



Beverly Historical Society

Strategic Plan 2011-2016

--Executive Summary--

The mission of the Beverly Historical Society is *to collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate Beverly's regional history.*

Vision: Preserve Beverly's past for the future, and make it accessible to everyone.

By 2016, the Society will be a leader in the North Shore historical community due to its extensive, accessible, well-documented collections, broad outreach to all members of the community, and financial stability based on increased membership, annual donations and endowment.

Objectives

Four areas of Strategic Focus will enable the Society to achieve the vision:

Accessibility

- Provide physical access to Society properties within the limits of good preservation practice and ADA requirements
- Provide electronic access to the collection.

Education

- Expand educational and interpretive activities with area schools and colleges
- Develop hands-on collection-focused programming that illustrates Beverly history, with a focus on the Society's strengths: colonial, maritime, neighborhood and transportation.

Recognition

- Become a regional visitor center
- Increase community participation
- Create awareness of Beverly's role during the witch trial period.

Sustainability

- Create long-term preservation plans for properties and collections
- Increase financial capacity
- Double membership
- Upgrade infrastructure and organizational capacity.

History

In 1891, a group of men, representative of some of Beverly's early families founded the Beverly Historical Society as a not-for-profit corporation. Their purpose was to establish a place for "investigating, recording, and perpetuating the history of the Town of Beverly, and collecting, holding, and preserving documents, books, memoirs, relics, and all other matter illustrating its history and that of individuals or families identified with it."

In 1892, Edward Burley died, leaving his home, the 1781 John Cabot House, to the Society for its headquarters. Today, three of its five floors are devoted to museum exhibits, meeting rooms, and research services. The Society's collections have grown to nearly a million objects, including manuscripts, books, photographs, decorative arts, and other artifacts related to the history of Beverly and the North Shore of Massachusetts.

In 1932, the Society acquired the Balch House, an important First-Period structure, for a nominal sum. John Balch was one of the first settlers of Beverly and was on the site as early as 1636. Balch descendants from around the world remain important contributors to the Society, and gather periodically at the house. The Society acquired Hale Farm in 1937. This 1694 structure, built for John Hale, Beverly's first minister, was sold to the Society by Hale descendant Eleanor Bancroft. The Walker Transportation Collection was given to the Society in 1969. Encompassing all modes of transportation, it is primarily a document and image collection, and has significantly increased in size since the original gift.

Throughout its history, the Society has collected, preserved, and interpreted Beverly history, offering programs to the public, as well as to teachers and students. A continuing influx of collection material, regular use of the Society's extensive collections, and a stream of volunteers demonstrate the need for an organization that preserves the past for use in the future. The Society's Trustees believe that the size of the supporting community is much larger than any present count of visitors would show and that the Society has work to do to increase the visibility of the organization and provide better access to the collections.

The objects (including buildings) and documents of Beverly history need to be preserved for the future, and made accessible to the public. A resource/education center of Beverly history, where the public could easily access the collections (either onsite or remotely), would address the needs of students, educators, and residents. The center could provide guidance and instruction to individuals who want to do their own research, or preserve/catalog their own collections. Digital electronic storage and communication of information stand to increase significantly both public access to the Society's collections and public awareness of the Society and its value. Having digital electronic storage also would record the collections in the event of catastrophe.

History grows with time, and the numbers of objects/documents that need preservation increase. The Society needs to foster a sense of stewardship for Beverly's historic resources in the community, and encourage community support for the preservation of our exceptional collections, so that we can continue to meet the community's needs.

The Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees on November 17, 2010.