

ARCHIVING OUR PAST

'MANY DO NOT KNOW THAT ITEMS ON DISPLAY ARE ONLY A FRACTION OF THE OBJECTS MAKING UP THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTIONS'

THE VISION

Railway Village Museum Director, Steve Markowitz, immediately recognized the institution's need for additional storage facilities when he first came on board in 2019. Steve realized that the continued growth of the museum would hinge on our ability to physically expand. As the museum owns several acres of property across rt 27, in early 2020, Steve proposed the addition of a new museum-worthy storage facility to the board of directors. Soon after, plans for an archival building were put into action.

'In the Fall of 2020, the museum took a tremendous step forward in preserving our past, when Dr. Whitney Lytle joined the team as Director of Curation and Education. Dr. Lytle has made a remarkable impact since her arrival last Fall, specifically in her efforts to bring the museum and its artifacts to the level of museum quality standards {as defined by the American Alliance of Museums}. Dr. Lytle and the Railway Village team have worked together to design an archival building that will serve as the 'missing link' in attaining these standards. The building will also deliver on each initiative defined within the museums' mission: Preservation, Education, and Community Outreach'.

THE NEED

Most of our patrons already know the Railway Village Museum is home to a substantial collection of historic artifacts, rolling stock, antique vehicles, and historic structures. But many do not know that items on display are only a fraction of the objects making up the museum's collections. However, the museum has insufficient facilities to properly store, conserve, or restore the entirety of the collections. Particularly, our current storage facilities do not support proper control of environmental conditions, and our collections are at risk of continued deterioration.

With our improving reputation and great strides towards museum standards, we are contacted more and more frequently with donations of high-quality items. Many of which we have happily accepted and even shared with you in editions of the Village Voice, such as the Allis Chalmers tractor (this issue) and collection of vintage woodworking tools (previous issue). Unfortunately, our current storage facilities greatly limit our ability to accept certain types of donations. We have had to turn away certain donations, like a gown from the 1800s, and make alternative recommendations for potential donation locations. This is not only due to limited space but, more specifically, space with appropriate environmental controls. We wish to be responsible and ethical stewards of Maine history and certain items have a need for very specific preservation requirements to prevent deterioration. The new building will be equipped with specialized storage and environmental controls to offer a solution for our current collection needs, as well as vastly improve our ability to accept donations in the future.

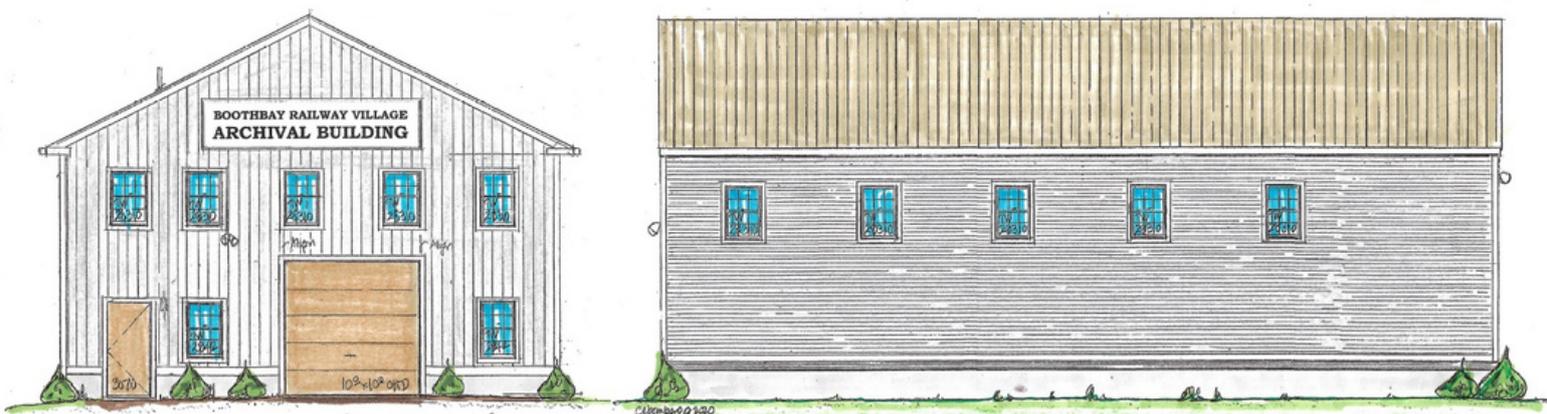


FIGURE 1: ARCHIVE BUILDING EXTERIOR VIEW

BY BUILDING OUR FUTURE

THE LAYOUT

The archive building will be a two-level structure (figure 1) with a loft-style second floor (figure 3). Due to the benefit of increased fire prevention, the building exterior will be a metal construction (common for structures housing artifacts and important archival materials). The two front entrances will include a large mechanical door/loading dock to allow for large objects to be transferred inside. This entrance will not only accommodate bulky objects from the collection to be brought into the building but also large display tables and equipment for developing new exhibits. The large area (labeled "A" in figure 2) will serve as a staging area for new exhibits. Currently, the museum has no space that serves this purpose limiting the opportunities for new annual exhibits.

Artifacts and archival papers will be stored in a specialized storage system designed by Donnegan Systems, Inc. specifically for the Railway Village Museum collections in the first-floor room labeled "B" in figure 2. Mobile shelving units operating on a rail system will take up much of the space and allow for the storage of thousands of artifacts of varying sizes. Shelving for files, flat files, and fireproof cabinetry will also be important aspects of the storage system in this area. The room will be secure and equipped with environmental controls that will allow the museum to set the optimal temperature and humidity levels for the preservation of items stored within. The first floor has been designed to include an office space (currently lacking on museum grounds) and bathroom facilities ("C" and "D" in figure 2 respectively).

The lofted second floor of the archive building will be furnished with workspaces for research and cataloging collections (area "E" in figure 3). Area "F" will be lined with shelving to house the museum's vast collection of historic and reference books and documents.

THE COMMUNITY BENEFIT

In addition to acting as a catalyst for museum sustainability, the archive building would allow the museum to better serve the Boothbay region community as a mechanism for volunteer program development, robust educational opportunities, and support to fellow historical organizations.

Upon completion of the structure, volunteer and internship opportunities will become abundant as the collections are rehoused and cataloged. Volunteers will get a chance to take an active and hands-on role in research and digitizing efforts.

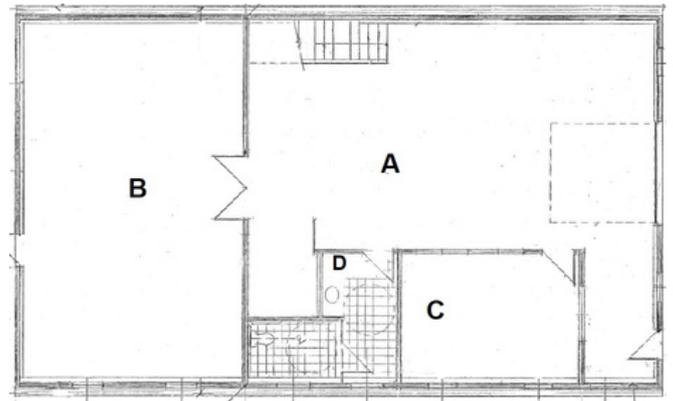


FIGURE 2: FIRST FLOOR

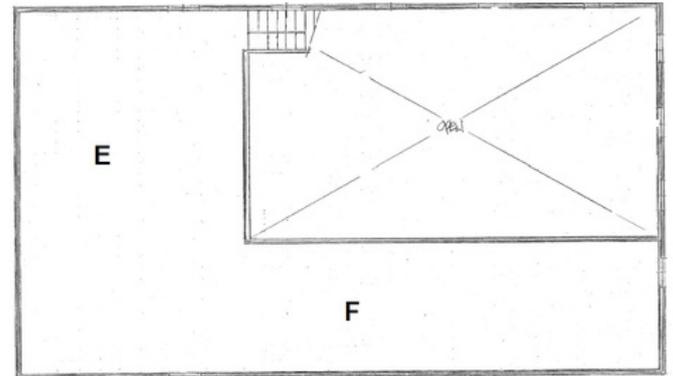


FIGURE 3: SECOND FLOOR

With the new workspaces, adult and teen workshops on topics like archival techniques, ancestry research, cataloging, curation, etc. would be offered. Year-round educational opportunities like tours for local schools or community groups would be available. The second-floor library would also be made available to the public for research by appointment. Lastly, storage space would be made available at a very low cost for local historical organizations to house objects or documents within their collections that require climate-controlled storage.

THE FUNDING

This project will be a game-changer for the museum and its ability to safely preserve our local history. It is an optimistic journey that needs a generous and devoted team to see it to its completion.

The McEvoy Foundation has generously promised \$125,000 in matching funds. The Davis Family Foundation has granted the museum \$25,000 towards construction. Additional grants may be available once construction is underway. The total project cost is \$500,000.

How to Help: In addition to monetary donations, materials and services of all capacities will be needed throughout the construction process. Please contact Steve Markowitz or Dr. Whitney Lytle for more information. (207) 633-4727

No participation is too small, and every little bit makes a difference.