

NEW YORK STATE
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION



May 2, 2014

PRESERVING
ENGAGING
EDUCATING

Mary-Carol Lindbloom
South Central Regional Library Council
Clinton Hall
108 N. Cayuga Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

Fenimore Art Museum

The Eugene and Clare Thaw
Collection of North American
Indian Art

Research Library

Cooperstown Graduate Program

New York State History Day

October Conference for Teachers

Conference on New York
State History

New York History

Heritage

www.harvestofhistory.org

Dear Ms. Lindbloom:

We at the New York State Historical Association are very pleased with the way the NYSHA Library's digitizing project, done with funds provided by the South Central Regional Library Council's RBDB grant, has turned out. With the funding Evan Rallis, Special Collections Librarian, has been able to digitize 10 more finding aids to our manuscript collections and a significant portion of our Octagon Houses Collection.

The electronic versions of the finding aids that were previously only available in hard copy here at our library, are now available to researchers online in three ways:

1. Through New York Heritage, the research portal of the state's library councils. After Evan Rallis added the recently digitized finding aids, the total number of finding aids for NYSHA's manuscript collections totals 58. This is a significant number of our collections now made much more accessible to students, historians, and researchers
2. Through a listing of all the finding aids on the NYSHA Library's own website.
3. Through links in the bibliographic record in the Library's online catalog Pathfinder.

The finding aids now available electronically through this project are:

Collection No. 9 – Chadeayne Family Papers, 1870-1916

Coll. No. 12 – Congressman John D. Clarke Papers, 1927-1934

Coll. No. 42 – Octagon Houses Collection

Coll. No. 262 - Col. Charles Stewart Papers, 1752-1818. Revolutionary War papers

Coll. 316 – Horatio Pollock and Charles Culver Papers, 1869-1950

Coll. No. 324 – Dauley and Wright Monument Company Records, 1908-1962.

Coll. No. 409 – John More Family Association Papers, 1827-1999

Coll. No. 437 - John Burger New York Railroads Collection

Col. No. 439 – The John Burroughs Family Papers, 1844-1973

Coll. No. 444 – Roger Butterfield Print Collection

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The second part of the project was digitizing photographs of octagon houses in our Octagon Houses Collection. Since the collection is quite large, we selected one image of each house in eleven counties – mostly counties in the South Central Regional Library Councils' area. We were able to digitize 36 images and edit meta-data originally created by Janet MacFarlane who put the collection together back in the 1940s. Evan Rallis was able to add the images to New York Heritage for the following counties:

Broome County
Cayuga County
Chenango County
Cortland County
Delaware County
Herkimer County
Madison County
Otsego County
Schoharie County
Tioga County
Tompkins County

Even though we only received partial funding for the project, we were able to scan a significant number of items in both parts of the project – finding aids and octagon house photographs.

We have seen an increased use in the finding aids since they have been placed online. Our own staff members find the electronic versions of the finding aids very helpful as they answer reference questions from the public. Reference librarians manning the reference desk have the aids at their fingertips and no longer have to retrieve the paper copies from filing cabinets on another floor. Researchers study the finding aids in advance of a visit to the library so that they know exactly what box and file they want to look at when they arrive. Researchers who are at a distance and can't drop by in person can determine materials for which they can have copies for their use.

Evan Rallis was able to put the text of many of the scanned finding aids into Archivists Toolkit to create the version submitted to New York Heritage. This program provides an archival standard and good looking format for the finding aids.

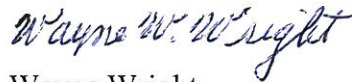
Our staff has developed a survey that we give to each person who uses a collection to determine how he learned about the collection. In that way we learn the extent of how the online finding aids are being used. Statistics are also kept to the number of hits to the finding aids on

our own website. As we see what collections turn out to be the most popular, we can make plans for digitizing the actual items in those collections.

We feel the images of the octagon houses look very good online. As we see how much use is made of the collection, either online or by researchers coming to see the entire collection, we can make plans to digitize photographs of houses in the other counties of the state.

I feel that we have accomplished the goal of the project to make available in electronic format more finding aids to our manuscript collections and a significant portion of the Octagon Houses Collection. The project has helped achieve SCRLC's goal of making library materials in its region more accessible. We have received additional funding for similar projects and are seeking other grant opportunities as well. We are very excited to see the interest and support for this work from various foundations in helping us make our collections more accessible to the public. We appreciate SCRLC's assistance in helping us accomplish this project with RBDB funds and for making the materials available through New York Heritage. I feel this greatly enhances the work of the NYSHA Library in connecting people to New York State's heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayne W. Wright".

Wayne Wright
Head Librarian

New York State Historical Association Library