

Maine Community Heritage Project

promoting community through the exploration of local history

www.mainememory.net/mchp

I. Project Description

The **Maine Historical Society (MHS)**, in partnership with the **Maine State Library (MSL)**, is seeking Maine communities to participate in the **Maine Community Heritage Project (MCHP)**, an innovative new program that promotes collaboration between local schools, historical societies, and public libraries through the exploration and celebration of local history. The MCHP grows out of the **Maine Memory Network** (www.mainememory.net), the Maine Historical Society's nationally recognized statewide digital museum that features a constantly growing online collection of over 13,000 historical items contributed by more than 180 historical organizations around Maine; nearly 100 online exhibits that explore a diverse range of themes and topics in Maine history; lesson plans; a gallery of student history projects; online tools that allow site visitors to create and share their own exhibits; and much more. This project is supported by a National Leadership Grant from the **Institute of Museum & Library Services**.

Application materials include:

- I. Project Description**
- II. Application Guidelines**
- III. Application Form**

Overview

The Maine Community Heritage Project is an intensive one-year process that will mobilize Maine communities around the exploration, gathering, and sharing of their local history. Beginning in June 2008, sixteen local teams—each made up of representatives from local schools, libraries, and historical organizations—will work closely with MHS and MSL staff to create content-rich websites within the Maine Memory Network dedicated to the history and culture of their communities. Eight teams will participate in a first project year that runs from June 2008-June 2009; eight additional teams will participate in a second project year that runs from June 2009-June 2010. Teams will inventory local historical resources, identify and explore important themes and topics in the history of their community, write a town history, digitize collections, and create online exhibits. There will be numerous opportunities for students, teachers, local historical society members, librarians, and other people in the community to come together, to collaborate, and to share their particular interests, knowledge, and skills.

Local teams will commit significant time and effort to their project. In return, they will receive **extensive training and support, a \$10,000 supporting grant**, and, importantly, the opportunity to **create a prominent website that promotes their community** and radically expands access to information about its history.

Why this program?

Virtually every community in Maine has its own rich and telling history—a vital but often underutilized community resource. Exploring local history can stimulate local pride, create a sense of connection, provide valuable educational opportunities, and even promote tourism and other kinds of economic activity. Yet most historical resources and information are dispersed throughout the community and difficult to access. Many local people have an interest and stake in preserving and using their local history—educators, students,

librarians, archivists, town officials, boosters, citizens—but logistical obstacles, busy schedules, and scarce resources often make collaboration difficult.

Project Activities

With the support and close guidance of MHS staff, participating communities will undertake an ambitious exploration of the history of their community. The project year will kick off with a day-long orientation at MHS in Portland on Friday, June 27. Over the following year, local teams will: (1) conduct an inventory of local historical resources (collections, organizations, buildings, landmarks, knowledgeable people, books, articles, etc.); (2) determine key local stories to capture and share; (3) digitize 100-200 historic documents, photographs, records, artifacts, etc. from local collections and upload them to the Maine Memory Network; (4) write an illustrated online guide to their town's history that introduces key themes and topics in the history of the community (approximately 3000 words); (5) create online exhibits that draw on historic documents, photographs, artifacts, oral history interviews (audio and/or video); and/or video documentaries to explore specific topics in local history; (6) create a prominent new website within the Maine Memory Network that showcases and provides access to these resources; and (7) come together for a community-wide celebration of their work.

Local Team

Work in each local community will be planned and coordinated by a local planning team, the group that should submit its community's application. Each planning team should include at least one representative from a local library, historical organization, and school. The planning team will also include students. Each team will designate a team leader to serve as their local point person and to help coordinate project activities. (More details about the makeup of the planning team and the roles that each partner might play are included in the Application Guidelines.) The planning team will meet monthly with MHS staff to coordinate project activities, monitor progress, and discuss opportunities and issues that arise, and to facilitate communication with MHS staff. MHS staff will help teams organize their work, identify specific project tasks, set priorities, define specific roles and responsibilities for team members and other local participants, and assist in all phases of the project. We anticipate that each team will be organized a little differently, and reflect the particular interests, needs, talents, and temperaments of its community.

There will be many opportunities for additional members of each community to get involved and contribute. The planning team, in fact, should form the nucleus of a larger team of local participants—historical society members, teachers, students, librarians, retirees, service club members, and other volunteers—who will contribute to the project in a variety of ways according to their time, interest, and ability. Some of these opportunities might include mentoring students, helping with research, sharing information and knowledge, transcribing documents, scanning photographs, writing, editing, or participating in interviews.

While schools, historical organizations, and public libraries are the focus of this project, we are mindful that not every community has each of those organizations, and that in some places a town government or other group might be a key player and driving force. It is our goal to accommodate, embrace, and nurture the particular culture and dynamics of *your* community, and find ways to make our project model work within that context. Please contact us to discuss the makeup of your team if it doesn't seem to fit our eligibility requirements.

Support for Local Teams

Throughout this process, local teams will receive extensive support and training—on project planning; working with historic documents, photographs, and artifacts; doing research; scanning; transcribing documents; planning and conducting oral history projects; developing curricular materials; and, using Maine Memory Network tools. The project will encourage high standards of historical practice and increase communities' capacity to care for, use, and interpret collections. Local teams will be supported by two full-time project staff from MHS who will provide guidance, training, support, and technical assistance. They

will visit your community frequently to help you plan your projects and workflow, set priorities, carry out project activities, and develop your websites. Our Community Partnership Coordinator will provide leadership, direction, training, and support. Our School Partnership Coordinator will assist in those areas, and provide extensive support to participating teachers and students. The MCHP is further supported by the expertise, experience, and professional resources of the Maine Historical Society and Maine State Library.

The Website

The website your team creates will provide a centralized, resource-packed, online place where people throughout your community and beyond—including teachers and students, community members, town officials, civic boosters, researchers, and tourists—can go to learn about the history of your community. The MCHP will mark the launch of an important new tool within the Maine Memory Network, **Sitebuilder**, that will enable any community (or historical organization, or school) to use a variety of flexible, user-friendly tools to build their own historical website. Using Sitebuilder, local teams will be able to add text, historic items, contemporary images, links, audio, and video to their website, and customize menu items, layout, etc. Each team will receive full training and support in the use of these tools.

Creating a website through the MCHP will enable your team to take advantage of Maine Memory's robust infrastructure, expand your community's presence on the web, and to present its history within the context of a nationally recognized website that thousands of people throughout Maine and across the country use to learn about Maine history. Your team will decide what information and material to include on your website, maintain control of it, and be able to continue to add to the website long after the project year ends. The project will greatly expand awareness and use of local collections while, overall, reducing their physical handling. Participation will also enable your team to avoid hiring a web designer, paying for hosting, or buying software. There are no charges or fees to participate—you simply need to commit to pulling together the best possible information about the history of your community.

Supporting Grant

A supporting grant of up to \$10,000 will be provided to each local team to support costs related to the project. The library partner will serve as the fiscal agent for the grant. Decisions about expenditures will be made by the local planning team who will work with MHS staff to create a project budget once the MCHP begins. The grant will be distributed in four equal payments during the project year. Local teams will be required to submit quarterly reports detailing expenditures made with grant funds.

We are mindful that the greatest obstacle to collaboration is often not interest but time and resources. The grant is intended to help your community participate in the MCHP by providing support where your team needs it. Grant funds may be used for:

- staff support (e.g. extending the hours of library and/or historical society staff, hiring a part-time local project coordinator, providing for a substitute teacher, etc.);
- equipment (computers, scanners, digital cameras, recording equipment, etc.);
- materials (archival boxes, folders, digital recording media, etc.);
- services (e.g. help with writing, assistance in video production, evaluation of collections, etc.).

Key Dates and Project Timeline

May 9, 2008: Application deadline for 2008-09 cohort

May 30, 2008: Selection of local teams announced

June 27, 2008: Day-long project orientation at Maine Historical Society (Portland) for 2008-09 cohort

July-August 2008: Local team planning and inventory

September 2008-April 2009: Research, projects, writing, scanning, website production, etc.

April-May 2009: Production of initial website completed

June 2009: Community celebration

Application Process

Please see the online Application Guidelines and form for detailed information about how to apply. These materials are available for download online at: www.mainememory.net/mchp.

Application Deadline: May 9, 2008

Selection Process and Criteria

Over the next two years, local teams from sixteen Maine communities will be selected to participate in the MCHP. Eight teams will be selected this May to participate in a project year that runs from June 2008-June 2009. Eight additional teams will be selected in spring 2009 to participate in a second project year that runs from June 2009-June 2010. Our goal is to work with one team from each county in the state.

Applications will be reviewed by a team that includes MHS and MSL staff as well as librarians, historians, and educators. Evaluation will be based on the local team's demonstrated interest, enthusiasm, and commitment to participating in the MCHP. We will also consider applicants' ability to successfully complete the project. Finally, selection of communities will take into account the geographic, economic, and social diversity of the applicant pool and overall balance of the eight teams in each cohort.

We are committed to representing Maine communities broadly, and continuing to develop and refine a project model and resources that can ultimately be adopted by and serve any community in the state, regardless of its location, financial wherewithal, or previous participation in statewide cultural initiatives. We encourage teams that aren't selected or who aren't currently able to participate in the intensive one-year MCHP process to get in touch with us to discuss ways that MHS might support your work.

Information Sessions

We will be holding four regional information sessions to share more information about the project and help interested communities develop their local teams and applications. Please call or email to RSVP.

Tuesday, March 25, 3pm: Farmington Public Library

Thursday, March 27, 3pm: Mark & Emily Turner Memorial Library, Presque Isle

Tuesday, April 1, 3pm: Belfast Free Library

Thursday, April 3, 3pm: McArthur Library, Biddeford

Application Help

We intend the application process to be open and supportive, and our project staff are available to help you plan. Please don't hesitate to contact us to discuss your interest, local issues that might impact the makeup of your team, or your application.

For more information:

Stephanie Philbrick
Community Partnership Coordinator
Maine Historical Society
489 Congress Street
Portland, ME 04101
cell: (207) 653-9677
email: sphilbrick@mainehistory.org