

Project Update, April 2019

Wayne Library Association (Annie Louise Cary Memorial Library) Wayne, Maine

Alice In Wonderland Room Preservation with Related Carriage Barn Renovation Project

Part A: Narrative

1. Description our purpose or mission

The Cary Memorial Library's mission is to engage, inform and enrich everyone who enters by providing a welcoming space for books, collections, programs and activities that encourage enjoyment of discovery and lifelong learning.

The Wayne Library Association is a 501 (c)(3) membership-based organization overseeing the publicly available Cary Memorial Library and adjacent Williams House property. Directed by a 9-member Board of Trustees, it has served the extended Wayne community since 1885. Strong community support is evidenced by a robust cadre of volunteers and an active Friends of the Library organization assisting the part-time librarian. With over 9,000 annual visits for library use and program attendance, we strive to be a community resource.

Annually, offerings of over 100 adult and children's programs appeal to a wide variety of audiences and include lectures and presentations by authors, artists, and historians, gallery exhibits and special events. Meet-A-Maine-Author programs have hosted Maine luminaries such as Monica Wood, Paul Doiron, Tess Gerritsen and Bernd Heinrich. Recent presenters with Wayne roots: Dr. Antonio Gotto, acclaimed cardiologist, Nick Record, Maine oceanographer, and Robert Charles, former Assistant Secretary of State. Children's programs include Lego Night, weekly Baby Time and Story Hour, and increased summer programming and reading clubs.

2. Project Summary Description

The Library seeks grant support for its project to save, conserve and relocate an important community art asset. The Library Board and the Mad Hatters Advisory Committee shepherding the project, launched a campaign to preserve the iconic Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Room ("The Alice Room"). Located in a private Wayne home and facing an uncertain future, the room was donated to the Library in October 2018, and then professionally dismantled and safely stored. Painted in 1932, the seventeen wall panels depicting Alice's Adventures in Wonderland will be restored and installed in a recreated Alice Room available to the public.

Part B: Detailed Project Information

1. Identify with specificity the community need for this project and how the applicant determined the need.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was published by Lewis Carroll in 1865 and illustrated by John Tenniel. This most popular children's book has never been out of print and has been translated into 175 languages.

The Alice Room has been a Wayne community treasure since the 1930's when Alfred T. Merian, a young architect, painted wall panels in the style of renowned illustrator John Tenniel in a room under the eaves of his mother's village home. Preserving The Alice Room, which has been shared with the community for eighty years, aligns with the Library's mission and vision. For many decades, school-aged children have been invited to special tea parties in the child-sized room and to learn about Alice's adventures. The Alice Room was also featured in the 2013 Wayne Home Tour with over 350 visitors.

The current owner, now 99, wished to donate the room and contents to the Library to assure that the room would continue to be available to the larger Wayne and Maine community. The Mad Hatters, formed in August 2018, assessed the opportunity and determined possible courses of action. Site visits by Laurie LeBar and Angela Goebel-Bain, curators at the Maine State Museum, affirmed the team's plan to move ahead with the preservation project. Their assessment, along with the other professional conservators who visited the room, agreed that the historic Alice Room should be preserved. As a repository, the Library met the criteria identified by the Mad Hatters: demonstrated stewardship capabilities, long-term view and supportive mission, non-profit organizational structure, and an available facility.

2. Describe the project Photos: Vickers and Beechler



A collaborative team of Library Board members, designer Augusta French, and the Mad Hatters formed to find a suitable long-term home for The Alice Room. The historic carriage barn attached to the Williams House was chosen. The Library's very popular Williams House is used as an exhibition gallery and as event space for meetings, receptions, speakers, fundraising events, book sales and intimate community gatherings. Reconstructing the room at this site has been approved by the Library Board of Trustees.

The carriage barn will require upgrading to accommodate the project. In order to recreate The Alice Room, work will include meeting ADA requirements, weatherproofing, electrical, framing and heating installation, and safety upgrades. A heat pump installation will ensure climate control. Exhibit lighting will be installed as well as faux windows and a "rabbit hole;" all to re-create the original room aesthetic. The main entry will be redesigned for safety and efficiency. A local architect has donated CAD plans for building the recreated Alice Room with the same measurements as its original home, but adjusted to increase its size slightly to accommodate new backing materials and fire-retardant wall materials.

In addition, renovated areas will also provide the Library much needed storage. The main entry will be redesigned for safety and efficiency.

The project is being accomplished in 4 phases:

- Phase 1- Dismantle The Alice Room: art panels, trim, doors and molding will be mapped, removed, stabilized and stored (completed);
- Phase 2- Establish relocation site at Library's carriage barn (renovation approved, construction planning is under way);
- Phase 3 - Conserve art panels: clean the art panels, consolidate edges, attach to a strengthening backing, in-paint losses, and apply protective varnish (first panel delivered to conservator);
- Phase 4 – Recreate The Alice Room and re-install panels in recreated room.

Beginning on December 11, 2018, the 17 panels were stabilized by two of Maine's best conservators, Nina Roth-Wells and Ronald Harvey with assistant, Scott Mosher. The panels had been painted directly on 1930s gypsum wallboard. The gypsum was tested by Northeast Laboratory Services and found clear of asbestos and arsenic. The conservation team was guided by the principles and obligations of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. Special techniques were used to remove the panels and new technologies to preserve the pigmentation and prevent degradation of panel edges. The artwork panels and four window curtains were appraised by Terence H. Geaghan, Shipmasters Gallery, and are now insured for \$32,000.

It is expected that the project will be the subject of a professional conservation journal article due to the unique circumstances and techniques utilized. A local colloquium of professionals involved in the project is planned for later in the summer.

3. Describe the long-term positive impact which you believe the project will have on the applicant or the applicant's community.

Bringing Alice to the larger Maine community via our public library property will enhance our capability to inform and instill in both children and adults the joy of learning and imagination. As the valuable Alice panels relate to a young reader audience (and beloved by adults as well), we project that The Alice Room's physical accessibility will significantly increase the library's programming. We anticipate seeking opportunities for partnerships with Maine's rich legacy of public art.

There is worldwide interest in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, in the story, in the illustrations and in the cultural phenomenon. Of note, our everyday conversations include Alice references such as "down the rabbit hole", Tweedledum and Tweedledee, "curiouser and curiouser." As Alice appropriately says, "What is the use of a book, without pictures or conversations?"

We strongly believe preserving this intriguing masterpiece has the potential to impact a very broad audience as The Alice Room becomes available to the public. It will also highlight an important element of Wayne's literary history. We look forward to expanded programming activities sponsored by the Cary Memorial Library.

Importantly, this project will honor the gift to the community from a revered senior who was the gracious caretaker of this historic treasure for more than 40 years.

4. Key individuals involved in this project, their specific roles and a brief statement of the qualifications of each.

- Judy Danielson- President, Cary Memorial Library Board of Trustees. Board oversees entire grant process, finances, and operations at Library. Long family heritage in Wayne.
- Donald T. Welsh- Trustee, principal overseer of Williams House property, long family heritage in Wayne, Chair, Wayne Board of Selectmen.

Mad Hatter Advisory Committee:

- Holly Stevenson & Doug Stevenson- Liaisons for Williams House, construction coordinator, past Library Board member, Treasurers; long standing residents and active community leaders and facilitators
- Dee Richardson – Life-long summer resident in Wayne, community volunteer, currently on the board of the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center, Santa Rosa, Ca.
- Jann Haynes Gilmore - Architectural and Fine Arts consultant, former Head, Museums and Historical Organization Programs, National Endowment for the Humanities, and an architectural historian for Department of the Interior and US House of Representatives' historic preservation programs. Author of seven books.
- Wendy Ault -long Wayne family presence and heritage, relative of Alice artist, Alfred T. Merian, former member of Maine House of Representatives
- Cynthia Pelliccia - community resident, member and former Chair, Friends of the Cary Memorial Library, Library volunteer.

Professional Resources:

- Nina Roth-Wells, LLC, Georgetown ME – conservator
- Ron Harvey, Tuckerbrook Conservation, LLC, Lincolnville ME – conservator
- Augusta French - Design consultant

5. Will this project continue beyond one year? If yes, how will this project be sustained in future years.

We anticipate the development of The Alice Room, conservation of the art panels, and re-installing the art panels will be completed in approximately one year. We expect the results of the project, that is, The Alice Room and programming, to continue long into the future. We envision both local and regional Alice-related events to be inspired as part of the Library and Williams House programming, some of which will be expected to be revenue producing. As an adjoining space, the incremental costs may be relatively modest, but we expect the fundraising effort to produce an amount toward sustainability of the installation. In our research on the historical and cultural content we have become aware of the vast energy and enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and experiencing this quintessential literary treasure.

6. Describe efforts to engage the applicant's community and supporters in the project.

A "Toast Alice, Thank You Grace" Open House occurred in December 2018 to honor the homeowner's donation and view The Alice Room prior to dismantling. Library Board members, friends who in past years had brought their children to tea in The Alice Room, and preservation supporters attended.

Project information, photos, and project updates appear in The Wayne Messenger, a local monthly newsletter that reaches over 800 households across the country.

Local historical societies have been apprised of The Alice Room project.

Informational displays are located at the Library and at the Williams House, where "First Saturday" events each month (coffee, books and boutique items for sale) attract about 80 visitors. Members of the Mad Hatters Advisory Committee discuss The Alice Room project with attendees.

Jann Haynes Gilmore has researched and written a 58-page scholarly paper on the creator of The Alice Room, Alfred T. Merian, and the history of the room in Wayne. The illustrated paper places Alice in an historical and cultural context and will serve as an introduction to the artwork, document the history, be available as a thank you gift to donors and serve as a training tool for volunteers and history lovers. (A copy is available upon request.)

The Lewis Carroll Society of North America has been informed about The Alice Room project and is interested in announcing our project in media such as its global newsletter, The Knight.

Prospero Art, an art products company featuring Alice in Wonderland memorabilia, requested project information and photographs of The Alice Room to feature on their web site.

Further informational events will include articles in relevant journals and newsletters, and the successful community parties we employed in fundraising for another Library project several years ago. We will launch a website for greater outreach. Finally, we plan immediate mass mailings, targeted individual contact with specific donors and sponsors of prior events, and on-going applications for grant support from qualifying sources and foundations.