

Community Preservation Funding Application

Window Painting and Rehabilitation for the Houghton Memorial Building



Submitted by

Littleton Historical Society, Inc.

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Community Preservation Application
Houghton Memorial Building Window Painting and Rehabilitation

Applicant: Littleton Historical Society

4 Rogers St, P.O. Box 721, Littleton, MA 01460

CPA Category: Historic Resources

CPA Funding Requested: \$ 50,000

Total Project Cost: \$ 102,064

“My favorite journey is looking out the window.” – Edward Gorey

The windows are one of the defining features of the 1895 Houghton Memorial Building. The beautiful arched windows that dominate the main floor were the inspiration for windows in the Masonic Hall (built as St. Anne Church in 1912) and for the grand new high school (2002). They also inspire visitors to the building as they enhance the beauty of the exterior and interior equally. Many of us have been inspired while gazing out at nature while struggling with a research question or slogging through cataloging of our collection. A favorite journey, indeed.

Project Description:

The Littleton Historical Society has been privileged to be the stewards of this iconic Littleton building. Tenants of the town-owned building since 1990, we pay a nominal rent and treat the building as our own. Soon after moving in, we secured its place on the National Register of Historic Places.

Several years ago, we realized that the window sills were losing the painted finish on the outside of the building – on all sides. There was also significant loss of glazing putty on all of the windows although, luckily, very little rot on the sills or muntins. A leaky roof, subsequent interior damage, interior climate challenges, and a wet basement have delayed our attention to this facet of building maintenance.

At the beginning of 2023, we decided it was time to turn our attention to this project. It was evident that some of the sills are down to bare wood and we knew this was inviting rot which would turn into a very expensive fix. Before approaching the town, we decided to talk to some window experts. We had three firms who advertised as either experienced or specialized in historic window painting and restoration. We invited them out to talk to us about the unique windows of the Houghton Memorial Building.

My Color Magic Painting LLC of Watertown was the first company we interviewed. They had a number of historic homes and buildings on their resume, which attracted our attention. The company submitted that they would sand and scrape the old paint from the windows and repair any glazing as necessary. They would do all the work in situ. A red flag for us was that they added power washing to the brick building and molding casings and sills. With the cracks and crevices in the mortar, this did not seem to be very foresightful. Although they seemed somewhat knowledgeable about the historic aspect of the windows, we were less than confident in their handling of the project. Their quote was \$33,150.

Two firms that we called, Early American Restoration (f/k/a Duane D. Houghton, LLC) and Cleary & Son were both experts in historic window restoration and rehabilitation. They both spent hours looking over the building and talking with our board members about the process and challenges of our project.

Both firms proposed very similar procedures. They would remove the windows in sections and take them back to their workshops. All the paint finishing and glazing would be thoroughly removed using practiced, harmless techniques; any deteriorated wood would be replaced or in-filled, and the windows completely reglazed.

Both firms also would repair any of the hardware (all windows) and counter-weight systems for the arched windows on the ground-floor. Even though we do not open the windows due to the nature of the use of the building, these would all be restored to working condition. Concealed weatherstripping would be installed.

Although both Houghton and Cleary's scope of work was very similar, their quotes were not. Houghton's estimate was \$102,064.25 and Cleary's was \$388,930.

We would have been confident in choosing either – we felt both would be attentive to the windows and the building, both seemed easy to work with, and both had impressive credentials. After extensive meetings with both principals, we chose to work with Duane Houghton at Early American Restoration. Price was, of course, a heavy consideration in choosing between the two. We were, however, impressed with his presentation and how his firm would approach the project. He patiently answered our questions and assured us he would work with us and our schedule to minimize the disruptions of our operation – both inside and outside the building.

Goal:

The goal of the project is to protect the windows in whole – the frames, sashes, muntins, and glass. It started out as a mere painting project but in talking with both window restorers, we realized this was our chance to do the work thoroughly and correctly both in a mechanical sense and in a way that preserves the beauty of the Houghton Memorial Building. After Mr. Houghton examined all the windows, he commented that we were doing this just in time. A few more

seasons of New England winters and summers would have no doubt continued their deterioration. This work could see us through 100+ years!

Timeline:

The project will be done in phases starting in mid-August 2023 and continuing through January 2024. The firm will remove a set of windows and take them back to their shop, do all repairs and painting, and reinstall them before starting another set.

Budget

The quote received on February 23, 2023 was for \$102,064.25 and was accepted by the Littleton Historical Society. This covers a total of 54 windows. We negotiated with Mr. Houghton to pay over the course of the project as the phases are completed.

We are asking for \$50,000 from the Community Preservation Historical Reserve to put towards the project. Our organization will cover the remainder from our capital savings. The Historical Society has already paid the initial downpayment of \$20,412 to allow Mr. Houghton to purchase materials for the project. If money is received from the CPA, we would apply the grant to the payments due for the final phases. If there is a budget overrun, we will pay the excess. We are looking into a variety of ways to fund-raise to offset our portion of the project.

Over the past three years we have installed a new HVAC system with climate controls, and water-proofed the basement at the Society's expense, investing more than \$103,000 of our own money into the town-owned Houghton Building.

Because we feel strongly about our role as caretakers, we are pleased our endowment allows us to contribute. We consider this building one of the town's crowned jewels, it is arguably the most beautiful of all town-owned buildings. We hope that the Community Preservation Committee shares our deep appreciation for the building and will agree to recommend this project to the Special Town Meeting on November 1, 2023. If you successfully nominate this project, we hope the residents of Littleton also share these sentiments.

Support

We have received support and permission from the Town Administrator's Office and Town Counsel for this project and both have approved the Historical Society to take on this project ourselves. We will be signing an Indemnification Agreement on advice of town counsel prior to the start of the project.

Recent photos of condition



south side of Reading Room



east side of exhibit room

basement windows





**Antique views from King
Street and Foster Street
showing scope of project.**

All those windows!

