant. The database shows there are 32 items relating to HoJo's. A coin bank is of interest. If the location field has been updated, the student will be able to find the exact location of the coin bank: Hurd Chapel Archive, Unit VII, section E, shelf 3 in HC Artifact Box 18. Bingo!

On the other hand, if the location fields are not updated, our student researcher may run into problems. Suppose the database shows there are some oral histories by people who worked at HoJo's in the early years. However, the histories' location is listed as Balcony Closet, and since that location no longer holds the archives, our student now has to look through over 200 boxes to try to locate it.

3. Many items in the collection need re-packing with archival materials to ensure their longevity. Antique books, for example, require protection that preserves the books while preventing them from damaging other items.



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4. A strict protocol needs to be developed and instituted before bringing in volunteers to work on the database. Archivists familiar with our database would be best to develop those procedures.

PROJECT GOALS

Ensure the capability to find all items in the collection when needed

In order for the collection to be used for research, exhibits, loans and the public's education and enjoyment, we need to be able to search the database and efficiently locate the appropriate artifacts. By updating specific fields, the database will be significantly more "searchable" enabling the CHO to access the full history desired.

Store artifacts archivally to help ensure their preservation

Re-housing can be as simple as placing interleaving paper in between photographs or as time-consuming as creating custom enclosures for important fragile documents and books. Once done properly, it will last for years in a space like the Hurd Chapel Archive.

Develop a realistic protocol for accessioning items into the database

Databases are only as effective as the information added to them. Developing a strict protocol and following it is critical. A well-managed database will enable the user to not only find the location of an object, but learn who donated it, how it relates to the Town, how old it is, and anything else that was known when it was acquired.

IMPORTANCE TO THE PUBLIC

Having a shared history of living in the same place creates community on its own. The old timer's response to the question, "Where is the CVS on Main Street?" is "Where the movie theater used to be." Nowadays you might hear, "Where's the Cape Cod Five?" with the reply, "It's where the hardware store was before it moved to where Christmas Tree Shop used to be." These kinds of interactions are indicative of the length of time a person has lived in a place. They make us recall a former time, churning up all kinds of memories of people and places from our collective past. However, many of us are washashores, for whom finding community takes work. Helping people who are relatively new to the area to get to know the history of Orleans gives them context with which to explore this new place. Without this context, there is no sense of place or shared identity—washashore or not.

This wonderful collection can help us understand the struggles and successes of people who have lived here. The stories in these archives tell the history of the town in a way that is relatable to us

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today, informing us about the side of history we never learned in school. For example, most people here know of the 1918 attack by a German submarine. They may have seen the photos of the tugboat *Perth Amboy* and ten-year-old Jack Ainsley with the American flag. Did they know Jack was living with his family on a barge? Did they know his mother homeschooled him? These little tidbits of history entice us to learn more.

The CHO's collection, spanning more than 200 years, is an invaluable record of our town's history. Preserving this legacy is our collective responsibility. Increasing the accessibility of the collection through the database will not only be invaluable to the CHO's curators, but also to researchers, educators, and the general public.

FUTURE COLLECTION ACQUISITIONS

Funding this grant will also help us to begin to build effective collaborations within the Orleans historical community. Having an efficient way to access all of the collection will allow us to create exhibits that can be shared and cross-promoted with exhibits at Snow Library, the French Cable Station Museum, and Orleans Elementary, giving us all better exposure and more compelling historical stories to share.

In addition, there are opportunities to expand the collection. The recent acquisition of the Sea Farm Supporters documents is a good example. The essays, letters, journals and photos had been stored in two places. The Orleans Historical Society (CHO) had the journals, with some photos and papers stored in the Hurd Chapel archive, but there was a substantial amount of material held by Sea Call Farm Supporters. Speaking with people from the original Sea Call Farm Supporters, the Orleans Cultural District Committee, and from the CHO, it was agreed that this historically significant material should be properly cataloged, digitally scanned and stored archivally in one place, the Hurd Chapel. We are aware of several other such archives that should be preserved in this manner. This grant will position the CHO to incorporate additional collections and make them accessible to the public for generations to come.

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BUDGET

Inventory 192 boxes & record in database:

	# OF Boxes	# Hrs per box	Total Hours	Cost*
Boxes, document, bankers, & custom/textile	124	5.75	713	\$35,650
Booklets, binders, scrapbooks, & antique books	52	0.5	26	\$1,300
Misc. boxes/wrappers	16	4.0	64	\$3,200
Total for Inventory/Location Work				\$40,150

Database Remediation

	# of Individual records	# Hours	Cost*
Collection List		3	\$150
Lexicon, collection, & status fields (5 min/record)	1217	101	\$5,050
Total for Database			\$5,200

Create Detailed Protocol

	# of Hours	Cost*
Create Detailed Protocol	20	\$1,000
Total to write detailed protocol		\$1,000

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Re-Housing

	Hours	Cost*
Books – 50 at 2/hour	25	\$1,250
Textiles – 45 boxes at 4 boxes/hour	12	\$600
Objects – 32 boxes at 2/hour	16	\$800
Photos interleaving papers – 9 boxes at 3/hour	3	\$150
Custom enclosures	4	\$200
Materials		\$650
Total Re-housing		\$3,650

Total Project Cost	\$50,000
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* Labor Cost is calculated at \$50/hour and is planned to be provided by Memento Preservation Services. The work will also be augmented (at no cost) by CHO experienced volunteers.

TIMELINE

Database remediation – collection, lexicon, and status
Re-housing, inventory and location notations
Creating detailed protocol for new acquisitions

July – August 2026
Sept 2026 – May 2027
June 2027

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Backup Materials

- Memento Preservation Services Background

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Memento Preservation Services
David and Meri Hartford
PO Box 1114, Orleans, MA 02653
MementoPreservation.com

PROJECTS

Rowland Scherman Archive

Cataloged and researched hundreds of photographs from this collection of thousands of historically significant photos. We selected, printed and framed 200 images and curated from this group various exhibits that traveled to 32 locations in New England, Alabama and Ohio. The organization of this material led to its inclusion in the Robert S. Cox Special Collection at UMass Amherst.

Gallery Reorganization

Reorganized a gallery workspace that was overfilled and neglected. Working in the retail space's back room and the basement, we built frame storage racks and shelving for framed art. Additionally we worked with the owner to create a space for them to wrap items for shipping, a workbench for framing, and an office/sales area that suited their workflow.

Scrapbook and Photo Album Restoration

Family albums and scrapbooks are painstakingly created to tell a story. When restoring them and transferring the photos and ephemera to a new archival book, we take care to preserve the order and any original handwriting on the pages. We scan the photos or pages for the client to have a digital copy. We have worked on a number of these projects.

French Cable Station Museum

This amazing historic building houses antique telegraphy equipment which at the time of our involvement had not been inventoried since the 1990's. We created a digital database using Musarch, with photos and descriptions of over 2500 artifacts. Once complete, we wrote a protocol for the cleaning and care of these specialized antique instruments. We are currently working on accessioning and digitizing the documents that have been saved from when the station was operational (1898 - 1959).

WWII Letters

Scanned and transcribed 205 handwritten letters from a U.S. Army Signal Corps officer in Hawaii. The letters were written to his soon-to-be-wife from 1944-1946. When complete, we returned the letters in labeled archival boxes organized by date and included the scans on a flash drive. We also printed a complete spiral bound book of the transcriptions with samples of the original letters included.

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The Centers for Culture and History in Orleans

We moved the bulk of their collection from a storage space to their new archive. Before moving the 430 boxes, 70 framed pieces, and dozens of hand tools, we made a detailed plan allowing for an organized archive. We built frame storage cabinets, racks for tools, and installed felt on metal shelving, customizing the space for the collection.

After moving the collection, we completed a survey of each box to determine its status, helping us to prioritize the next steps. Working with their database in Past Perfect, we began the process of updating existing records with new locations and adding photos and accessioning new items where needed.

Genealogy and Research

We routinely work with clients to decipher and record family histories using both real-world and digital research strategies. A research project on one client's family business required traveling to the Baker Library at Harvard and the New York Public Library to research and scan advertisements chronicling 100 years of company history. After scanning, we added keywords to the metadata allowing the client to sort the images.

Other services

Audio tape to digital conversion
Custom designed scrapbooks and memory books
Provenance Records/Sheets for artwork, furniture, jewelry, etc.
Website Design – a list of sites we have created are on our website

Background Information

We were owner/operators of a custom framing business specializing in archival framing and shadowboxes for 23 years. We have taken specialized classes and seminars in archival mounting techniques and framing as well as classes in creating custom enclosures for the preservation of paper, photos and books.