

Preservation Assessment

Lower Merion Historical Society

May 2024

Prepared by students from the Winterthur/University of
Delaware Program in Art Conservation

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LOWER MERION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preservation Assessment Report

Institution: Lower Merion Historical Society

Date of Survey: May 6, 2024

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I. Introduction

This Preservation Assessment was carried out within the context of the first-year preventive conservation training in the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. The onsite survey took place on Monday, May 6, 2024. The contents of the report, including the executive summary, was prepared by WUDPAC students with guidance from course instructors.

The surveyors would like to thank Paige Bartello and Erin Betley for their cooperation, availability, and conversation preceding and following the time spent on site. The staff and volunteers of the Lower Merion Historical Society are to be congratulated for their strong commitment to heritage preservation and ongoing efforts to mitigate identified risks to staff, visitors, and collections.

A. Purpose of Assessment

This report has been prepared to aid the Lower Merion Historical Society in evaluating the preservation needs of its collections. Recommendations highlighted in the report address the preservation needs and concerns for the collections in the areas of planning, policy, building and maintenance, environment, security, emergency preparedness, and collections care. The report will serve as a guide for the process of creating a Preservation Plan, a document key to the identification, planning, funding, and staffing for all collections care projects.

B. Institutional Mission

The mission of the Lower Merion Historical Society follows:

“The Lower Merion Historical Society is an organization dedicated to “Preserving Our Past for the Future.” This is accomplished by stewardship of local history, education of the community, preservation of historic resources, and outreach to promote awareness of the cultural heritage of the Township of Lower Merion and the Borough of Narberth.”

C. Collection

The LMHS collection is comprised of materials that relate to the history of Lower Merion Township or the Borough of Narberth. Significant collections include oral histories, maps and land records, photographs, collections related to the history of Lower Merion schools, ledgers, postcards, family papers, and more.

II. Executive Summary

The Board, staff, and volunteers of the Lower Merion Historical Society are clearly dedicated to the care of the collections under their stewardship. They recognize the significance of their collections in documenting the history of the community, and they have the desire to see preservation projects completed.

The LMHS is in a transitional phase, coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic and working towards new strategic goals for the organization. The recognition of the need for a paid staff position, the strategic planning work that has been done, and the participation in this assessment process are excellent steps in the long-term preservation of the collection. They show that the Historical Society is making a sustained commitment to the preservation of all the unique collections under their purview. Recommendations in this report speak directly to the Lower Merion Historical Society's collections and the spaces in which they are stored and accessed. Developing a comprehensive Preservation Plan will help in prioritizing projects and creating a framework for moving forward in a systematic manner.

Recommendations for the site and the collections are explored in detail in the following report. Based on the site visit and the pre-survey questionnaire completed by LMHS, priorities include increasing accessibility to the building and the collections by:

- Continuing to gain intellectual control over the collection by inventorying and organizing objects;
- Supporting sustainable collection growth by reevaluating the collection scope and responsibly deaccessioning materials that no longer align with the mission of the institution;
- Supporting the strategic plan by developing community partnerships that make collections more representative of the history of the county;
- Supporting volunteers by developing standardized training for handling, collections management activities, and emergency planning and response;
- Increasing transparency and communication with the school district in a way that improves the stewardship of collections and allows for greater access to LMHS resources by students, faculty, and staff;
- Working towards removing all collections objects from the attic storage space - until this can occur, working to protect collections from moisture and pests using low-cost, low-tech strategies; and
- Creating a safer and more accessible environment for collections by
 - Renegotiating the use of the space in the building with the School District
 - Working with a preservation architect to address issues with the building envelope including lightning safety, water issues and drainage, pests, and accessibility
 - Reorganizing space and furniture in a way that facilitates the safe storage of and access to collections.

The surveyors would like to thank the staff and administration of the Lower Merion Historical Society for the opportunity to view the collections and for generously sharing their time and knowledge of the collections to assist in the preparation of this report.

III. Site Recommendations

A. Introduction

The Lower Merion Historical Society is located on the second and third floors of the Lower Merion Academy building, which was completed in 1812 and has gone through at least two renovations since that time. The following sections include observations and recommendations relating to site maintenance, building envelope, and building environment.

B. Site Maintenance

1. Observations

Trees, bushes, and other foliage directly about the building on the north, east, and south sides. Dense foliage close to the building promotes water retention and restricts drainage. It also increases the risk of pest infestation. A tideline of water was noted around the north (front) and east sides of the building. This suggests that the soil in this area is highly saturated and emphasizes the need to improve drainage.

The building is not equipped with a lightning rod; it is unknown whether the weathervane is grounded. One of the effects of climate change is the increased frequency and intensity of storms, which means an increased risk of lightning damage and fire. Lightning impact could cause masonry explosions, ignition of the wooden elements, widespread blackouts for electronics, and data loss.

2. Recommendations

- Discuss foliage change/removal with Erin to get approval from committees.
- Push the foliage back at least 3 feet from the building's exterior.
- Erect a lightning rod or ground the weathervane.

C. Building Envelope

1. Observations

Building security is a concern. It is unclear how many sets of keys are in existence and who has access to them. Moreover, there seems to be a lack of communication between the school district and the historical society as to who is accessing the building at what times.

Calciferous buildup was noted along the flashing of the porch on the South side of the building. This buildup has led to stalactites all along the back porch and films of calcareous buildup could also be seen on the lower windows where the water runs off. This buildup is likely the cause of rainwater leaching through the slabs and being deposited in these areas. This leaching is compromising the integrity of the building materials, but the movement of water has also caused physical displacement of the slabs on the back porch which presents a future safety concern.

Rising damp is the most prominent concern at the front of the building. The tideline extends to both sheltered and unsheltered sides of the building. The porch does not show any evidence of an interior space suggesting that it is filled with earth. The earth has likely reached a saturation point that is forcing the water into the wall. There is the potential that water has entered the porch roof, degrading the wooden beams inside and causing differential sloping along the sides.

There are similar issues on the sides of the building. Surveyors observed losses to the glazing putty on the windows and cracking and peeling of the window paint in these areas. The east side of the building shows significant biological growth that is due to a higher density of foliage on this side.

There have been issues with roof leaks in the past. These issues seem to not have been fully resolved; the salt efflorescence and prolific peeling of paint in the attic indicate ongoing issues with water. The shingles are also showing significant cupping, delamination and a layer of biological growth.

The Historical Society shares the building with the school district, which controls the ground floor and the first floor. The Historical Society controls spaces on the second and third floor (attic) of the building. While the school district maintains control of the first floor, there are some Historical Society collections on display in first floor spaces. The main collections spaces in the building (archive room, reading room, and office spaces) are in good condition, with no reports of water events or ongoing issues.

The third-floor attic space is also used for the storage of some collections. LMHS staff and Board members are aware that the area is not currently suitable for collections storage but did express interest in a potential renovation of the area to make it a viable collection storage option. A recent leak in the roof resulted in an area of the plaster ceiling falling away. There is also extensive salt efflorescence throughout the walls and ceiling, indicating moisture issues. This has resulted in surface deterioration of brickwork and plaster and extensive peeling paint. While the most recent paint layer appears to be a latex-based paint, the age of the building indicates that earlier layers could include lead or other potentially hazardous materials. Holes along the roofline on the northeast and southwest sides of the attic have allowed access to birds and there is evidence of past pest damage. Many floorboards are loose, and there are gaps in the floor. There is a chimney access in the attic that appears to be stuffed with insulation, but to what extent all chimneys are capped or sealed is unclear.

In the basement, there are similar issues with salt and damp, especially along the wall that is behind the front porch. Salt efflorescence is also leading to delamination along the baseboards of the vinyl wall covering that is in place in some parts of the basement.

The building provides limited access to public and collections spaces. Ingress and egress points can only be reached by stairs, and once in the building, the only bathroom is located on the second floor. Since there are no elevators, these barriers discourage members of the public from utilizing the facilities and collections.

Although the building is historic, it is not necessarily excluded from ADA compliance. Section [4.1.7](#) of the ADA Compliance Guidelines regarding alterations to historic buildings should be referenced to determine the appropriate steps necessary to make the building barrier-free. This would have the added benefit of creating a more welcoming environment to community members.

2. Recommendations

- Install a ring camera in the Reading Room to facilitate more secure, supervised access to collections.
- Work to gain access to existing school district security cameras or work to develop a Historical-Society-specific security system.
- Remove dead vegetation, cut back trees, and remove foliage around the building to allow for a 3' gap between vegetation and building masonry.
- Develop a site maintenance/landscaping schedule.
- Consult a preservation architect and discuss the following:

- Issues with water throughout the building including
 - Moisture in the attic that is causing efflorescence and peeling paint
 - Rising damp
- The age and condition of the roofing
- The status of the chimneys
- ADA compliance
- The possible presence of hazardous materials including lead paint, asbestos, and mold
- Secure loose floorboards in the attic.
- Determine whether the chimneys are capped, and if necessary, cap them in consultation with professional guidelines.
- Block holes in the roofline allowing access for birds. Consider installing bird houses near the building as an alternate nesting option.

D. Environment

1. Observations

The building has radiant heating and central cooling in the form of a proprietary high-velocity air conditioning system. Surveyors noted that the radiant heating was on in the basement during the site visit despite the warm day.

The environmental and light data collected during the site visit shows that the chosen collections spaces within the building are currently effective at maintaining a buffered climate. This is most evident when looking at dew point readings- the difference between the exterior and interior dew point are highest in the current collections spaces. A range of temperatures can occur in these spaces without inducing dangerous levels of moisture in the air.

The artificial light throughout the building was shown not to emit significant amounts of ultraviolet radiation and the blinds on the windows in each room were effective at blocking sunlight and ultraviolet rays when drawn.

The environmental data was collected indoors and outdoors on a humid, cloudy day after rainfall (Tables 1 and 2). All of the rooms on the first and second floors were capable of effectively buffering the warm and humid outdoor environment to some degree. As expected, the archive room was the best-controlled environment in the building, despite the door being open to the hallway environment throughout the site visit. The metal storage spaces within the archive room provide an extra buffer for collections within.

Table 1: Temperature (°F), relative humidity (%), and dew point (°F) recorded on 5/6/24

Location	Note	Temp (°F)	RH%	DP (°F)
Outside	South	75.7	69.1	64.9
Attic	Right side (PL)	75.4	61.4	61.2
Attic	Left side (PR)	74.3	59.9	59.5
Basement	Locker Room	74.7	57.4	58.6
Reading Room	Center of room	73.0	57.1	57.0
Archive Room	Temp/RH controlled	71.1	58.0 (dehumidifier set to RH 55)	55.8
File Room	Center of room	70.5	58.9	55.4
Office	At desk	70.2	61.1	56.1

Meeting Room	At central table	72.1	59.6	57.4
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Table 2: Visible light (lux), and UV (μ Watts/lumen) levels taken on 5/6/24

Location	Light Source	Vis (lux)	UV (μ W/lumen)
Outside, south side	(cloudy)	18849	768
Attic Right (PL)	Windows, blinds open	53.1	173
Attic Left (PR)	Windows, blinds open	27.1	62.4
Basement	Fluorescent Lights	762.6	12.4
Reading Room	Blinds mostly down, multiple bulb types in chandeliers on	59.4	10.8
Archive Room	Fluorescent lights	405.0	0.4
File Room	Window blinds closed + chandelier on	93.0	0.4
Office	Blinds open, LED lamps off	54.6	200.6
Meeting Room	Blinds open	35.1	151.3

2. Recommendations

- Communicate with the school district that the radiant heat should be turned off in the basement.
- Avoid using the attic for the storage of temperature and humidity-sensitive collections items. The age of the building and the nature of the attic space mean that the cost of maintaining a controlled environment would be prohibitively expensive and would likely cause problems with moisture (e.g. condensation on the single-pane windows). In addition to the issues with the environment, the low ceilings and general inaccessibility of the attic make it a non-ideal collections storage space, even with building envelope improvements.
- Install a water sensor in the overflow condensation tray of the attic air handler. The tray is full of rust, indicating a history of standing water. The collections areas below this system are at risk of water damage in the event of condensation overflow.
- Purchase dataloggers and monitor the environments at least in one space each on the first, second, and third (attic) floors over multiple seasons to gain a baseline understanding of the building environment and inform any future building envelope or mechanical system renovation.
- If a cold storage space for sensitive objects is desired, the archive room would be most suitable. This space would require the least amount of energy to maintain a cooler, drier environment with no external walls.

IV. Collections Recommendations

A. Preservation Planning

1. Observations

Funding

Regular funding for the LMHS primarily comes from rental incomes accrued through renting out commercial and residential spaces located in the Cynwyd Rail Station in Lower Merion Township, PA. Some additional funding comes from membership dues and donations. LMHS staff and board members are actively working to increase LMHS membership and establish a robust grant application process to address preservation, conservation, and accessibility needs in the collections.

Staffing

LMHS has one paid part-time employee who was hired recently. Prior to this, the Historical Society was entirely volunteer operated. Volunteers and Board Members play an important role in the operation of LMHS, but the once thriving volunteer program has not yet fully recovered from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. A key portion of the LMHS plan to increase community engagement with the collections is to revive this volunteer program.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an essential component of achieving collections care and preservation goals. Fundraising opportunities could include events, open houses, public outreach, and programming with local school districts. As staff capacity increases, exhibition opportunities at the Cynwyd Station, schools, or libraries could be explored to encourage public awareness of and participation with the Lower Merion Historical Society.

Community Engagement

LMHS staff, volunteers, and board members are currently in the process of raising awareness of the society's hours, collection strengths, and open hours to begin the process of making collections more accessible to the community.

Emergency Management

LMHS is currently developing a comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plan for the 1812 Lower Merion Academy building.

2. Recommendations

- Include preservation in LMHS public relations efforts to ensure that the preservation concerns for the collections are brought to the attention of community members and potential donors.
- Continue to pursue available grant funding for preservation, conservation, and accessibility projects.
- As finite processing, storage, and rehousing projects are identified, pursue funding for project staff in future grant applications.
- Develop a tracking method for volunteer participation - contact sheets, an excel spreadsheet keeping track of ongoing projects, etc.
- Develop an object handling policy and provide training for all volunteers who will have access to the collections.

- Create a sign-in sheet that can be used to keep track of who is visiting the LMHS and how often.
- Develop an object handling policy for researchers.
- Move forward with plans to develop a comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plan.
- Purchase and maintain an emergency supply cache.

Resources

- [Funding - Preservation Pennsylvania \(preservationpa.org\)](http://preservationpa.org)
- [Competitive Grants - Historic Preservation Fund \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](http://nps.gov)
- [DAR Historic Preservation Grants | Daughters of the American Revolution](#)

B. Collections Management

1. Observations

LMHS has a Collections Management Policy that was last updated in 1997 including information on collection scope, accession and deaccession, ethics, conservation treatment, and documentation. The policy is out of date but provides a good framework for how the current Board and staff members can adapt existing work to better align with the Strategic Plan.

Overall, there is little intellectual control over the collection. Institutional knowledge about the contents and locations of most collections is not documented. Staff estimate that around 50% of the collection has been inventoried and 5% of the collection has been formally accessioned. Staff and volunteers are currently working on inventorying collections by storage area. LMHS also recently purchased the collections management system PastPerfect.

LMHS has begun digitizing their most popular collections, providing access to them through their website. Most of the digitized files are also stored in google docs, though there is a strong interest amongst LMHS staff and board members in identifying a more archival alternative.

LMHS has loaned out collections objects in the past, but documentation of these loans is incomplete. Exhibitions are largely permanent displays of collections in the Reading Room on the second floor and the Meeting Room on the first floor. LMHS has no written loans policy, exhibition policy or rotation schedule, though there is interest in writing these policies.

LMHS has some collections relating to the Lenape - the indigenous people of land that now encompasses parts of Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. The Historical Society does not own these collections. They are on long-term loan from the family of a previous Director. Current staff and Board members report a strong desire to handle these materials in the most respectful way possible.

2. Recommendations

- Revise the existing collection scope to better reflect the current Strategic Plan for the organization.
- Continue with efforts to inventory collections; flag collections that no longer align with the collection scope for deaccession or weeding depending on their status.
- Continue with efforts to process collections using PastPerfect.

- Responsible handling of indigenous materials can be complex. Though LMHS does not own these materials, they can support responsible stewardship by inventorying the objects, tracking down all existing documentation related to their provenance to the best of their ability, and encouraging the owners to reach out to appropriate Tribal Nation to ask for guidance on repatriation and/or responsible stewardship.

Resources

- [Acquisition Guidelines - South Street Seaport Museum](#)
- [Microsoft Word - Deaccessioning.doc \(wordpress.com\)](#)
- [The Art Loan Agreement: Examples For Small Institutions \(conserv.io\)](#)
- [ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Loans of Special Collections Materials for Exhibitions and Resource Sharing | Association of College and Research Libraries \(ala.org\)](#)
- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/index.htm>

C. Long-Term Collections Storage

1. Observations

At present, collections storage is limited by the use and layout of the building. LMHS spaces are on the second and third floors of the building, which limits accessibility. Existing storage spaces are also overcrowded and often multi-use, with permanent collections, collections in process, and supplies stored in the same area, which increases the risk of dissociation and other damage. Staff and Board Members have expressed interest in the renovation of the attic into a space that can be used more reliably for collections storage, but this strategy is not recommended (See [Section III.C. Building Envelope](#)). Rather than relying on the attic for collections storage and limiting access to both collections and bathrooms to visitors with mobility issues, surveyors recommend a path forward that requires minimal building renovation and a reallocation of space within the building between the Historical Society and the School District.

2. Recommendations

- Re-negotiate the building lease with the School District so that the Historical Society controls the west side of the first floor and the entire second floor of the building. The east side of the first floor (Meeting Room) and the basement can remain in school district control and the use of the attic for storage could also be given to the school district. This reallocation of space would allow for more access to collections and would facilitate more collaboration between the District and LMHS.
- First Floor
 - Convert the first-floor pantry to an accessible bathroom. The existing water supply in the pantry will mitigate the cost of the renovation.
 - Convert the Reception Room to a reading room where visitors can access collections without needing to use the stairs.
 - Convert the Kitchen to an office or workspace for volunteers (optional).
 - Continue to display LMHS collections in the Meeting Room.
- Second Floor
 - Convert the Reading Room into the main collections storage area. Use the large floor space to bring in modular metal shelving to allow for efficient storage.

- Continue to use the Archives Room for storage of sensitive, high value, and or potentially hazardous collections including photographic prints and negatives, firearms, and ammunition.
- Convert the File Room into a processing room. Remove all permanent collections storage and use strictly as workspace and temporary storage for unprocessed materials.
- Move all collections in the School Closet to storage in the former Reading Room and utilize the space for supply storage.

D. Space Specific Recommendations

Recommendations for the long-term reorganization of collections space is provided in the previous section. Until that long-term project can be realized, the following sections include short and medium term actions to improve the condition of collections.

1. Observations

West Attic

The west side of the attic contains framed paintings, framed works on paper, film and photographic negatives, binders full of paper documents, a large architectural wooden diorama, textiles, and miscellaneous objects. There is not a consistent storage approach for framed pieces of art. Some are stacked flat on the plastic shelving units, some are stored vertically in those same shelving units, and some are stacked against a wall (not off the floor). Protective plastic sheeting is used to cover some shelving, but it is torn and missing in places. Some shelving units appear overloaded with shelves bowing under the weight of objects.

There are a large number of film and photo negative collections that are currently stored in large plastic tubs on shelving in this area. The use of the containers protects these objects from water events, pests, and some mitigation against fluctuations in RH. Some of the tubs, however, are very heavy and difficult to handle, which makes access difficult. The negatives examined appear to be polyester film, which has high physio-chemical stability.

A significant number of collections objects (including film negatives, Cold War era paraphernalia, etc.) are currently stored in acidic, deteriorating corrugated cardboard boxes. Some collections are also stored using materials that could degrade and cause damage like bubble wrap and packing peanuts. A rolled textile banner stored near the S wall exhibits significant holes from insect damage. There is some evidence of frass, but it was not determined during the assessment whether this is active pest activity.

The paint in the attic overall (more so on the ceiling than the walls, but not exclusive to the ceiling) is peeling off to a significant degree. The current paint layer peeling off looks to be a modern latex, but there is a reasonably high chance that one or more of the successive layers underneath is a lead based white, which could be hazardous to people.

East Attic

The right side of the attic is used for the storage of non-collections objects including easels, paint cans, trashcan full of salt, chairs, desks, pamphlets and assorted informational materials for the historical society. There were a considerable number of cardboard boxes with pamphlets and other historical society related informational materials. These boxes felt cool to the touch, which could indicate dampness.

Archives Room

The archives room contains paper documents, ephemera, photographs and photographic negatives (including polyester negatives), bound materials, rolled mounted and lined materials, folded textiles, and objects (including stone, organic horn or bone, as well as firearms and ammunition). The organization of objects is inconsistent and difficult to interpret. For example, some flat files are organized by subject, and others are organized by object type. There are many framed objects in flat files that can catch on the drawer when it is opened and closed. There are rolled objects stacked on top of each other above flat file storage, posing potential crushing/compressing hazards for objects at the bottom. Heavy boxes are located on high shelves, which poses challenges for safe accessing/handling. Plastic bins behind the door on metal shelves store textiles with tissue. There is some precarious storage of objects: the arrowheads in Drawer 2 were stored on top of soft padding with no cover. This snugly fit container caused the arrowheads to be abraded and jostled when the drawer was opened.

Office

The main function of the office is a workspace for the Administrative Coordinator of the Historical Society. There is office furniture including a desk, chair, computer, printer, and lamps. There is an open recycling bin, as well as a lidded trash can in the space. It is unclear if food is disposed of in the trash can. There are two doors and three windows in the room. There is also an old fireplace that has been sealed.

The space also serves as temporary collections storage for unprocessed materials including two metal shelving units with materials from the Woman's Club of Bala Cynwyd (recent acquisition) housed in archival blueboard boxes and lidded plastic boxes. There are some materials such as rolled paper and framed maps that are resting on the floor and would be vulnerable to water damage, if a leak should occur. There are also framed papers and a silver plate stored on the windowsill.

School Closet

The school closet contains records from the school district. The majority of the objects are paper based including correspondence, records, photographs, and donation paperwork. Some objects are stored in plastic sleeves within binders, but others are not. There are some non-paper-based collections in the space including jackets and pennants.

The closet is very crowded; plastic shelves are bowing, and several binders are stored horizontally across the vertically stored binders. The shelves go up very high (7ft est.) and the binders are tightly packed on the shelves. There are also various objects on the ground along one of the walls, which restricts access to the space. Overall, archives in this room are somewhat inaccessible.

Files Room

The files room contains a variety of materials including yearbooks, letters from students during WWII stored in binders, framed works on paper, vertical files of various materials (i.e. primary and secondary source papers, glass slides, etc.), and items that are in the process of being accessioned/deaccessioned.

Currently, collections items and items being processed for accession/deaccession are being stored together/near one another. Items are stored both on modular metal shelving with cardboard liners and in plastic bins or cardboard boxes on the floor. Some items are also leaning against the wall or are placed near the two radiators in the room. Books on shelving are leaning against one another at a

slanted angle with some unstable bookends. Items in vertical files in the process of being examined and secondary sources are being separated from primary source material. There are three south/west facing windows with blinds that are usually kept closed.

Reading Room

The reading room is the main publicly accessible space of the Historical Society. It contains a reference library; glass, ceramics, metal, stone, and textile objects; flat files with railroads maps; periodicals in bookshelf cabinets; facsimiles; and items from the Lower Merion Society for the Detection and Prosecution of Horse Thieves (not owned by LMHS). Most collections are well supported and displayed. Some materials may be at risk because the way they are displayed including glass and ceramic objects stored on a filing cabinet in the SE corner and street signs with no mount stacked on the table along the E wall. Some rolled documents in the large flat file are too wide for the unit. Books leaned vertically on display on the W wall are not able to structurally support themselves, particularly spiral bound and soft cover materials.

2. Recommendations

Attic

- Remove the textile banner from the attic, isolate it in a plastic bin or using plastic sheeting, and monitor for active pest activity (signs of frass, insect carcasses, etc.)
- In the long-term, it is recommended that all collection materials be removed from the attic; the environment on the third floor puts collections at risk of damage caused by water, insects, pollutants, physical forces, and more. In the meantime, there are steps that can be taken to protect collections that must be stored in this area:
 - Transfer/redistribute film and photo negatives into smaller plastic bins to address compressed negatives and the challenge of handling them safely.
 - Transfer collections objects currently stored in non-archival cardboard boxes into plastic bins.
 - Store smaller framed works vertically in plastic shelving units.
 - Get larger framed works off the floor at least 4". This can be as simple as using padded blocks or crates to elevate objects.
 - Transfer boxes full of paper documents off of the floor onto new plastic shelving.
 - Replace degraded plastic sheeting with fresh plastic sheeting and make sure all uncovered shelving units are covered.
 - Organize distribution of boxes/bins/collections objects so that lighter objects are on higher shelves and heavier objects are on lower shelves.

Archives Room

- Continue with efforts to inventory collections and work towards a consistent organizational structure for materials.
- Place heavier objects, boxes, etc. lower down for easier and safer access.
- Unframe framed objects in flat files and rehouse in polyethylene sleeves to reduce direct object handling and drawer volume.
- Identify rehousing priorities and explore rolled storage solutions for stacked objects above flat file storage.

Office

- Storage and Rehousing
 - Work to elevate objects stored on the floor to prevent damage caused by water, pests, physical forces, etc.
 - Remove objects from the windowsill to prevent high light exposure.
- Housekeeping
 - Move trash cans to the hallway to prevent pest activity.
 - Close the blinds when the office is not in use.

School Closet

- Evaluate collections to determine the relevance of the materials to the collecting goals of the institution. Deaccession materials that no longer align with the mission of the organization.
- Relocate objects stored on the floor of the closet to allow for easier access to the records and elevate the objects off the ground in case of a leak.
- Replace plastic shelving with a more durable material.
- Standardize the housing of records in archival plastic sleeves to prevent tearing.
- Include an appropriate ladder or step stool to access the records.
- Rearrange binders that are horizontally on top of vertically stored binders to facilitate access.

Files Room

- Acquire more modular metal shelving to get items off of ground.
- Replace the cardboard lining shelf decks with a material like coroplast, which is archival and will provide a better surface for access to books.
- Separate donations/accessioning/deaccessioning items from permanent collections storage to prevent dissociation.
- Move items away from radiators to prevent damage caused by heat/cooling in the winter.

Reading Room

- Move glass and ceramics currently stored on the file cabinet to a stable surface to lower the risk of damage caused by physical forces.
- Mount heavy street signs or place them on a larger table to prevent damage caused by physical forces.
- Maps and other documents that are too large for the flat files should be stored rolled using archival tubes. If these materials are frequently requested, they should be digitized to prevent excess handling caused by rolling/unrolling.
- Purchase book stands for the vertical display of books that can be damaged by leaning.
- Make handling aids accessible to researchers including foam blocks and weights.

V. Goals

At the completion of the assessment, the surveyors organized recommendations into a list of goals for the Lower Merion Historical Society to jumpstart the planning process of caring for their important and irreplaceable collections. Short-term (completion within the next 12 months), medium-term (completion within one to three years), long-term (completion within three to ten years), and ongoing

goals are identified. Staff and Board Members are encouraged to customize and expand these goals and develop them further. Goals within each of the categories are not listed in order of priority.

Short Term

- Ground the weathervane or install a lightning rod.
- Work to clean up landscaping and cut back foliage to facilitate drainage and prevent moisture retention.
- Consult a preservation architect and discuss the following:
 - Issues with water throughout the building including
 - Moisture in the attic that is causing efflorescence and peeling paint
 - Rising damp
 - The age and condition of the roofing
 - The status of the chimneys
 - ADA compliance
 - The possible presence of hazardous materials including lead paint, asbestos, and mold
- Contact the school district and ask them to turn off the radiant heat in the building for the summer.
- Secure loose floorboards in the attic.
- Address the bird holes in the roofline at least temporarily.
- To make collections in the attic safer in the short term:
 - Replace ripped plastic sheeting on shelves
 - Reorganize shelves with heavier collections on lower shelves to prevent failure of plastic shelving
 - Remove textile from back corner, seal in plastic and monitor for insect activity
- Purchase additional shelving for the file room.
- Move objects in the File Room away from radiators.
- Check collections in the attic for dampness.
- Work to elevate collection items up off of the floor in all collection spaces.
- Move glass and ceramics currently stored on the file cabinet to a stable surface to lower the risk of damage caused by physical forces.
- Mount heavy street signs or place them on a larger table to prevent damage caused by physical forces.
- Recommend that the legal owner of the Lenape collections reach out to the Lenape Nation Cultural Center to discuss the repatriation and/or responsible stewardship of materials.

Medium Term

- Push the foliage back at least 3 feet from the building's exterior for drainage.
- Move collections out of the attic storage space.
- Move all film and photographic materials into the Archives Room. Use this as an opportunity to rehouse collections that are stacked in heavy boxes.
- Prepare a proposal for the school board for the reallocation and reorganization of spaces on the first floor.
- Install a water detector in the air conditioning unit in the attic.
- Purchase dataloggers and start an environmental monitoring program for collection spaces.
- Install birdhouses near the building as an alternative nesting option.

- Replace plastic shelving in the school closet with more structurally stable metal shelving.
- Replace shelf lining in the File Room with coroplast.
- Purchase book supports for the reading room.
- Develop a volunteer training program.

Long Term

- Work towards a long-term storage plan for collections that allows for accessible access and adequate storage and workspace.
- Assess the value of the CD/DVD collection documentation to the current mission of the collection; if this information is deemed important, explore options for reformatting the data to archival digital files.

Ongoing

- Continue to rehouse collections using supportive, archival storage materials.
- Priorities for rehousing may include:
 - Objects currently stored in acidic housing
 - Rolled collections
 - Framed artworks that are taking up space in flat files
 - Textile collections
 - Items stored in binders
- As inventory and cataloguing projects continue:
 - Continue to clarify/separate primary and secondary sources from photocopies and non-original objects
 - Include a shelf numbering system to facilitate location tracking
 - Assess collections for potential hazards including firearms and ammunition
 - Assess the value of the objects to the collection and consider objects that don't fit within the collecting scope for deaccession
- Continue to monitor collections for pest activity and maintain food and trash removal policies; if an infestation is discovered, isolate collections in plastic and call a conservator.
- Continue to inventory and reorganize materials in the Archives Room to maximize space.
- Unframe framed objects in flat files and rehouse into polyethylene sleeves to reduce direct object handling and reduce volume in drawer.
- Continue to establish collaborative relationships with more diverse local organizations with archives.