The History Center in Tompkins County

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from generation to generation

2020 Technology and Digitization Grant
South Central Regional Library Council

FINAL REPORT

In January 2020, The History Center in Tompkins County was provided funding for several digitization projects to advance our *HistoryForge* digital application. The collections included pictures from the Southside Community Center Collection, photographs of buildings from our General Photo File: Residences collection, and several Sanborn map atlases. Each of these collections were provided for public access on the New York Heritage platform in addition to their integration within the *HistoryForge* application. The project was significantly delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but was ultimately successfully completed in July 2021.

The total funding award of $3,000 provided the necessary support for upgrades to technological equipment, a temporary, project-specific position for some of the digitization work, and minimal staff compensation. The primary match for the funding award was staff time on the project, calculated in the subsequent financial section.

After our initial application was approved, the scope of our digitization efforts was adjusted to integrate the digitization efforts of external groups. The Library of Congress digitized the 1904, 1910, and 1919 Sanborn maps for the City of Ithaca, which allowed us to focus on the photo collection digitization. We were able to expand our digitization efforts beyond the proposed selection of residences, and include other buildings from the General photo File. The digitization of the photographs was completed by Sabea Evans, a project-specific hire. She also created the required metadata for New York Heritage. In total, she digitized 91 photographs from the Southside Community Center Collection, and 295 photographs of houses and buildings from the General Photo file. These photographs have been integrated into the building records for *HistoryForge*, and can now be viewed in the application where they exist. The digital files and accompanying metadata were also submitted to be uploaded to New York Heritage for online hosting.

The total $3,000 covered $824.00 for tech equipment, the most significant of which was a B&H Photo Camera for high-resolution digitization of extra-large photographs. Sabea worked a total of 65.5 hours at a pay rate of $20.00, which totals $1,310.00. The estimated payroll tax calculated at 8.5% is $111.35. The total compensation for additional labor is $1,421.35. The remainder of the allotted $3,000 was allocated to History Center staff time on the project, although the staff time far exceeded the remaining time. Dedicated staff time includes 50 hours from Eve Snyder (*HistoryForge* coordinator), 20 hours from Donna Eschenbrenner (Archivist), 12 hours from Dave Furber (*HistoryForge* software developer), and 10 hours from Cindy Kjellander-Cantu.

The digitization grant from the South Central Regional Library Council has added breadth and depth to HistoryForge. These images fill out parts of Ithaca's historic built environment merely hinted at in the building outlines on the Sanborn maps. Their digitization and the information collected during the process also added a new dimension to some of the building residents (one photo shows Mr. and Mrs. Solomon Chapman in front of their home on West Clinton Street), and in some cases even provided new clues about the buildings themselves (the information included in a note on one photo suggesting that a house at 334 West State Street had been demolished and replaced by an A&P Supermarket in 1939 was verified and added to the building record). Additionally, these digitization projects allowed us to make significant developments to the *HistoryForge* application in order to host archival materials in the digital platform. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 period, we are lucky to be able to advance community access to our archival materials through projects like this. Our whole team is deeply appreciative of SCRLC's flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic as we completed this project.