

Division of Preservation and Access

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful grant application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/sustaining-cultural-heritage-collections> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before the grant deadline by emailing preservation@neh.gov.

Note: The Attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Environmental Upgrades in the 1848 Shaker Meeting House

Institution: Shaker Heritage Society

Project Director: Danielle J. Kruppa

Grant Program: Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections

Funding Level: Implementation Level I

Introduction

Shaker Heritage Society (SHS) requests funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections program in the amount of \$98,273 to (1) install blown-in insulation in the attic of the 1848 Shaker Meeting House, and (2) add an energy recovery ventilator (ERV) to a new HVAC system. These projects a part of a multi-year effort to stabilize and improve environmental conditions onsite to enhance preservation of the structure and the collections housed within.

Incorporated in 1977, Shaker Heritage Society protects and promotes the site of America's first Shaker settlement, Watervliet, established in 1776. The former village today features nine surviving Shaker structures, an herb garden, and apple orchard. Over the past forty-five years, SHS has slowly acquired a small, but meaningful collection. Many of the objects and photos we hold are directly connected with local individuals who were Shakers, lived with the Shakers, or had relatives in this community. The 1848 Meeting House is the heart of our interpretive programs. This building houses our offices and retail operations. It is the venue for presentations, workshops, exhibits, and holds our archival and object collections.

In December 2020, Shaker Heritage Society signed a 50-year lease with our landlord, Albany County. Following this accomplishment, the Board of Trustees of SHS approved a new strategic plan in December, 2022. The revised mission of SHS is to enrich the Capital Region by engaging the community with the founding home and enduring values of the Shakers. The guiding vision of SHS is to honor Shaker values, transforming the founding home into a thriving cultural destination at the crossroads of preservation and innovation.

A communal, celibate, Utopian society, Shaker history may seem out of step with modern life. Yet, while Shakers lived apart from "The World," their communities were rooted in the communal values of innovation, sustainability, equality, hospitality, cooperation, and the pursuit of a meaningful life. SHS collections reflect not only the physical tools and products of the Watervliet Shakers, but are also a powerful testimony to these shared beliefs and spiritual values. Shakers believed that their work was a form of worship, as expressed by the Shaker saying "Hands to Work, Hearts to God." This belief was expressed through the architecture of their communities, the design of their furniture and clothing, and the rhythms of their daily lives.

Shaker Heritage Society's new strategic plan will be an important step towards creating a true cultural campus at the Church Family site that reflects this history. Through adaptive reuse, we aspire to create a vibrant center for education, arts, commerce, and community. Real estate and architectural survey work will determine what uses are achievable for our particular site. Historic rehabilitation will provide a path towards greater cultural relevancy and institutional sustainability. All rehabilitation efforts will be guided by the communal values and entrepreneurial spirit of the Shakers. The Meeting House is the main hub and showcase from which we will launch our new strategic initiatives in the coming months and years.

This work is accomplished by a small staff of one full-time director and four part time staff: an Education Coordinator, Museum Shop and Craft Fair Manager, Community Engagement Coordinator, and Bookkeeper. A corps of 40+ volunteers supports this team. SHS currently welcomes approximately 12,000 visitors to the site each year. In 2021, SHS operational expenses for the fiscal year totaled \$508,000.

In 2019 and 2020, SHS received NEH Preservation Assistance Grants to support an Environmental Survey report and a subsequent Mechanical and Electrical Assessment of the 1848 Meeting House. A number of immediate-term recommendations from these reports have already been implemented in a first phase of work (outlined below in “History”). The second phase planned for the spring of 2023 features the installation of a new air-source heat pump HVAC system in the 1848 Meeting House. This new system will replace a 25+ year old air handler that has reached the end of its useful life. Due to rising costs and funding constraints, an energy-recovery ventilator (ERV) planned for this system was omitted from the final scope of work.

In the third phase proposed here, we seek to restore the ERV to further improve the efficiency and sustainability of the new HVAC system. We also plan to add blown-in insulation between the first floor Meeting Hall and second floor attic space. Currently, there is no insulation in either the attic floor or roof. Although our staff is small and our capacity finite, SHS is well-positioned to quickly launch this project, if funded. Construction documents are already prepared for both projects, and SHS has already initiated the necessary approval process with the Albany County Legislature.

Significance of collections

Shaker Heritage Society’s collection encompasses between 600 and 700 objects, and approximately 400 archival records associated with the Watervliet community from the mid-19th century through the 1930’s. The 2019/2020 NEH-funded environmental survey report conducted by Spicer Art Conservation, LLC identified four key categories of collections:

- **Furniture:** This category is largely represented by Shaker-made ladder back chairs, designed to hang on the ubiquitous Shaker pegboards when not in use. The collection also includes a cradle, a rope bedframe, and several other large wooden objects including spinning wheels.
- **Textiles:** these include the distinctive clothing of the Shakers, such as cotton and silk “berthas”, meant to modestly cover a woman’s dress from her shoulders to waist; woven-rush bonnets with silk ribbons; and “fancy goods”, including pincushions, emeries, and sewing kits manufactured by Shaker sisters for sale to hotels, general stores, and individuals.
- **Archival material:** this encompasses photographs, postcards, and ephemera such as Shaker vegetable can labels, as well as a small number of bound books. These are particularly susceptible to shifts in temperature and humidity.

- Household objects and workshop tools: the broadest category, this includes distinctive Shaker bent-wood oval boxes, woven baskets, and a variety of tools such as awls, chisels, knitting needles, and other handwork tools. Many of these objects feature mixed materials, such as wood and metal, and are thus can present a particular challenge for preservation.

Shaker Heritage Society also holds a small collection of un-accessioned archaeological finds from several excavations over the last 30 or so years. On the recommendation of our preservation consultant, we have transferred ownership of some of these materials to the New York State Museum where they will be incorporated into their robust teaching and research collections. This will not only provide better storage for these objects, and render them more accessible and useful to scientists, historians, and students but will also allow SHS to focus on a smaller range of collection items. The transfer agreement with NYSM allows SHS to arrange for long-term loans of archaeological pieces for educational purposes.

Elements of the collection are currently installed in the orientation exhibit room on the first floor of the Meeting House and featured in visual aids for programs, such as at our “Weavers and Shakers” event in fall of 2022 in collaboration with the Hudson-Mohawk Weavers Guild. Photos from the collections are also displayed on outdoor interpretive signs around the property, and highlighted in our quarterly printed newsletter, and digital newsletters. Collection objects are also periodically loaned to other sites for exhibits. In 2015, a Meneely Bell from the roof of a Watervliet Shaker Dwelling House was loaned to the New York State Museum for an exhibit on Shaker history and material culture.

Shaker craftsmanship is experiencing renewed relevance in an era of do-it-yourself and hands-on learning. The Shakers’ dedication to craft provides a one-of-a-kind gateway to history, inviting an exploration of their faith and ideals by showcasing the products of their beliefs. A wooden boys shirt pattern used for making the dozens of shirts needed for the Watervliet community was included in *Everyday Perfection*, a 2019 exhibit at the Albany International Airport that juxtaposed historic Shaker objects with works of contemporary art to explore the Shaker ideal of work-as-worship. Currently, a Shaker rocking chair, and tabletop loom are on loan to the Schenectady County Historical Society for an exhibition on regional crafts.

In 2022, several examples of “fancy goods” from the SHS collections were featured in the new book [Necessary Beauty: Shaker Fancy Goods](#) by Catherine Goldring. The author documents fancy goods as both beautiful objects, but also as a powerful illustration of the inventiveness and dedication of Shaker women who sustained their communities through production of these retail goods in the 20th century.

Photographs from our collections will be incorporated into a new interactive site tour in 2023. This new tour is slated for development over the course of several semesters by students in the Capital District BOCES Game Design program. This multi-year collaboration will offer students a meaningful work-based learning credits, and integrate humanities education with instruction in digital design.

There are a number of important institutions with significant holdings of Shaker objects. When the Church Family Site closed in 1925, the New York State Museum here in Albany acquired a large collection of Watervliet Shaker objects and records. Hamilton College and Case Western Reserve have large archives with many examples of Watervliet photos and ephemera. An hour away from SHS is Hancock Shaker Village, one of the best-preserved Shaker historic sites in the country. Similarly, the Shaker Museum planned for Chatham, NY will exhibit the largest collection of Shaker objects in the world when complete.

While the holdings of SHS are less comprehensive than those of many other institutions, it is a unique and deeply personal collection. Many objects and photos were donated by friends of the Shakers, and by children raised by the aging Shaker Sisters of Watervliet in the early 20th century. A photograph of Shakers enjoying a summertime picnic lunch in the 1920's, a rocking chair that belonged to the last Eldress of the community, and a delicate dress, cloak, and silk bertha crafted for a young child's doll are some poignant examples of this collection. In many ways, it represents a melancholy era in Shaker history, as communities slowly dwindled in size and increased in age. However, it is also a testimony to the Shakers' resiliency and dedication to their spiritual values.

Current conditions and preservation challenges

The Shaker Meeting House is a clapboard structure dating from 1848. The Meeting Room is the largest space in the structure. Designed for the Shakers' worship including spoken word, singing, and dancing, it is an inspiring space with outstanding acoustics. Measuring 85'x 52', and two-stories tall with 14 triple-sash windows, it is also a challenge to heat and cool, and extreme temperature and humidity fluctuations affect other spaces.

SHS collections and archives are primarily stored on the third floor of the building in three small rooms. These spaces probably originally functioned as workspaces and/or storage facilities for Shaker Elders and Eldresses living on the second floor. These rooms are directly adjacent to the large central attic that supports the first-floor the Meeting Room, and are effectively enclosed in a clapboard "box". Efforts to reorganize these storage spaces are ongoing. Following recommendations from the 2019 Environmental Assessment report, object storage has been largely consolidated into two rooms, with archival storage planned for an adjacent interior closet space.

The planned installation of a new HVAC system in the spring of 2023 will address the issue of an increasingly unreliable 25+ year old air handler that heats the Meeting Room. The air handler unit failed twice during the winter of 2020, requiring costly emergency repairs and at one point causing the temperature inside the building to dip into the 40's. The Meeting House currently has no cooling system apart from residential window units, and the heat pump will add this capacity for the first time. Currently, there is no insulation between the Meeting Room, the attic, and the roof. Dataloggers installed in 2020 have demonstrated that that humidity in the third-floor collections area approaches 70% at certain points during the year. Combined with temperature spikes, this presents a significant danger of mold and insect damage. The addition

of the energy recovery ventilator and insulation will enhance the efficiency and utility of our new HVAC system.

Specialized studies and assessments of the 1848 Meeting House that inform this project include:

- Environmental Survey Report, 2019, completed by Spicer Art Conservation, LLC. Funded by NEH
- Mechanical and Engineering Assessment, 2020, completed by Landmark Facilities Group, LLC. Funded by NEH
- Insulation Project Construction Documents, 2020, completed by Lacey Thaler Reilly Wilson Architects
- Engineering Assessment for Insulation Project, 2020, completed by Ryan-Biggs
- HVAC Construction Documents, 2021, completed by Landmark Facilities Group, LLC

SHS is making meaningful progress towards achieving substantial intellectual control of our collections. The institution has employed Past Perfect for its digital database since 2008, but the digital records for our photograph collections were incomplete. In 2019, concurrent with preparation of our Environmental Survey Report, SHS staff and volunteers reviewed location information and updated records for the object collections in the database. In 2021-2022, all paper accession records for objects and photographs were digitized and checked against records in our Past Perfect database. Entries were clarified and corrected, and a significant number of new records were added. To improve the accessibility of our archival collections, historic photos stored throughout the facility were consolidated, reorganized, and scanned at a high resolution. Photo identification was corrected or added as needed in Past Perfect. Currently, SHS is using an older version of Past Perfect, first purchased in 2008. Once the initial phase of database cleanup and reorganization is complete, SHS will prepare to upgrade the software to further improve our data management capacity.

History of the project

SHS has leased the 1848 Meeting House under various agreements with Albany County since 1983. Even under challenging conditions, the organization has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to preservation and practical rehabilitation of the historic building for the benefit of the public. A robust Master Plan produced in 2008 addressed preservation priorities and needs across all nine Shaker structures on the property, but less attention was paid to the expenses and administrative requirements of maintaining the properties post-restoration. The SHS Board of Trustees has recently been reinvigorated with an influx of new members committed to reimagining the organization to further advance the mission of education, community engagement, and preservation.

In 2019, Shaker Heritage Society received funding through an NEH Preservation Assistance Grant to complete a collections assessment. Gwen Spicer of Spicer Art Conservation, LLC performed an onsite evaluation in September of 2019 and compiled a 44-page environmental

survey report for the Society, outlining short, medium, and long-term collections goals. In addition, Spicer led a half-day training workshop in December 2019 for staff and volunteers on best-practices for working with collections. This was a critical step towards building our internal capacity to manage facility improvement projects in the collections storage areas and implement future re-housing projects. The Environmental Survey report has remained the guiding template for ongoing efforts to reorganize our physical collections and digital records. The current priority is on stabilization of the environment and improvement of the physical organization of collections and records.

Subsequent PAG funding awarded in 2020 supported the implementation of a specific set of recommendations from the report, including a mechanical and plumbing assessment completed by Landmark Facilities Group, LLC, (LFG) and installation of dataloggers to continuously monitor temperature and humidity throughout the building. Through discussions with LFG, we concluded that a high-efficiency air-source heat pump system with variable flow refrigerant (VFR) capacity will provide a cost-effective and energy-efficient solution for heating and cooling the structure. This system will eliminate the air handler, use existing vents, add cooling capacity, and incorporate the existing hot-water boiler as an emergency backup in extreme cold-weather. As noted above, due to the rapidly increasing costs of materials and labor in the past year, the energy recovery ventilator was eliminated from this phase of the project.

SHS has already implemented several high-priority items from our NEH-funded environmental and mechanical system assessments (see attachment "Assessments").

Building-wide actions:

- Dataloggers are now installed throughout the building
- A pest control agency on contract with SHS monitors sticky traps for insect activity
- An aging water heater and faulty vent piping to the hot water boiler have been replaced
- Electrical wiring has been evaluated by a professional
- A new air-source heat pump system will be installed in spring of 2023. The HVAC system will add cooling capacity to the building for the first time, which will contribute to greater stability in temperature and humidity in the structure.
- To further seal and protect the building envelope, we have also negotiated replacement of the 25+ year old Meeting House roof in 2023/2024 as a mitigation measure for a development project located within the Watervliet Shaker National Historic District.
- Staff have participated in online training workshops and drafted an emergency response plan

Collection storage improvements:

- Damage to the plaster ceiling has been repaired
- UV filters have been added to exterior windows
- LED bulbs are installed in all light fixtures

- New modular shelving has been installed to house object collections. This will also facilitate more consistent and regular weekly inspection and light cleaning of the storage rooms by SHS volunteers.
- SHS purchased additional archival storage supplies and staff and a volunteer repacked a number of textiles in 2021/22 and will continue to work on rehousing printed and framed materials in 2023
- Digital scans of historic photos have been completed, reducing the need to handle the original photos

Sustainability is one of the key values of SHS as outlined in our new strategic plan. Furthermore, Albany County is making significant investments in sustainable technologies, including solar energy and electric vehicles. This proposed project will complement county-wide initiatives to improve our long-term sustainability, and position the organization to capitalize on these municipal investments in the years to come.

Methods and standards

This project is a logical next step in a series of actions taken from our previously-funded Environmental Survey and Mechanical Assessments. Improvements to our building envelope were identified as important priorities by both Spicer Art Conservation and Landmark Facilities Group for collections preservation and building stability. Our HOBO dataloggers will permit us to conduct direct comparisons of temperature and humidity before and after each phase of the project is complete. While these facilities improvements will not result in total control of building microclimates, this project should significantly contribute to more stable environmental conditions throughout the structure.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, when insulating an unfinished attic in a historic structure, “the easiest, most effective in terms of payback and energy savings, and least potentially harmful place for insulation in an attic space is below the floorboards.” (Energy Advice for Owners of Historic and Older Homes, EPA Archives.) Blown-in-cellulose was selected by Thaler Reilly Wilson Architects for its thermal efficiency and critically, its breathability. Moisture and humidity are constant concerns in a historic structure, and blown-in insulation options are less likely to cause harm to the structure by trapping moisture compared to many other common insulations like spray foam or fiberglass batt.

Earth911 Insulation Comparison Chart							
Insulation Type	Application	Materials	Recycled Content	R-Value per Inch	Moisture Issues	Comments	Recommended Brands
Cellulose	blown-in, sometimes in batts	Recycled paper products	80 to 85%	3.1 to 3.8	If wet, insulation will degrade over time and can grow mold. Install a vapor barrier if area is prone to moisture, and do not use if moisture issues are unavoidable.	Borate fire retardants often used, generally considered safe unless ingested	Greenfiber
Cotton	batts & blown-in	Recycled cotton, commonly denim			If wet, insulation will degrade over time and can grow mold. Install a vapor barrier if area is prone to moisture, and do not use if moisture issues are unavoidable.	Borate fire retardants often used, generally considered safe unless ingested	Ultra Touch
Fiberglass	batts & blown-in	Molten glass that is spun into fine fibers	20 to 60%	Loose: 2.2 to 2.9 Batts: 2.9 to 3.8	Insulation is ineffective when wet. If insulation becomes wet, it is important that it can thoroughly dry.	Energy-intensive manufacturing process emits pollutants. Some products contain binders that can pollute indoor air.	Ecobatt; Sustainable Insulation by Certainteed
Mineral wool	batts & blown-in	Man-made material from natural minerals like basalt or from blast furnace slag	75 to 90%	Loose: 2.2 to 3.3 Batts: 3.3 to 4.2	Mineral wool is still effective when wet.	Energy-intensive manufacturing process emits pollutants. Often contains formaldehyde which can create indoor air quality issues.	Thermafiber

Additionally, other options such as expanding foam insulation were rejected due to concerns about irrevocably changing the character of this historic structure. Fiberglass batt is economical, but reduces the utility of the area for storage. Exposed fiberglass batt in the Meeting House has been observed to attract dirt and potentially vermin, posing obvious threats to our collections.

Work plan

	Task	Dates
Pre Grant	Submit RLA to Albany County for Grant	Oct 2023
Preparation	Confirm dates for ERV installation w/ RMB Mech.	Oct 2023
	Doc review and permits w/ Albany County	Nov 2023
	Request bids for insulation	Dec 2023
	Review bids and sign contract for insulation	March 2024
	Site Prep	May 2024
Installation	Insulation installation	July 2024
	ERV installation	September 2024
Report	Final Report prepared and submitted to NEH	December 2024

Project team

Johanna Batman, Grants Administrator; Co-Project Director

Executive Director Johanna Batman will serve as grants administrator for this project, and provide onsite support for the project. As the only full-time staff member, Batman is responsible for all issues related to facility maintenance across the Church Family property. Over the past three years of her tenure as Director, she has acquired a significant working knowledge of the various building systems, including electrical, plumbing, and heating, and has studied and become familiar with the institutional history of their design, installation, and

function. Financial management is another key responsibility of the ED, and Batman typically manages 5-7 grants annually from Federal, State, and local funders.

Mark Muscatiello, Co-Project Director

Supporting the Director in this role is the Board of Trustees Site Committee, which advises and collaborates with the Director both on matters of facility operations and strategic planning for the long-term preservation of the property. Committee member Mark Muscatiello is acting as the Committee lead on this project. As the former Senior Director of Operations for the Uncommon Schools of Troy NY, Muscatiello has extensive experience in facility operations and maintenance, and has personally overseen two large construction projects at the Troy Prep Middle and Elementary Schools. In this role, his responsibilities included coordinating with the construction project manager, monitoring construction on-site, and ensuring construction project deadlines were met within budget limitations.

Gwen Spicer, Consultant

Gwen Spicer is a Textile, Upholstery, Paper, and Objects Conservator, and full-time principal of Spicer Art Conservation, LLC. She received her Master's degree from the Art Conservation Program at Buffalo State College, State University of New York. She has over twenty-five years of experience, is a Fellow of AIC, and has been in private practice since 1995. She has assisted many museums, institutions and private collectors with the treatment of artifacts and antiquities for both display and storage. She works closely with each client to focus on problem solving while constantly aiming to find solutions that work within the framework and constraints of each individual situation. While in private practice, she assists many small museums and historical society's across New York State and beyond with collection care, exhibitions, and conservation treatments. This includes designing storage spaces for small institutions and house museums based on inventories.

Mark Thaler, Consultant

As a nationally recognized expert in Historic Preservation, Mr. Thaler has been responsible for the renovation and restoration of some of our nation's most significant landmarks, including buildings at Ellis Island, Valley Forge, the Washington State Capitol, and numerous colleges and universities across the country. He has written and lectured widely on many of the challenges which are encountered in their rehabilitation and his design solutions have been recognized with over two dozen design awards including an Honor Award from the national AIA. He has authored numerous articles and is the author of APPA's Body of Knowledge Chapter on Renovation.

SHS has not yet made a final decision on the construction contractors with whom we will work on the insulation project, but prospects and estimates will draw from several resources, including the New York State online MWBE business directory; a list of recommended

contractors issued by Historic Albany Foundation, a local architectural salvage and preservation nonprofit; and the professional experience and business contacts of the project managers.

Project results and dissemination

This project will directly support our efforts to preserve, display, and interpret our collections for the public through creation of stable environmental conditions. A corollary benefit of this project will be to increase the utility and accessibility of the Meeting Hall for programs during the hottest and coldest months of the year. SHS is incredibly fortunate to have passed through the worst period of the pandemic crisis in a stable financial position. The past two fiscal years of 2021 and 2022 have years of significant growth and accomplishment. They have also been a period of reflection and reevaluation. Following passage of our new strategic plan, a top priority for SHS staff is to build up our annual program calendar to attract new, and more diverse audiences. Shaker history and Shaker values possess an enduring relevancy in modern life, and humanities-based programming is key to revealing this meaning. As we seek to build up our program roster and attract larger audiences to the Meeting House for programs, the addition of insulation and an energy recovery ventilator will be essential for improving comfort and air quality for staff, visitors, and program presenters, and better address ongoing health and safety concerns highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Successful completion of this project will also substantially mitigate the organization's required maintenance expenses both in real dollars and in the investment of staff hours. This will strengthen our institutional capacity and increase the time staff can allot to mission-related work. It will further lay the groundwork for subsequent rehabilitation projects, including repairs to the historic plaster in the Meeting Hall planned in the next five years. Investing more intentionally in maintenance and preventative conservation measures will be a key component of creating a sustainable business model for the decade to come. We would look forward to celebrating these accomplishments through press releases to local media, and distribution via our print and digital newsletters and social media channels which reach over 5000 households.