

**Town of Leverett
Community Preservation Committee
Application for Community Preservation Funding**

PROJECT NAME AND ADDRESS

Project Name:

A Sense of Where You Are: Getting to Know Leverett's Industrial Past, 2022-2023, revised January 2022

Property Address: Within town borders

PROJECT PROPONENT

Project Proponent Organization, if any: Leverett Historical Commission

Contact Name: Susan Mareneck

Address: P.O. Box 300, Leverett, MA 01054

E-Mail Address: leveretthistoryinfo@gmail.com

Date: November 30, 2021

Requested CPA funds: \$12,500

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION CATEGORY (Check All That Apply)

Open Space

Historic Resource

Community Housing

Recreation

1. Project Summary

The Leverett Historical Commission (LHC) seeks \$12,500 to support its ongoing project "A Sense of Where You Are," which consists of community-wide initiatives to investigate and further the preservation of Leverett's historic assets, and supports moving towards creating a

community-wide preservation plan. This project follows up on the 2017-18 Historical Assets Survey and seeks to raise awareness of the historical assets and landscape of Leverett through engagement and education while inventorying/documenting surviving structures or archaeological remains such as the Slarrow Sawmill in North Leverett or the remnants of a seasonal mill now partially covered by Cave Hill Road.

Historic preservation is guided by governments at all levels, but government is of necessity often a catalyst rather than the main source of funding. More preservation is done by private owners and groups of citizens than by governments. However, what governments can do is make the climate for preservation welcoming, increase visibility of historic assets, and facilitate the work of those who wish to actively pursue ways to keep the past alive to benefit the present and inspire the future.

As we know from our survey and from experience, Leverett residents are interested in the archaeological sites/mill sites, and our approach to preservation is to get residents engaged in thinking about their (the sites') future as well as that of the town. During the COVID-19 crisis we developed online programs documenting sites in detail, including a video visit, documentation, and a talk explaining the site. These programs were attended by people from almost two hundred Leverett households

Our goal for the coming year is to continue building understanding and appreciation of the gifts Leverett's industrial heritage brings to the town we are today by creating "how did it work" focused programs that include witness interviews with skilled craftsmen who worked in local industries such as charcoal making or sawing timbers.

We also plan to expand the education and awareness of this history by initiating a signage program for industrial historic sites in Leverett in public and private ownership. This idea was broached in several of the ASoWYA programs, both in-person in 2019 and on zoom in 2020-21. Owners of properties that were once significant industrial sites requested a way to make the knowledge of what had been there accessible to others on a continuous basis.

Additionally, the 2022-2023 proposal supports the Commission's work through continuing its ongoing participation in town planning as needed. During 2022-23, the town will be engaged in Master Planning, and committees will be working to increase options for housing and sustainable economic activities. Committed to building for the future, LHC will continue to share options for and information about the conservation of historic landscapes and the preservation and interpretation of historic remains.

Funding will enable the LHC to work with our consultant — who guides our activities (in inventorying, research, and logistics, as well as online and in person events); support documentation of the work of industrial workers and public programs; and initiate the interpretative signage program. All of these extensions of the mandate from the original Historic Assets Survey have grown as result of citizen involvement and requests.

Finally, this highly successful program also serves to prepare for Leverett's 250th anniversary commemoration in 2024, as it collects information that will be available to those who might wish to create tours, videos, or other programs.

Project Description

The Leverett Historical Commission found in its 2018 survey that residents are particularly interested in the town's historic archeological sites, especially those related to our industrial history. In response, we have been working to bring greater awareness and knowledge of these resources — hidden in plain sight— through seeking the involvement of the community, including residents and members of town government.

Our strategy is to introduce the community to the resources themselves *and* to possibilities for protecting and preserving them, as a way to build interest in the town for developing a comprehensive community-wide preservation plan, which is our goal. Our belief has been, and remains, that raising awareness will facilitate finding ways to preserve our historic assets and that in turn, will support the town's fiscal and civic sustainability in the long term. Our strategy for engagement is three-pronged:

First, we seek to continue the conversation about our resources and broaden interest in these issues. For the past few years, Leverett residents supported our approach through awarding CPA funds to the Leverett Historical Commission for our "A Sense of Where You Are" public engagement project and by enthusiastically attending the virtual programming we offered on Zoom. With this funding request, we are looking to create online and in person events that focus on interviews with those who know the sites intimately from having worked there. What were the tools? How were the sites used? What skill sets were needed to operate these industrial facilities, mostly run on water-and people-power?

Second, the LHC would like to start up a roadside interpretive historic marker program — in the first instance with markers designating industrial sites -- to enhance their visibility and encourage preservation. This proposal to initiate an interpretive marker project is part and parcel of the public outreach relative to our industrial heritage programming, and central to our approach to implementing the outcomes of the Historical Assets Survey. As is evident from the [slide show](#) the LHC presented on its work to the Western Massachusetts Coalition of Historical Commissions, the efforts are so interwoven they belong in the same proposal.

As we are currently continuing to inventory sites, and we develop programs, we have been creating relationships with owners of these historic foundations. For the most part, owners are interested in preserving their sites, and in making them more visible on a continuous basis rather than through the occasional program. The concept of the program is based on the historic plaque programs many historical commissions in Massachusetts run, in which owners purchase their own signs. However, since interpretive road signs/historic markers are much more expensive than simple house or barn plaques, we are proposing to fund the better part of these signs through the town. Thus, they become a collaborative effort between owner and town, with investment in the historic landscape by both.

Roadside interpretive markers serve as a logical counterpart and extension of the research and programming of the past few years: Not only do they offer owners a way to invest in their sites and keep them visible, they offer information to everyone on a continuous basis. Signs will not only give information now, but will extend interest in the online program videos and slideshows. And they will be there for the 250th anniversary.

Third, our research, combined with the ongoing public conversation, has allowed us to support and inform preservation opportunities as they arise, and we plan to continue that effort with the support of our consultant. For example, our research is informing the development of options for Leverett to take on the North Leverett Mill. Also, we are focusing some of our work on the villages that formed the centers of industrial Leverett. As other opportunities present themselves, having the knowledge base to be of assistance with preservation gives the Historical Commission the ability and resources to create informational events around them.

In addition, this work serves to inform Leverett's various government bodies and committees on strategies that our town can utilize to create a fiscal and regulatory environment that is conducive to tax-neutral or tax-positive historic preservation.

Specifically, our proposal for the coming year includes funding to:

Create an "embodied history" program to document and share the memories of workers in Leverett's historic mills and charcoal kilns. We have identified at least five men who worked at one of the sites. The plan is to create a program, involving the elementary school if possible, to interview these workers about the sites. What did they do there? How did the site function? This would be followed by public programming to share these interviews at the sites, live, if possible, as well as through an online and/or printed resource. Deliverables include:

- a. Logistics and contacts for witness documentation program
- b. Descriptive guidelines for Leverett-specific interview program
- c. Storage and dissemination plan for program content, through video capture or other media
- d. Event planning and logistics

Increase visibility and encourage preservation and interpretation of industrial sites in which the community expressed great interest in the 2018 Historic Assets Survey. Plan and implement a historic signage program that represents in most cases a collaboration between owners and the Commission: Planning and implementing roadside historic **interpretative signage** for dams and mill foundations in collaboration with private owners.

Deliverables include:

- a. Interpretive signage: signage research and contacts, website text for the signage program, protocols for the committee, evaluation and research of sign text for specific mills.
- b. Creation and installation of 6 signs: Two at publicly owned industrial resources, the rest with owner contributions of \$50-200.

Support (with research and graphics) LHC members in their work with other town committees and groups, specifically to incorporate historical assets and landscapes into Leverett’s planning for its future by working with and supporting the Leverett Sustainable Economy Committee, Leverett Planning Board, and others; to catalyze and buttress efforts to negotiate preservation of specific properties, as well as investigate and propose regulatory approaches to preservation where appropriate for Leverett. Deliverables include:

- a. Research and cataloging historic sites in the five villages/enclaves of Leverett
- b. Documentation for legislative approaches
- c. Slides and supporting materials (data, etc.)

2. Applications must include at least two estimates (three are preferred) from suppliers of work to be done.

Please note that this is an ongoing project with the consultant, who is a specialist, and with whom we have developed this project. Pleun Bouricius is the principal of Swift River Press Public History and Communications

A Sense of Where You Are 2022/2023 Project Budget

CPC budget request for A Sense of Where You Are 2022/2023 **\$12,500**

Budget specifics:

1) “Embodied History’ project	<i>subtotal</i>	\$3000
Consultant (logistics, text, logistics and PR of programs)		\$2000
Dissemination (event/video recording)		\$1000

2) Signage project	subtotal	\$6700
Signage (6 signs @ \$1000 installed - owner contributions of up to \$200 for 4)		\$5500
Consultant: program text and application, logistics, sign text		\$1000
Incidental costs (printing, travel, etc.)		\$ 200
3) Planning and outreach support	subtotal	\$2800
Research and graphic support for external meetings and outreach to other committees, commissions, and groups in Leverett.		
Consultant		\$2300
Incidental costs (printing, travel, etc.)		\$ 500
Total 1), 2), and 3)		\$12,500

3. How Will the Project Benefit Leverett?

The project is building a solid base of both knowledge and shared knowledge about Leverett’s industrial past and current landscape. As noted above, Leverett’s historical landscape is central rather than incidental in the experience of residents. Preservation of that landscape is to the benefit of Leverett now and in the future. However, historic preservation in large part depends on community will: both on awareness of that historic landscape and on private and public efforts to preserve. Preservation is local, and in large part undertaken by private individuals or at citizens’ initiative. The LHC’s role is to facilitate: create as preservation-friendly an environment as possible through judicious regulation; to help residents become aware of the treasures they own and live in or around; and to educate/provide information about preservation and resources.

Programs that gather and disseminate local historical knowledge support the building of residents’ ties to the community. Secondly: programs that call for material participation, such as witness interview programs and signage programs, increase long-term investment in the community. Thirdly, the more visible history is on a continuous basis, the more likely it is that residents will be aware of it.

Finally, but importantly, the more of this material is available in such a way that it can be used (rather than in primary documents), the easier the work of the Leverett 250th will be. Programming focused on local worker experience will bring together long term residents and relative newcomers. Signage will support the visibility of history in the landscape and encourage residents to invest in the landscape’s history.

4. Precedent or Comparison to Other Similar Projects

Embodied history: It is comparatively easy to collect nineteenth-century history. People wrote letters, newspapers carried local advertising and local news. Collecting twentieth-century first-person history, many organizations have discovered, is done most readily through witness interviews, But they have a short shelf life--interviews need to be collected sooner rather than later. After 25 years, people start to disappear. The Mass Memories Road Show, for instance, urges communities to collect photos and memories town wide. The Lawrence History Center, as an example, has created extensive documentation of the many workers in its many mills. But the kind of industry that Leverett was home to, predominantly in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, and after that in heritage industries, has not been collected so much. Given the shrinking availability of informants, it is important to gather their memories *now*.

Signage program: Historical Commissions in many towns in Massachusetts host signage programs. Putting up interpretive signs in the landscape is one of the central assignments of the commissions. Engaging residents by creating a uniform and standard signage program is done in many towns, for example in [Stoneham](#), [Norwood](#), [Danvers](#), [Weston](#), [Westford](#), [Dartmouth](#).

All around us, Massachusetts communities are marking significant anniversaries, and many are taking the opportunity to pay more attention to their historic landscape — create a new museum, plant trees, or restore a significant building. Compared to fifty or a hundred years ago, anniversaries are no longer simple celebrations of the hardy souls who settled the town and the first families who led it. Land, we now realize, was not uninhabited or unused when first encountered by Europeans, and so settlement also meant displacement or cultural merging. In addition, with the advent of the internet, history has come within the reach of most families. A marking of a milestone thus asks us to consider what our specific history was, and what role it plays today. Much of the industrial history of towns like Leverett is written on the landscape that our antecedents walked. The 250th anniversary in Leverett affords the town an opportunity to collectively take stock of its heritage. This project enables such reflection.

5. Control of Site

Most of the industrial sites we encounter are on private land. A few are open to the public, many are not, or not explicitly. The project relies on community engagement to invite property owners, on whose land we find sites related to Leverett's industrial history, to participate in the project in some form, from allowing access to learning more about preservation concepts. One issue we are trying to address is fear of legal consequences of opening one's land to visitors when, in fact, Massachusetts law is written to protect generous and hospitable owners.

With the expansion of the "A Sense of Where You Are" program into Zoom programs and slideshows we achieved these goals:

- All site visits -- those to mills next to the road as much as those further into the woods -- are available to people of all physical abilities.

- The programs and research cannot only be archived, but readily made available online as videos.
- LHC can make visits available to sites of which the owners would rather not give permission for group tours, but are open to having them be documented in this manner.

With interpretive roadside historic markers we achieve another way of engaging owners and residents in the history and preservation of sites. Since the markers will be on public land (the roadside), they will be under the aegis of the LHC. We do, however, plan to implement this program in collaboration with current owners. If they sell the site, the sign is there. If eventually necessary, the sign can be replaced by the town.

6. Feasibility

Success of the project depends on voluntary engagement with history (including permission from property owners), which is also one of its main objectives.

Residents are not used to thinking about their own land or the future of their town in terms of history, but uncertainties are generating interest in ways to live that diverge from the pattern of prosperity set in the twentieth century (suburbs). In addition, the upcoming 250th anniversary affords an opportunity for the community to come together around its history. This project is geared to help the community not only to learn more about its industrial and landscape history but also the preservation issues surrounding the remains, and to help Leverett residents find ways in which to incorporate the town's past into the future. In our experience with this project, many residents are interested in finding practicable ways of participating in this work.

7. Project Timeline

Please see attached timeline graph

April 2022: CPC Grant announcements/Town Meeting approval

- Starts signage research and text for website
- Create list of interview prospects
- Decide on project specifics (schools or not, who does the interviewing)
- Create standard permissions and recording standards
- Participate in various planning committee meetings

Late spring and early summer 2022

- Decide on signage
- Get website ready
- Launch interview/ local informant project

- Participate in various planning committee meetings

July-December 2022

- Go public with signage program
- Work with 6 site owners to create site language and order signs
- Do interviews and decide on programs and online availability
- Hold public interview events as appropriate
- Participate in various planning committee meetings

January-March 2023

- Video record or other capture for Embodied History program
- Participate in various planning committee meetings

March-April 2023

- Embodied History resource launch

May-June 2023

- Accounting and reporting

8. Funding

CPC funding will be generously -- and we think close to evenly -- matched by the work of several LHC volunteers.

9. Attachments

Include the following Attachments with ALL applications:

Assessors' map showing location of the project

NA

Include the following if applicable and available:

Deeds of property NA

**Plans and specifications for new construction or rehabilitation
Maps, renderings, etc. NA**

Evidence of Historic Eligibility (National Register of Historic Places)

Leverett has four National Historic Districts:

- Leverett Center National Historic District (12/5/2008)
 - <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13001131.pdf>
- East Leverett National Historic District (1/29/2014)
 - <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13001131.pdf>
- Moore's Corner National Historic District (5/19/2014)
 - <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000215.pdf>
- North Leverett National Historic District (6/13/2014)
 - <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000326.pdf>

All have significant language concerning mill sites, dams, and foundations, providing evidence that Leverett's industrial heritage in the landscape is significant. (It is also more widespread than the four centers.)

Names and addresses of project architects, contractors, and consultants

- Pleun Bouricius, PhD, LHC Public History Consultant, PO Box 41, Plainfield, MA 01070, pleunbouricius@gmail.com

Other information useful to the committee in considering the project.

List of Attachments

- [List of candidate sites for roadside markers.](#)
- [LHC Historic Preservation Planning Slideshow.](#)
- [Swift River Press Public History and Communications Proposal](#)