



Request for Proposals

Seeking an Experienced Collections Consultant to Assess and Inventory Collection of Antique Tools and Farm Equipment

Issued by: Weston Historical Society in Weston, CT

Proposals Due Electronically by: Monday March 21, 2022 by 5:00pm

Primary Contact: Samantha Kulish-Fargione, Executive Director
director@westonhistoricalsociety.org

Overview

The Weston Historical Society in Weston, CT seeks an experienced collections consultant to catalog and assess the Society's extensive collection of antique tools and farm equipment.

Background

The Weston Historical Society (WHS) discovers, collects, and preserves Weston's heritage, promoting understanding of and context to local, regional and world events. WHS is a tax exempt 501-c-3 non-profit organization and operates independently from town government and is not funded by taxpayer dollars. WHS is sustained by generous donations from local residents, local businesses, grants, programs, and volunteers.

WHS is located on the site of the Coley Homestead, a former working farm with roots going back to the 19th century. Our 3.7 acre site contains the David Dimon Coley Farm House, Coley Barn, Carriage house, and the Prue Bliss Education Center which includes the society's archive and exhibit hall, and four outbuildings. These resources provide a living record of how life has been lived in Weston over the years. We further our mission by curating exhibits that highlight Weston's history and its connection to national and world events, by offering historical and

cultural public programs for all ages as well as partnering with local schools to teach and bring to life Weston's history.

Our archive consists of records, photos, deeds, textiles, newspaper clippings, catalogs, ephemera and objects connecting to Weston history. These items are stored in our climate-controlled vault on the bottom floor of the Prue Bliss Education Center.

We also have an extensive collection of antique tools and farm equipment which is housed in the 1883 Coley Barn. The collection that is housed in the main part of the Coley barn and in the section known as the milk wagon barn consists of roughly 500 - 600 objects such as: woodworking tools, cobbler tools, tools relating to the former Weston Bradley Tool Company, blacksmith tools, home/domestic tools, food related tools and machinery, wagon wheels, a milk wagon, and dairy equipment. The Coley Barn consists of antiquated displays of some of these tools and farming implements. Volunteers who oversaw this collection have since passed on or moved away.

After years of using various paper and computer cataloging systems, in 2019 WHS transitioned to Connecticut Collections, an open-source, online resource tool that allows history and heritage organizations to manage their collections, to share selected items with the public through a statewide portal and to preserve their digital collections and associated metadata in the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA).

Our dedicated team of archive volunteers went through Connecticut Collections training. A few months before the pandemic hit, the archive volunteers began the tedious process of cataloging the objects in the main barn and inputting the objects, along with a photo of each object, into Connecticut Collections. In the past, handwritten forms for objects were stored in large three ring binders and none of the information was digitized. The archive volunteers began the process of matching handwritten forms to objects, creating new accession numbers, photographing objects and entering objects into Connecticut Collections. As they were working on this task, many questions came up: What were some of these objects? How were they used? What were the names of certain object? How best to catalog and describe certain objects? What is the provenance of objects and do

all objects fit with our mission and collections policy? With these questions and concerns, came the idea to hire a consultant to assist the archive volunteers with this huge task. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the constraints of lock down, and lack of funding, that idea was put on hold as we tried our best to survive during unprecedented times.

With grant funding and Covid restrictions relaxing, we are looking for an experienced collections consultant to lead us in this process of assessing and cataloging the 500 – 600 objects in the main part of the Coley Barn and milk wagon barn. Objects in this collection have been given to the organization over the past 60 years with little to no documentation. Due to our space constraints and need for exhibit space in the barn, objects that do not fit the WHS collections management policy and mission must be culled from the collection. Our goal with this current project is to not only successfully catalog, inventory, and assess the barn collection, but to make it available online for the public, as well as use the knowledge to update and reinterpret the barn exhibitions to engage the community in a deeper understanding of Weston's agricultural and industrial history.

Project Deliverables

Weston Historical Society seeks a qualified and experienced collections consultant to:

- Inventory, catalog and assess the 500 - 600 antique tools and farm equipment in the main section of the barn and in the adjacent milk wagon shed, and enter objects into the Connecticut Collections database.
- Research objects to determine name and historical uses.
- Research provenance and paper trails.
- Assess the barn collection objects already in the Connecticut Collections database and identify name and historic uses of objects currently unidentified.
- Identify duplicates and recommend which to keep and which to deaccession.
- Recommend which objects can be deaccessioned as well as which objects might warrant conservation.
- Identify and recommend conservationists.
- Identify places to donate or sell deaccessioned objects

- Make recommendations on how best to display objects correctly and safely.
- Provide a final report that details recommendations regarding objects for deaccessioning, objects for conservation, and object displays.

The collections consultant will have a team of four archive volunteers provided by WHS to assist with writing tags, tagging objects, photographing objects, and data entry.

Timeline of Project

In accordance with the CT Humanities SHARP Grant received to fund this project, there is a time constraint on ending date.

Project Start: Mid April 2022

Project End: August 31, 2022

Final Report Due: October 1, 2022

Qualifications:

The selected consultant shall:

- Possess the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for successfully assessing, cataloging and researching objects in a museum setting.
- Have experience working with the Connecticut Collections database or experience working with a similar online collections database.
- A working knowledge of 18th, 19th and early 20th century agricultural and tool history and/or have resources and experts to reach out to for guidance.
- Communicate weekly with WHS executive director with updates on the project.

Proposal Requirements & How to Submit

Proposals from qualified consultants shall include the following information:

- Project understanding, approach, and coordination methods:
 - Consultant shall describe understanding of project and identify approach to fulfill project deliverables.

- Consultant shall describe how he/she will address the challenges of this project
- Similar Project Experience:
 - Consultant shall identify similar project experience within the last 3-5 years and provide a reference for each. By submitting a response to this RFP, the respondent hereby authorizes the Weston Historical Society to contact references and make such further investigations as may be in the best interest of the organization.
 - Consultant shall provide a resume highlighting relevant work experience.
- Schedule:
 - Consultant shall provide a work task timeline based upon the Weston Historical Society's proposed timeline and final report date of October 1, 2022.
- Fee Proposal:
 - Consultant shall identify total fee to complete project with a breakdown of tasks, estimated hours, and hourly rate. Total fee shall reflect all costs, included but not limited to: sub-contractors/consultants, meetings, travel, specified deliverables, overhead, and estimated costs for materials are required to be included in fee proposal under reimbursable expenses.

Proposals must be submitted electronically by Monday March 21, 2022 by 5:00pm to:

Samantha Kulish-Fargione, executive director:
director@westonhistoricalsociety.org

Selection Criteria:

Following the submission deadline, the executive director, Board President, Board Vice-President and archive team will review all proposals and formulate a recommendation to the Weston Historical Society Board of Trustees. At its discretion, WHS may elect to conduct interviews with prospective consultants as part of the selection process.

WHS uses the following criteria to select a consultant that best fits the project's requirements:

- Professional qualifications.

- Demonstrated experience with relevant or similar projects and positive references.
- A clear and concise understanding, approach, and coordination methods of the project.
- Ability to meet the stated project timeline.
- Cost.

Upon approval of the WHS Board of Trustees, the candidate shall be contacted no later than Friday, April 1, 2022.

Contact

Questions regarding this RFP or the associated project should be directed to:

Samantha Kulish-Fargione

Executive Director

Weston Historical Society

director@westonhistoricalsociety.org

203-226-1804