



*The Little Red  
Schoolhouse  
Preservation  
Committee*

Community Preservation Act Committee  
Amherst Town Hall  
Amherst, MA

**Re: CPA proposal for an historical archiving  
of the Little Red Schoolhouse**

January 4, 2016

Dear Community Preservation Act Committee,

The Little Red Schoolhouse Preservation Committee is submitting the attached proposal for CPA funds to create an archival record of the historic Little Red Schoolhouse which is about to undergo dramatic changes as the one year demolition delay on the building is set to expire in May 2016. At best, the building could be moved to a new location and given a new use (having previously been a preschool for 75+ years and being one of the oldest preschools in the country still standing that was built as a preschool). At worst, Amherst College will level the building as soon as the demolition delay expires on May 19 as they make room for their new science center. In either event, it would be important to have a detailed historic record of this unique building built by one of the country's leading architectural firms of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: McKim, Mead and White. An archival record should also be created that records the effect this little architectural gem had on people in our community. In an era when "town-gown" issues impact many college communities, the Little Red Schoolhouse, built from a generous donation by an Amherst College alum, was a successful collaboration between the Amherst community and Amherst College for three quarters of a century with more than 1700 preschoolers passing through its doors. It was also a cutting edge pre-school program for its time, built in 1937, as it realized the value of early childhood education long before even the national Head Start program was developed.

The Little Red Schoolhouse Preservation Committee is still interested in having a dialogue with Amherst College about alternatives to demolition, but in the meantime, we request that the CPA Committee consider allocating \$10,000 (or less if the estimates come back as less) for proper documentation of the Little Red Schoolhouse, both the building itself, before it may be destroyed, and the program and its effect on our community. Since the Little Red Schoolhouse program was closed by Amherst College fairly recently, in 2013, the history of the program is still quite fresh.

This proposal would address two archival goals:

- 1) To document the interior and exterior of the building through photos, videos and perhaps 3D imaging, a process that has been used by others in Massachusetts prior to a demolition of a history building. We have received an estimate for \$1,900 for 3D imaging (attached) from a company called Existing Conditions Surveys, Inc. If you would like to read the brochure for this company, it is available at this link: <http://existingconditions.com/about-us/>
- 2) To document the human side of the Little Red Schoolhouse by hiring a company that would interview people who were affiliated with the program: those who ran the program; elders in the community who know the older years of the program before the most recent generation; Amherst College students who interned with the program as part of their college years being trained in early childhood education, and some of the many graduates of the preschool who are now respected members of our community from all walks of life. For this part of the history, we will be seeking estimates from companies that specialize in documenting history with the help of interviews as well as photography and video. We believe a thorough record of what the Little Red Schoolhouse meant for our community should include an oral history that could be told along with the building's history, perhaps including interviews that would take place in the building itself pointing out how the building was used, what activities happened where, and how the structure of the building itself facilitated learning for 1700 preschoolers from our community. It is estimated that this type of oral history might cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000. If the CPA Committee decides to consider this proposal, we will follow-up by submitting estimates with specific numbers from one or more companies who would be available to conduct an archival history of the Little Red Schoolhouse. Here are two companies that do such work: <http://winthropgroup.com/services/service/history-services> and <http://www.historyfactory.com/> I have spoken with someone from the Winthrop Group who thinks a brief history could be done on the timeline needed and with this amount of funds if not by his company than by another historian he could refer me to.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like to learn more about our ongoing efforts to save the Little Red Schoolhouse, please visit our website at <http://www.savelittlered.org/> We would be happy to address the CPA Committee to provide more information and to answer any questions you may have about this proposal.

Sincerely,

Carol Gray (413-297-1075)

On behalf of the Little Red Schoolhouse Preservation Committee, <http://www.savelittlered.org/>