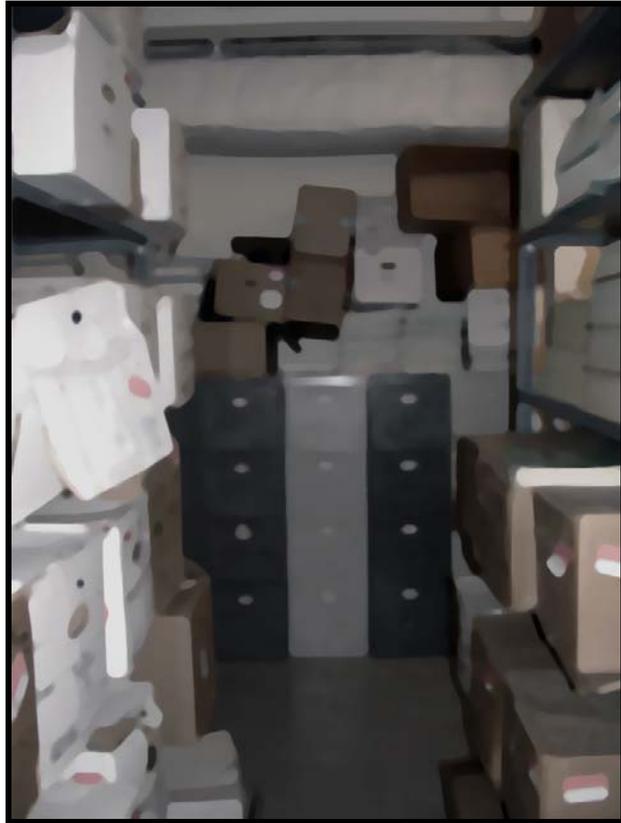


Town of Weston

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT



Submitted to the Weston Historical Commission

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HISTORICAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1791 the Massachusetts Historical Society, the first of its kind, was formed “to preserve the manuscripts of the present to the remotest ages of posterity.” (www.archivists.org/history.asp). It is time for Weston to do the same. Weston is not only the sum of its historical parts; it is itself a part of the larger American heritage.

Weston urgently needs a centralized repository for its historical manuscripts, documents, maps, and other archival materials. These items are currently scattered in town buildings, with no location records or ways to track them, in spaces with little or no environmental controls for preservation, and with very inadequate security. Benign neglect is taking its toll. The out-of-sight-out-of-mind approach to care for many of the materials is irresponsible and must be corrected.

The Historical Archives Committee recommends a phased plan beginning with collections known to have immediate needs for cataloguing, preservation, and increased public accessibility. Based on the experiences of other towns, a combination of virtual and physical archives makes sense for Weston and provides flexibility for future growth. It would also serve as a model to other communities grappling with similar issues.

Recent technological advances offer real solutions for digital archive catalogues to serve as record keeping and to make historically significant archives available online. (See for example www.nmrls.org/digital/commonwealth.) A professional archivist should be contracted as a consultant to supervise this phase of establishing the archives.

A centralized archives repository can be incorporated into renovation plans for the Old Library. A discrete, dedicated space can be fine-tuned to create a proper microclimate for long-term preservation of the materials stored there. When viewed in the context of renovations and building projects in Weston, it is a relatively small and manageable project - a worthy long-term investment with huge dividends.

A variety of funding sources – local, private, state, and federal – are available to offset costs of the centralized archives project. The Community Preservation Committee includes the Old Library in its plans for Community Preservation Act funds. Community Preservation Act funds can also be used for the establishment of a centralized archive repository. Many other towns have funded similar archival projects with CPA funds (see

www.communitypreservation.org). An example of private funding is the Sudbury Foundation (www.sudburyfoundation.org), which provided funding for Sudbury and Wayland to set up their virtual archives and may help fund Weston's initial start-up. State funding agencies include the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (<http://mblc.state.ma.us>), Massachusetts Cultural Council (<http://www.massculturalcouncil.org>), and Massachusetts Documentary Heritage Grant Program (www.sec.state.ma.us). Federal grants may be obtained from the Institute of Museums and Library Services (www.imls.gov) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (www.neh.gov).

To summarize, the Historical Archives Committee recommends the following:

- The Town of Weston needs to approve and provide a centralized archives repository in the Old Library.
- Funding should be obtained to hire a contract archivist to set up a digital system for cataloguing and processing the archives; a process that can be undertaken while the Old Library is renovated.
- An archivist/historian should be hired to install the historical archive collections of the Weston Historical Commission, Weston Historical Society, and pre-1870 Town Records into the centralized archives repository.
- Other archives will be accepted in the repository over time on a case-by-case basis.
- Weston will serve as a model to other towns in the management of historical archives collections.

HISTORICAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE REPORT

Introduction

Historical archives collect, preserve, protect and share the documents and memorabilia that represent who we are and what we do. They are a constantly changing record of our history, growth, and development, an invaluable piece of our cultural heritage. Archival materials include records, manuscripts, newspapers, diaries, photographs, letters, tapes, videos, and even computer data produced by individuals, organizations, and institutions. Historical archives can be anything from ancient hieroglyphs and cuneiform tablets to yesterday's jpegs and pdfs. Weston's historical archives range from the early 18th to 21st centuries.

The Historical Archives Committee (HAC) was formed in September 2005 to administer a grant-funded survey of three archive collections in Weston and to make recommendations to the Town for a plan of action for processing, preserving, cataloguing, and making Weston's historical archive collections available for public access. When formed, HAC was co-chaired by an archivist representing the Historical Commission and an art conservator representing the Weston Historical Society with two additional members: the Local History Room Librarian and the Assistant Town Clerk. Within a year, the archivist co-chair unfortunately moved out of Weston for professional reasons. To the committee's benefit, the Assistant to the Town Manager joined HAC in November 2006.

The Historical Archives Committee Report provides background information and recommendations for historical archives in Weston. The HAC short and long term recommendations are drawn from the consultant's archival survey and research into the establishment of a virtually and/or physically centralized, historical archives repository for Weston. Major issues in forming a centralized repository include collecting policies, organization, preservation, management, and resources.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A brief review and excerpts of the 2006 Report of the Archival Survey of Weston Town Clerk's Vault, Records Storage Room. Historical Commission, Historical Society, and the Public Library's Local History Room, by Scott Andrew Bartley is provided. The full report is attached as Appendix 1.

Information on Weston's archives and archives in other communities is also provided here to illustrate the complexities and challenges of historical archives collections.

Review of 2006 Archival Survey

In June 2005, the Weston Historical Commission received a \$5,000 grant from the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB) and Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin, to hire an archivist to survey Town records, the Weston Historical Commission archival materials and the Weston Historical Society archival materials. Archivist Scott Andrew ("Drew") Bartley, and his assistant Martin Hollick, were hired in September 2005. They performed the actual survey in November and December 2005; the report was received July 2006. It provides preliminary quantification of the various archive collections surveyed. The archivist informed us that a more detailed survey could not be performed due to the disorganized and inaccessible states of the collections – a kind of archival Catch-22. Town records in employees' offices and documents stored at the Cambridge Trust Company were not included in the survey. In addition to the archival materials that were surveyed, the archivist visited the Local History Room at the Town Library to assess the facility and review their 2004 survey. The archivist's "blink" reaction was that the space in the Local History Room could accommodate centralized, historical archives for the Town. However, for a number of reasons, this is not an option. The Local History Room serves as a ready reference of print and audiovisual materials (no artifacts or realia) that pertain to Weston's general history. These materials can be used by the public with the assistance of a librarian during library hours.

In general, the condition of the records and archival materials surveyed is described as very good. The excerpts below summarize the archivist's recommendations.

Immediate (within 6 months) priorities:

- *Remove all the obsolete computer equipment in the [Town Hall] basement. There are salvage places for them (like Earthworm Recycling), but it might cost to recycle. Contact the town computer vendor, too.*
- *Buy, donate, or discard the excessive published books found in the basement (the Weston local history books are also found in both parts of the Historical Collection).*
- *Start using standard record carton boxes and begin labeling these boxes as per my example in this report in accordance with the state retention schedule.*
- *Set a time, once a month, for department heads or appropriate staff to identify records already in the basement to reflect their retention schedule. It can be done a little at a time until all records in the entire basement storage area have been identified. Write the [Massachusetts State] Archives each month with a list of the records ready for disposal with the sample letter in the appendix. Buy a heavy duty paper shredder if the town does not yet own one and begin disposing of the obsolete records when the state approval letters are returned.*
- *Start a dialogue between the Weston Historical Commission and the Weston Historical Society to see if common ground can be found regarding their collections.*

Long-term goals are:

- *Separate the permanent records as identified in the retention schedules and all pre-1870 records mandated by the Commonwealth to be kept from the larger body of temporary records that will be stored in the basement.*
- *Identify the best place to store and make available these permanent records. If it is the town library, work with them on how that can best be achieved while not putting an undo strain on their staff and resources.*
- *Identify a secure environment and home for the manuscript part of the Historical Collection.*
- *Keep the artifacts of the Historical Collection in mind when the town implements its plan for the use of the Josiah Smith Tavern.*
- *Identify what permanent records have already been microfilmed and how best the town can continue that effort. The microfilm should be used first before any originals are brought out for a researcher. These microfilms can be added to the existing collection at the public library where copies can easily be made from the films.*
- *Develop a volunteer work force from the Historical Collection groups that will create detailed inventories and guides to the permanent records and Historical Collection.*
- *Seek funding for any of the projects above after outlining the course of action.*

After receiving his report, HAC met with Drew Bartley again to consult on issues specific to records management. This subsequent advice was incorporated into the HAC short-term recommendations. HAC also asked him to visit the Old Library to assess it as a possible site for a centralized, historical archives repository. His evaluation can be found under HAC long-term recommendations.

Archives in Weston and Other Communities

The archive collections in Weston can be divided into the following categories: town government (departments, boards, and committees), town organizations (museums, societies, associations, and clubs), and private collections. A quick look at www.weston.org shows 21 town departments and 32 town boards and committees. Town organizations include Weston Forest & Trail Association, Land's Sake, League of Women Voters, Friendly Society, Weston Historical Society, Women's Community League, Golden Ball Tavern, and First Parish Church. Examples of Weston individuals with private collections are Pam Fox and John Brooks. Each one of these groups has historical archive material and continues to generate and collect files – meeting minutes, press releases, events ephemera, historic items and the like - that are part of our town's unique history.

How then do we responsibly manage our archives? A look at what other communities are doing reveals that we are not alone in our dilemma. HAC investigated New England archive collections and found two excellent models in neighboring states. On the Connecticut shoreline, the town of Madison has an archive collection, the Charlotte L. Evarts Memorial Archives, Inc. (www.evartsarchives.org), housed in the old Town Hall. The private archives were begun by its first Town Historian, Charlotte L. Evarts, and depend on private contributions for operating expenses. In New Hampshire's Monadnock Region, the Peterborough Historical Society (www.peterboroughhistory.org) houses the Morison Library and Archives, the latter being primary source materials that allow the Peterborough Historical Society to provide a comprehensive resource on the town's past.

Looking to more immediate neighbors, the towns of Sudbury, Lexington, and Danvers have taken the initiative to establish archive collections. In Sudbury, the Library Director, the Reference Librarian, a historian/documentary editor, and a technology administrator, with funding from the Sudbury Foundation, worked together to create a virtual historical archives (www.sudbury.ma.us/archives) using Inmagic® *Content Server* system and Media Thinktank© web interface. The project began in 1991; the database followed in 1995 and includes records of the Town Clerk's office as well as archives from the Goodnow Library, Longfellow's Wayside Inn, the Sudbury Historical Society, and the Wayland Historical Society. The Lexington archives are maintained by the Lexington Historical Society (www.lexingtonhistory.org) at the 1738 Hancock-Clark House, where materials and photocopies are available with supervision and permission from museum staff. The Danvers Archival Center, a department of the Peabody Institute Library, is the oldest archival collection of the three nearby towns used for comparison by HAC. Conceived in 1970 as part of the Danvers Historical Commission Master Plan, the Archival Center (www.etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/collection.html) states that its purpose is to collect, centralize, protect, preserve, and make accessible a combination of public and private records from a single community. The collections on deposit include the holdings of the Danvers Historical Society, library, numerous churches and town organizations, and official records of the Town of Danvers (1790-1910).

Table 1 on the next page provides a comparison of these five archives. All are privately financed with the exception of Danvers, which is funded through the library. One has been set up as an independent entity, two through libraries, and two as part of local historical societies.

Table 1. Comparison of Town Archives

Town	Incorporated	Population	Archives
Madison, CT	1641–E. Guilford 1826 – Madison	18,643	www.evartsarchives.org private collection database with nearly 90,000 entries
Peterborough, NH	1760	6,073	www.peterboroughhistory.org private, Peterborough Historical Society
Sudbury, MA	1639	18,107	www.sudbury.ma.us/archives private, Goodnow Library database with approximately 15,000 records
Lexington, MA	1713	30,355	www.lexingtonhistory.org private, Lexington Historical Society
Danvers, MA	1752 – separate district from Salem	25,212	www.etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/collection.html centralized collections housed in the Peabody Institute Library
Weston, MA	1713	10,983	

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HISTORICAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Short-term recommendations focus on the needs of the three main collections surveyed by the contract archivist, Drew Bartley: Records Storage at Town Hall, the Historical Commission archival materials, and the Historical Society archival materials. The archivist's recommendations of immediate priorities were incorporated into the HAC short-term recommendations.

Long-term recommendations draw on the observations of the HAC, the archivist's recommendations, and the study of other communities with well-organized archives that could serve as models. A valuable resource for further development of a long-term plan was A Manual for Small Archives, available online at <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/msa>. Excerpts from Chapter 1, "Getting Started," are provided as Appendix 2 and their Glossary of Archival Terms is provided as Appendix 3.

Short-Term Recommendations

Today's records become tomorrow's archives. Of the three collections studied, the records in Town Hall are the largest and have the most immediate need for attention. The Town is fortunate to have a renovated facility in the basement of Town Hall, where access is limited, shelves are somewhat organized, and there is post-renovation, improved climate control. The archival materials of the Historical Commission are unfortunately divided between the Town Hall basement and a second floor room of the Josiah Smith Tavern. Even HAC had difficulty gaining access, which could be considered good security but means that the material cannot easily be monitored or made available for research. The Historical Society's archival materials are located on the first floor and second floors and attic of the Josiah Smith Tavern. While the more important archival materials are in the process of being organized and rehoused, it is hard to imagine worse conditions on the upper levels of the Tavern.

Town Hall Records Storage



Most Town records are stored in the Records Storage Room in the Town Hall basement, pictured above, with sections designated for different Town departments. Other records are in the Town Clerk's Vault, as well as in department offices and another basement storage area. For appropriate records management, the records should be categorized as 1) current or in-use, 2) temporary but useable, 3) permanent, and 4) historic value. The State mandates how long records must be kept and schedules when certain records should be impounded or destroyed. Appendix C of the archivist's report provides tables of retention schedules, which are also available on the State's web site (www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrmu/rmurds/rdsmds.htm). Ideally, a records manager (at least part-time) would be hired. At the very least, the archivist's report recommends that department heads or responsible staff set aside one day per month, with supervised volunteer labor, to record, track, and shred the records according to the retention schedule. The current and temporary files can be stored in acidic cardboard boxes; permanent and historic records should be stored in acid-free boxes. Standard size boxes would ease handling and processing and make better use of limited space. Back-up files of vital statistics and other permanent records need to be made, by microfilming or scanning the documents, and stored in a separate location. The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, which has a branch office at 150 Brown Street in Weston, has already copied Weston's vital statistics up to 1905, with a service, or second generation, copy provided to the Town and stored in the Clerk's office. (See www.lds.org and www.familysearch.org. This may be considered adequate back-up of those files.)

Organization in the basement storage area can get out of control as space becomes scarcer and time-pressured staff place things in whatever space can be found. Recently, the problem of obsolete computer equipment (below left) in Records Storage has been resolved and soon the engineer's files (below right) currently stored in a general store room across the hall will be moved into the Records Storage Room.



The environment in the Records Storage Room fluctuates from summer to winter. In the summer the humidity exceeds the recommended level of 45% despite two dehumidifiers running constantly. This has caused some cardboard boxes to weaken, collapse and spill contents out onto the floor. High humidity in closed, dark spaces also encourages growth of mold and mildew. In the winter, the humidity levels are much lower. Extreme fluctuations cause eventual damage to paper and leather-bound documents. The area should be monitored with a hygrometer to track changes in relative humidity throughout the year so that appropriate changes can be made to provide a stable, ideal environment of 45% RH and 65°F.

The archivist's report recommends separating the permanent records and pre-1870 records from the temporary records stored in the basement. These are the historical archives that should be moved to a centralized, historical archives repository. Much-needed space in basement storage would open up and the historical materials would be secure in a proper storage environment.

Weston Historical Commission



From the Town web site:

The Historical Commission is responsible for the preservation of the Town's historic and architectural heritage by recommending historical preservation projects to be funded from the Community Preservation Fund, reviewing applications for demolition of any pre-1945 buildings and requiring a 6-month delay of demolition if deemed appropriate

The Weston Historical Commission's focus on historic (over 50 years old) architecture generates records, maps, files, and restriction documents, some of which are required to be kept on file with the Commission. The Historical Commission's archive materials are currently stored in two locations: older documents are in a back corner of the Records Storage Room, pictured above, and files are located on the second floor of the Josiah Smith Tavern, pictured below. They are managed by a consultant to the Historical Commission working on a volunteer basis. Some of the documents are actively used. There are also non-archival materials in these areas that need to be sorted out and donated to the Historical Society or other appropriate repository.



The observed environmental problems and requirements for stabilization in the Records Storage Room are described above. The conditions in the Josiah Smith Tavern are far worse. The tavern went for several years without central heat, which was restored to the building in the fall of 2006. While some may argue that without central heat, as in the 18th century when the tavern was built, the gradual seasonal changes in temperature and humidity along with sub-freezing winter temperatures may provide better preservation than drastic fluctuations caused by central heating systems, current preservation standards aim for a stable, controlled environment throughout the year.

Of more immediate concern regarding the use of the Josiah Smith Tavern for storage of the Historical Commission's archival materials is its imminent phased renovation plan. The first phase targets the exterior and includes providing a new roof, repairing windows, and replacing rotted sills and footings. The materials stored in the Historical Commission's second floor room should be removed or at the very least packed up and moved away from the windows. Ideally, these materials would be moved to a centralized archives repository, where they could be kept secure, while still accessible, in a clean, secure, dedicated space and stable environment.

The Historical Commission should address the organizational needs of its archives, determine ownership, and begin the task of housecleaning, culling, reorganization, and rehousing. Once these tasks are performed, a better assessment of space needs and long-term preservation can be made.

According to the archivist's report, the Weston Historical Commission and the Weston Historical Society should begin a dialogue "to see if common ground can be found regarding their collections."

Weston Historical Society



The Weston Historical Society is a non-profit [501(c)3] organization incorporated in 1963 whose purpose is:

To gather, study, preserve, house, and make available for use the records, relics and memorabilia relating to the history of the town of Weston and its people, including current items which may become of historical interest in the future; and to disseminate information, particularly to the inhabitants of Weston in cooperation with its schools and otherwise, intended to promote greater understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions, both past and in the making, of the Town of Weston and its neighboring communities.

The Historical Society collection, which contains both artifacts and archives, currently resides in the Josiah Smith Tavern in space generously provided by the Town. The organization has had a relatively amorphous existence through the years, but can be seen as a vital complement to the Golden Ball Tavern, which focuses on one Weston family. Rather than literally keeping up with the Joneses, the Historical Society is a repository for many facets of Weston's history including its beginnings as a rural community to the establishment of small industries and large estates to its post-war development as an affluent suburb. Over the years the WHS archives, all of which are considered historical, have been stashed in available nooks and crannies including the attic, above left, and a second floor bedroom, above right.

The most important archives are kept on the first floor and are in the process of being organized by volunteer labor from its Board. Pictured below on the left is the office before reorganization (with George Armadon) and on the right after some preliminary work has been done. This is a good example of how to approach the housecleaning and culling recommended in the archivist's report.



The Historical Society, under the direction of President Pam Fox, has made rehousing its archives collections a high priority, as part of developing its overall collections policy. A separate room on the first floor of the Josiah Smith Tavern has been cleaned, painted, and set up as a working area and temporary storage for the archives (below left). Again using volunteer labor from its Board, old files are sorted and reorganized using the same alphabetical typology developed by Pam Fox for a reorganization of the WHS photograph collection, which was undertaken with Sally Gilman before Pam's writing of Farm Town to Suburb (2002). The archives are being rehoused in acid-free folders in new file cabinets (shown here in the right of the picture on the right).



As in the case of the Historical Commission's archives in the Josiah Smith Tavern described above, the environmental conditions Historical Society's rooms at the Josiah Smith Tavern have been abominable. A permanent location needs to be found for the Historical Society's archives, especially given the Town of Weston's current plan to renovate the tavern's exterior and future plans to develop a new use for the building and renovate the interior of the historic structure.

Summary of HAC Short-Term Recommendations

All three collections are in need of varying levels of organization, housecleaning, culling, rehousing, and storage in proper environmental conditions. Some of these activities are currently underway. Furthermore, all collections need to be inventoried and catalogued. According to the archivist's report, there is nearly one-tenth of a mile of shelving currently holding duplicate published materials. Town Hall records were estimated at over 1,600 linear feet. At the Josiah Smith Tavern, Historical Commission archives were estimated at 56 linear feet and the Historical Society's (exclusive of materials on upper floors) at 60+ linear feet. Unfortunately, the Town does not have a space or facility set up to accommodate the real and immediate needs of these archives collections.

Long-Term Recommendations

The Historical Archives Committee recommends that Weston establish a centralized repository for historical archive collections to meet the needs of the many archive collections in Town. Key factors imperative to future planning are:

1. Each archives collection has distinct characteristics and needs in terms of ownership, control, and accessibility, as well as priorities, goals, and problems,
2. All phased activities must be undertaken so as to be constructive toward the ultimate goal of a centralized, flexible archives repository for Weston archives.

Major considerations for the establishment of a centralized historical archives repository in Weston can be divided into two interactive categories, intellectual and physical requirements, described herein. The recommendations strive for professionally recognized standards and for the "ideal" in archival activities while cognizant of the

challenges of the real world. To create a centralized archives, it makes sense to begin with the three collections already studied, mindful of future expansion to include other Town archive collections. The Committee recommends that a professional archivist be contracted to set up the archives and that at least a part-time archivist or historian be hired to oversee the archives.

Intellectual Requirements

The first requirement for centralized archives is to establish the purpose and goals. In order to create a minimum standard, the archives must exist as a professional body and not just another storage area. Toward that goal, a comprehensive archives policy must be developed including, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Collect and preserve archival materials relating to the history of Weston
- Arrange and describe these materials so that they are accessible, unless access is restricted by legal requirements of an institution or donor
- Maintain standards for acquisition, loans, and deaccessions
- Provide adequate and appropriate conditions for storage, protection, and preservation of the material (See **Physical Requirements** below)
- Provide regular services to individuals, organizations, and town government, or other groups interested in the archives
- Provide educational and outreach programs to increase public awareness of town history and the holdings of the archives.

After an archives policy has been developed, the next requirement is to gain legal control/ownership. In Weston's case, where centralized archives will be made up of collections with different ownership issues – such as town government v. personal collections – the legal ownership will be varied and some collections may be considered as loans to the central archives. With ownership established, the process of bringing materials into the archives can begin. This process includes acquiring, appraising, and accessioning. Establishing centralized archives will not involve purchases but will consist of bringing together already existing collections. Once an archives repository is set up, there may be archival material donated and/or acquired following the archives collection

policy. As material enters the centralized archives, the following information will need to be recorded:

- Name of donor
- Description of material, including, if possible, an appraisal
- Condition of material and any access restrictions
- Date of entry
- Signature of archivist and donor

Processing archives continues with a cataloguing system to organize materials by what are called levels of arrangement, usually filed according to the order in which they were originally created, maintained and used. The archivist contracted by the Town will set up a system of levels of arrangement such as:

- Repository
- Record group or manuscripts group, and subgroup
- Series, and subseries
- File
- Item

A critical decision needs to be made with the help of a professional archivist: Will the archives exist only as a virtual collection, i.e., as a collection of data accessible through the internet, such as the Sudbury archives, or will it be an actual collection of archival materials in a repository? In Weston, some combination of the two will probably be the best solution to satisfy all the needs of the various existing historical archives collections.

Physical Requirements

With a preliminary survey and understanding of existing archive collections, at this stage of planning it is possible to design a space that will suit Weston's needs for a centralized archives repository.

An archives repository can be divided into the following functional areas: reference, processing, and storage. Other spaces, such as exhibition areas, meeting rooms, vaults for valuable materials, and separate lunch space, are also desirable. The reference area is set up as an office with a desk, photocopier/scanner, computer(s), telephone and

worktable for researchers. The processing area is set up with worktables and supplies for housing/rehousing archives, boxing, labeling and preparing material for storage. A scanner, camera, and computer would be set up in the processing area. For the storage space, ideal environmental goals are:

- Fire-resistant, with heat and smoke detectors and fire suppression system
- An area free from possible flooding or water damage
- An area free of rodents, insects, fungus, and mold
- Stable temperature at 65-68°F and relative humidity of 45%
- Low light levels, controlled natural and fluorescent light, uv filters
- Secure area with locks and alarms
- Accessible, sheltered receiving area

And now for real world recommendations. The Historical Archives Committee sees two viable options for centralized archives space: the Josiah Smith Tavern and the Old Library. The Old Library, a masonry rather than wood structure with more easily adaptable space, is the site we recommend. Interestingly, in Farm Town to Suburb (p. 343) a description of the Old Library when it was newly built in 1900, states “Basement space was allocated for future book storage and a fireproof storage room for town records.” There is historic precedence for the Old Library to become Weston’s centralized historical archives. The lower level of the Old Library may not meet all of the ideals listed above, but it deserves serious consideration.



The Historical Archives Committee asked the archivist to assess the lower level of the Old Library and he gave the following response:

Pros

Close to the Town Hall where related records are kept.

A room with lots of built-in bookshelves.

Open space to work on projects and receive researchers.

Not in the main flow of traffic in the building.

Building already owned by the town.

No plumbing located above the storage space.

Room for the Town Archives and the “Historical Collection.”

Limited windows that can be blackened to reduce light damage.

An area that can be sectioned off and better environmental condition maintained.

An office area for the part-time “Archivist” located on the second floor.

Cons

Leaking problem that would need to be fixed.

Providing enough security for the collection with all the many access points on that floor in a building that would not be used on a daily basis.

Needing protection from the nearby boiler room.

Maintaining a good, non-fluctuating temperature and humidity building-wide or in this sealed space.

If the town has the interest and resources to provide a safe place for valuable historical records of the town, this beautiful building would work fine. The key issues are security of the collections in a lesser used building and maintaining a good environment in an old building. Neither of these needs to be obstacles for creating a town archives and historical records space.

The above “cons” need to be addressed by any renovation planned for the Old Library. Of particular concern is the HVAC system. Current conditions graphically demonstrate the need for a significant upgrade to the system. Damage is actively occurring to many plaster walls, including corners in the space we propose to use. Furthermore, heating pipes currently run along the alcove ceilings on both sides of the room where archival materials would ideally be stored.





For some archival material storage space, we envision preserving the existing architectural details and adjustable shelving of the alcoves and supporting columns. The varnished, aged wood shelves provide an inert receptacle for archival boxes of documents and other materials. Of the eight alcoves, five are presently available, two are used for exits, and one is a supplies storeroom. The open central space in the room could be adapted for additional storage and/or exhibits.



There is adequate space at the north end of the room to accommodate reception and processing areas that would require minor, non-structural architectural changes.

Additional rooms in the east wing on the lower level will be used for more secure, isolated storage vaults, workrooms, and a separate meeting/lunchroom. Plumbing/bathrooms already exist in the east wing (below right).



At the northeast inner corner there is an exterior, level entrance from a small, off-street parking area, which would easily accommodate staff, visitors, and deliveries. An additional exit on the west side now occupies an alcove. Depending on building and fire codes, this exit may be adapted for use or closed off.

Summary of HAC Long-Term Recommendations

The Historical Archives Committee recommends that the Town establish centralized historical archives to be located in the lower level of the Old Library. The collections of the Weston Historical Society, Weston Historical Commission, and pre-1890 Town Records should be moved into the renovated space as soon as it is available. A professional archivist should be contracted, with funds from available local, state, and/or federal grants, to set up virtual and real archives, which would then be managed by a part-time archivist/historian.