



## Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application MA-35-19-0036-19  
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Public Access

### L.C. Bates Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$17,182  
Amount of cost share: \$23,968

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2020 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2019 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the [FY2020 Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## **IMLS MFA INSPIRE Project Abstract--L.C.Bates Museum**

### **The Treatment of 5 mounted fish mounted by taxidermist Fred Parke and 36 Historic Bird Mounts**

The L. C. Bates, the project applicant, a natural history museum located on the rural campus of Good Will-Hinckley Homes for Children is requesting \$17,531 for a 2 year IMLS Museums for America INSPIRES Collections Stewardship grant. The project will provide conservation treatment for 36 bird mounts and 5 fish mounts, conduct a collections care workshop in partnership with Maine Archives and Museum, offer visitor exhibit and conservation tours about the project, have a talk by scholar Susan Beegel about Parke and his taxidermy. The Museum's mission is to inspire wonder, knowledge and understanding of the natural world and human cultural environments. This preservation project will support the museum accomplishing its mission and conservation plan by preserving and securing the museum collections and using them for public exhibitions and programs and by providing preservation training and knowledge to Maine museum's staff and visitors. The grant would support Conservator Ron Harvey completing needed conservation/stabilization treatments and associated written and photographic documentation of this work. MAP and CAP reports and board planning identified these collection care needs. The project aligns with the IMLS goal of supporting exemplary stewardship of museum collections by executing conservation treatments.

The continued preservation and access of these significant collections is a museum strategic plan priority. The L.C. Bates Museum is truly a "museum of a museum". Specifically, it is a rural early 20th century museum that retains its original exhibition presentation. Former ME Historic Preservation Director, Earle Shettleworth describes the Museum as "...a major Romanesque Revival building that houses Maine's most well-preserved museum interiors from the early 20th century." Such museums are increasingly rare as museums change and update exhibits. The museum building and its collections/exhibits are interpreted as "exhibits" themselves and artifacts of our museum heritage. A RECAP consultant, John Taggart reported, "If there was a museum of museums, the L.C.Bates would definitely be included." The museum has made the much needed preservation of the animal galleries with their interior architecture and historic exhibits a priority, first preserving its 32 habitat dioramas and now focusing on the historic bird specimens and fish mounts.

The fish and ornithology collections need to be preserved for the use of researchers, scientists, school groups and museum visitors. Over time, the historic specimens have accumulated dirt and dust and some have loose feathers, missing supports, damage, loose parts or paint lose. The L.C. Bates Fish and Historic Bird Mount Treatment Project (Phase 8) is designed to conserve and safeguard five taxidermy fish and 36 unique, historic and scientific ornithological taxidermy mounts and their historic cases and to provide related educational programming about collections care. The bird taxidermy mounts date from the last half of the 19th century or the early 20th century and the fish from 1920's and 1930's. The cased birds have significant scientific, ecstatic, artistic, educational, economic/tourism, and historical value that meet the needs of today's visitors and need to be preserved for future generations of learners. The bird mounts include threatened species. The preserved fish and birds will better meet audience educational and scientific research needs. They will enhance museum activities that support new NEX GEN school learning results and STEAM.

Between August 1, 2019 and July 31, 2021, conservator, Ron Harvey will treat the fish and bird mounts, present a workshop on the Caring for Mounted Collections, and write a collections care article related to the project for the Maine Archives and Museums Newsletter and for docent tours training. To put the fish collections and their taxidermist into an historic perspective, Scholar Susan Beegel will present a talk on taxidermist Parke and clients including Hemingway and Zane Grey. The Conservator will propose presenting a program on Historic Fish Conservation at the 2020 AIC meeting.

The project result will be specimens preserved for the long-term and our rural community informed about the importance of object preservation. The project will be documented by the conservator's treatment report. The project's treatment and educational results will be assessed by an outside evaluator, Dr. Paula Work, Registrar and Curator of Zoology from the Maine State Museum. Results of the project will be broadly disseminated during and after the project through articles in the Museum newsletter, Facebook, Maine media PR, and the visitor's tours of conserved mounts.

Success will be measured by the objects' completed treatments and the surveys of the participants in the educational activities. The project will improve the visitors experience and learning and make collections more available for research and programming. The project's educational goal is to raise audience awareness of the conservation issues illustrated by the treatments. Project educational activities are targeted at 4 primary audiences: 1) regional museum staff, 2) students, 3) the general public, and 4.) potential museum volunteers and supporters. Evaluation surveys of program participants will measure the project's success and knowledge and skills gained from the educational programs. We will evaluate if these unique interactive learning opportunities promoted lifelong interest and support for the stewardship of collections and document visitors' changes in knowledge about and attitude toward collections care.

## **MFA INSPIRE Proposal –The Treatment of Five Historic Mounted Fish and 36 Historic Bird Mounts**

**1. Project Justification: Project Purpose-** L. C. Bates Museum, a natural history museum located on the rural campus of Good Will-Hinckley Homes for Children is requesting \$17,531 for a 2 year INSPIRE Collections Stewardship grant. This stewardship project will provide professional conservation treatment for 24 bird mounts in their Victorian case, 12 individual bird mounts and 5 fish mounts, conduct a collections care workshop in partnership with Maine Archives and Museum(MAM), present a scholarly presentation about the well-known fish taxidermist, and offer learner centered visitor conservation programming including a small exhibition. The conservator will submit a proposal for the AIC 2020 meeting on *Literary Fish Mounts-The conservation of historic early 20<sup>th</sup> century fish mounts (taxidermy) a pose unique and challenging process.* The grant funds would support Conservator Ron Harvey completing needed professional preservation treatments. The project's results will be assessed by an outside evaluator Dr. Paula Work, Zoology Curator and Registrar from the Maine State Museum. The project aligns with the IMLS goal of supporting exemplary stewardship of museum collections by executing conservation treatments.

**Collections need:** Professional assessments and board planning and the completion of earlier natural history conservation now make this preservation project our collection care priority. Since 1993, the staff and board have learned and planned through 5 MAP assessments, a 1993 CAP and a 2008 ReCAP. The recommendations of the CAP led to the Museum making conservation the top priority, first focusing on improving the building [an artifact itself] in order to improve collections conditions. Since 1994, long range plans and work have prioritized collection care. The 2008 RECAP assessed our progress and planned future conservation work. This project advances the objects required preservation, provides training for staff, local museums and visitors and gives researchers needed access to the scientific mounts. (See attached assessments) These preservation treatments are a needed priority because of the recommendations of our 2008 RECAP, our 2012 MAP, the mounts significance as elements of the Museum's historic exhibit presentation, daily utilization for educational programs and scientific value. The project supports the long term stabilization of the mounts and their access for scientific study. This project will be a model for future preservation and further determine the best practices for caring for these types of collections.

**Project Beneficiaries:** Based on the evaluations of previous educational collections care activities, we have documented audience needs and we have planned activities to meet those needs. The project educational activities include; 1. One workshop on Caring for Scientific Collections, 2. A MAM Newsletter article, 3. A talk by scholar Susan Beegel on Parke's Taxidermy methods and well known clients including museums. and 4. Programs and an exhibition targeted at our local audience including school groups. The educational activities will use this treatment project to exemplify the conservation process. The day long workshops, presented in collaboration with MAM will build knowledge about the special needs and health issues involved in caring for scientific collections. This project's programming will serve Maine museums that have similar mounts because of the state's significant sport fishing history. They will provide up to date information about preserving delicate fish and bird mounts and the conservator's role in this process.

The L. C. Bates Museum's overall and unique historic presentation and mission will benefit greatly from this project. The L.C. Bates Museum is truly a "museum of a museum". Specifically, it is a rural early 20<sup>th</sup> century museum that retains its original exhibition presentation. ME State Historian and past Historic Preservation Director, Earle Shettleworth describes the Museum as "...a major Romanesque Revival building that houses Maine's most well-preserved museum interiors from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century." Our CAP consultant John Leeke stated in his assessment, "If there was a museum of museums, the L.C.Bates would certainly be included." Such museums are increasingly rare as museums change and update exhibits. The museum building and its collections, exhibits and dioramas are interpreted as "exhibits" themselves and artifacts of our museum heritage. The museum will benefit from the preservation of the galleries historic exhibits and mounts included in this project. Impressionist artist Charles D, Hubbard, who designed and

painted the museum's dioramas, designed the ornithology and marine life exhibits to complement the dioramas. The museum, the oldest existing natural history museum in Maine, is among the oldest in New England. Our exhibition philosophy is to retain the original presentations and mounts as much as possible, but to professionally conserve them. The museum, including its mounts, is a rare example of a period exhibition and scientific presentation. It is valuable to the study of science today and scholarly research. The mounts as subjects benefit artists and writers. For example, the mounts are included in Rosamond Purcell's 2016 film, *The Art the Nature Makes*, Mary Cappello's 2016 book *Life Breaks In*, and Susan Beegel's November 2018 Hemmingway Review article about Hemmingway and his taxidermist Fred Parke.

**Collections benefit:** The 36 ornithological and 5 fish mounts will be preserved and exhibited safely in cases as a result of this project. The conservator's attached treatment plan addresses the mounts needs and preservation work that will benefit the mounts. Now, the mounted specimens are very dirty and dusty and exposed to possible insect infestation. The annual need to remove dirt (cleaning of the mounts) leads to mount deterioration. Most of the mounts are stable and complete, but many have loose or detached feathers, wings, or tails that need to be realigned, or like the Jabiru need special treatments as noted in the conservator's treatment plan. All have some level of photo-degradation, and need cleaning and safe housing. Some specimens including the Blue-Winged Macaw exhibit broken and partially detached tail feathers. Ten of the birds are missing their wood supports resulting in feathers or tails touching surfaces and require the fabrication of bases to make the mount upright for exhibition and safe storage. The fish are in unstable condition exhibiting deterioration in the form of cracks in the skin, most notably around the gill plates; paint loose on the upper surfaces of the mounts, the fins and in areas throughout the underside of the body. There are losses in the painted surface in the form of scuffs. There is cracking noted on the mounts bodies. The upper facing surfaces of the mount exhibit dust. *Please see treatment plans for condition details.* The unique bird mounts reveal the diversity and depth of the collection. *Please see a complete list of the mounts attached.* Stored birds that will be rotated onto exhibition in the wall case include: Brown eared Pheasant, Semipalmated Plover, Sarus Crane and Garganey. The galleries LED lighting will be adjusted to the conservator's recommended light levels for the specimens.

The fact that the mounts are historic and some are associated with known taxidermists or literary and historic figures such as Earle Gray, Hemmingway, Admiral Peary or taxidermists Parke and Williams, and some are species listed on the 2017 ME Special Concerns and International Venerable lists makes them a preservation priority that will benefit from the project. Their well-documented provenance makes them important for international, national and regional wildlife research. The 1920's and 1930's marine fish mounts prepared by Fred C. Parke, a taxidermist with establishments in Maine and Florida specializing in fish, allows the museum to provide programs that integrate science with humanities and literature. Parke also mounted Zane Gray's fish for the NY Museum of Natural History. The taxidermist Parke was said to be to fish mounts what Akley was to mammal mounts and he mounted fish for many museums. The mounts exemplify early taxidermy, before the use of uniform plastic internal mount forms. *Please see Parke attachments*

**Advancing the plan:** Center to the museum's mission and long-range plan is education and preserving the collections and historic building for the benefit of our community. The ornithology and marine fish treatments are now the most prioritized objective of our conservation plan, a part of the 2018-22 Museum Plan that is based on preservation assessments. This Treatment Project is the 12<sup>th</sup> phase in the preservation of the animal galleries. The project is important because of the specimens' scientific value, relationship to known taxidermists or literary figures and their support of the Museum's education mission. Our 2008 CAP and 2012 MAP Collections helped plan and design this treatment project and determine its significance. The mounts were found to be in great need of conservation to prevent deterioration and to secure some loose parts. The Museum and its collections are a prime resource for learning in our rural community. New directions in school curricula [NEX GEN and STEAM] have greatly increased the importance and use of this resource by teachers. Dr. Work's past evaluation and 300 teachers' program surveys supported planning and/or will support assessing measurable project outcomes that align with the museum plan.

**How the Project Addresses INSPIRE the Goals:** The project aligns closely with the INSPIRE goal of supporting exemplary stewardship of museum collections and the sharing collections access to support lifelong learning. The project will advance the performance goal for Collections Stewardship of improving the preservation, conservation, and care of the Nation's content and collections.

**Museum Capacity Goals:** The project will increase the museum capacity to meet the goals by 1. Enhancing the L.C. Bates Museum's long-term collections stewardship through the preservation methods that meet AIC guidelines, 2. Providing community and scholarly access to the natural history collections as a result of the preservation treatments, and 3. Offering a professional object conservation workshop for staff and museum peers on the unique issues of conserving early taxidermy mounts. And, as a result of the project, build the museum's capacity to offer visitors' tours about the need, value and standards of preservation.

**2. Project Work- Plan:** Based on the conservator's and Cap recommendations and evaluations of past projects, this project will apply appropriate theory and best practices. *SafetyWorks!*, ME Dept. of Labor monitored Harvey as he performed fauna cleaning by the methods proposed and found the levels of dangerous metals/chemicals below the level of detection. Project staff will wear safety equipment recommended by *SafetyWorks!* The treatment will be in agreement with the American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice. The Museum is strongly committed to implementing sound collections treatments and practices. This Project will be considered an essential part of the staff workload and working with the conservator a learning experience.

**Specific Activities and their Sequence:** The activities will be monitored monthly by the Museum board and any challenges addressed. The Schedule of Completion is appropriate because it is based on the time estimate of the conservator and Museum staff that have completed previous similar treatments. Between **8/1/2019 and 7/30/2021** these activities would implement the treatment project: **1-2. Planning/ordering supplies 8/19-9/19.** The project director will finalize the project details and timeline and order materials. **3. Pre-treatment 10/19-11/19** The conservator will prepare pre-treatment documentation. Staff will prepare the conservation work space. **4. Treatment 10/19-1/21** Conservator will treat the mounts. **5. Woodwork 12/19-9/21** As directed by the conservator, the woodworker will conserve or duplicated 10 mount supports. **6. Monitoring 8/20- 1 Data Logger** installed to monitor the case climate. **7. Support Staff: 8/19-7.21** Staff and Volunteers will assist the conservator as needed and document the project elements completed. **8. 4/21- 7/21 Post treatment documentation:** The Conservator will prepare a treatment report. **9. Evaluation- 4/20 and 4/21-7/21** Workshop participants' surveys and evaluation conducted Dr. Paula Work, will evaluate the project activities. **10. Public Education Activities and PR 8/19-7/21-** Facebook and PR will be used to promote the project and its public activities. Throughout the project staff working with the conservator, will document the preservation work and visitor programs that use this project to promote conservation. In **4/20** the conservator will present a workshops and an article will be written for the MAM newsletter and its text used for tour scripts. On **5/21 the public celebration-**We will celebrate the results of this conservation project and include a scholarly talk by Susan Begeel on taxidermist Fred C. Parke. Between **4/21-6/21** the project portfolio will be completed and in **7/21** a final report will be submitted including Dr. Work's project evaluation and workshop participants surveys that document the quality of the programming and the impact it had on their museum's collections work. This data, analyzed by Museum Board will result in a reliable outcome study, performance evaluation.

**Project Maturity:** This 12<sup>th</sup> phase of the collections care work is mainstreaming related collections preservation and community learning experiences, as it implements the preservation of the specimens.

**Project Risks:** The project's proposed straight forward preservation and educational activities are modeled on past successful preservation work and thus has few risks. Any challenges will be addressed by the museum board and director who will manage the project.

**Project Management:** The Museum Director, Ms Staber and Museum Board that includes retired museum professionals and naturalists, with the support from the project conservator developed the project goals and activities. The board and Director will oversee and manage the project implementation.

**Resources Staff:** These staff, volunteers and consultants will be sufficient to implement the project. **Object Conservator:** Ron Harvey, Tuckerbrook Conservation LLC, who has extensive experience conserving mounted specimens will treat the project collections. Between 2001 and 2016 he successfully completed the treatment of 32 habitat dioramas and many mounts. He will spend 19.5 days on the treatment project and 1.5 on the workshop. **Project Director:** Deborah Staber has worked at the Museum for 26 years, overseeing and participating in educational and preservation projects. As a planned part of her job, she will serve 500 hours as project director. **Volunteers/Staff:** **Volunteers** including MeANS (Maine Academy of Natural Science) students 2 Colby students and **museum part time educational staff** will create photographic documentation, assist the conservator, help develop and present educational activities, and do ongoing museum work to free the director for this project. **Woodworker:** The woodworker will preserve or reproduce 10 mount bases for \$150. He has preserved similar bases. **Dr. Paula Work** will prepare a written evaluation of the completed project. (2 1/2 days) **Scholar Susan Beegel** (Hemmingway and Parke Scholar) will present her research on taxidermist Fred Parke and explain his connections to writers, and others who caught the museum's fish specimens. **Time Resources:** Prior preservation projects and the conservator's experience with similar treatments allowed him and staff to make a reliable estimate of the professional time needed for the conservation work and educational programming and staff and volunteer time commitments. **Financial Resources:** We are requesting grant funds (\$17,531) and have matching cash and in kind donations (\$24,242) for the project. The total project cost is \$41,773. The project's expenses are the conservator's fee, woodworker's fee, and materials costs for treatment supplies, monitoring equipment and staff and volunteer time. The educational project expenses cover the workshop, program materials, exhibit, and printing handouts. IMLS funding will support the costs of the conservator's and wood worker's time, part of the educational program expenses, and a data logger. The cash match and in-kind match will include: (\$1000) Paula Work's evaluation, individual donations (\$400), volunteer time, Friends of LCB support (\$500) for the MS Beegel's talk and Museum budget support. Grant funds will be in held a separate account overseen by the parent organization GWH and audited annually.

**Tracking Progress:** This project will be monitored by the staff and the museum board at bimonthly meetings. The Museum Board is committed to conservation planning and oversight and supports and reviews funding initiatives. The project's progress will be assessed based on the project's Schedule of Completion and Management Plan developed by the director and approved by the board. A project portfolio will track and document the completion of activities. This review will expedite any adjustments to keep the activities on track.

**Sharing results:** Sharing the project results will be the part of the project's educational objectives that are targeted at 4 audiences: 1) regional museum staff, 2) students, 3) the general public including tourists, and 4.) potential museum volunteers and supporters. One museum goal is to raise audience awareness of the conservation issues illustrated by the treatments. Newsletter and newspaper articles, a handout, a MAM workshop and article, an exhibition, tours, and social media postings will share the project's outcomes.

**Community Involvement:** The community will be involved participating in and evaluating programs that share the conservation projects progress and results with the public and school classes.

**3. Project Results: Success Defined:** The project work will sustain the preservation of the mounts and the Museum's capacity to grow and be of benefit to future researchers, volunteers, teachers and visitors. The project activities are sustaining the long-term preservation of the bird and fish mounts and museum's historic presentation. The taxidermy information about Parke's taxidermist methods will support future preservation of fish collections. In rural Maine there is very limited access to information about conservation for the general public. We especially plan that our young visitors and at-risk Maine Academy of Natural Science students will be introduced to the value of preservation. Our popular and ongoing Hands-on" Let's Preserve" youth program, will use this project's work to build the Museum's capacity to present activities designed to grow preservation knowledge. This project's conservation and educational activities will be measured subjectively and objectively in several ways: by participant numbers, visitor feedback, an outside evaluator, audience and workshop participant's surveys, and docent feedback which will all be reviewed by the director and museum board to determine the significance of the project outcomes and if the

project goals have been achieved. Dr. Paula Work's evaluation will determine that the museum has successfully completed and meet conservation standards.

**Need Addressed: Improvement to Collections:** The project results, its outcomes and outputs will provide immediate and long-term benefits to collections, the museum, visitors and the museum field. This project will provide the object stabilization that is a critical next step in the mounts long term preservation. The objects will benefit from conservation treatment and easier access for ongoing condition monitoring by museum staff. The project's treatments will help assure the preservation of the unique marine and bird galleries, the bird and fish mounts in their historic settings and birds in storage for future generations of visitors and science researchers. The bird treatment will conserve an important Museum display/artifact and enable staff, board members and conservators to plan, prioritize, and undertake identified future conservation of museum's natural history specimens. It will help all staff, members, volunteers and visitors understand and take pride in and value our Museum's conservation efforts. Specifically, the birds are securely housed in a sealed, climate monitored dust free environment that will assure their long term preservation and 10 mounts will have new supports that protect them from damage. The project preserves the museum's unique historic presentation with its historic mounts. The workshops will result in Maine Museum staff having collections care knowledge about taxidermy objects and support their care of the collections in their museums.

**Collections Care Improve:** The proposed activities will result in improved physical and intellectual stewardship of the natural history collections. The Museum's project result will be the preservation of 36 fragile historic bird and 5 fish mounts in their historic early 20<sup>th</sup> century exhibition setting/cases or storage and the implementation of related conservation programming.

**Products:** The most important product will be that the scientifically significant, well documented mounts are preserved and available and used for exhibition, tours and study. The conservator will produce a treatment report outlining the preservation work and the project director will assemble a project portfolio that will include the results of the project work and project evaluator and audience evaluations. Educational preservation tour and program scripts will be available for future visitor learning at the museum.

**Sustainability:** The project work is designed to provide long term and sustainable preservation of the mounts. The benefits of this project are sustainable and will be maintained beyond the conclusion of this award because the project activities lessen risks to the collection and promote their long-term preservation. The project's stabilization treatments, in combination with routine condition monitoring of collections will ensure that any future deterioration is detected and slowed. In the strategic plan ongoing preservation of the collections is identified as a primary museum purpose. The safer housing and data logger monitoring will help staff monitor and assure their preservation. We anticipate the project's educational activities and exhibition will encourage potential donors to better understand collections stewardship and support future needed conservation projects.

**Define Success:** Dr. Work's evaluation results will document that the treatment activities were successfully completed and meet conservation standards. The museum's new positively evaluated educational preservation programs are supporting conservation education for visitors including school groups, college classes and families. Participants' surveys document the importance and value of the preservation programs.

**Capacity Change:** This project's activities will expand the museum's ability to preserve its collections and provide preservation knowledge for visitors. We will evaluate outcomes to determine the percent of our audience that feels they have gained preservation knowledge, if they feel the preserved mounts better serve their needs, and if as a result of the educational activities they more strongly support future object preservation. Also, a survey will be administered to project student volunteers to obtain feedback regarding the extent the project activities accomplished their goals. All evaluations will document the improved physical and intellectual collections stewardship and expanded access for museum audiences

**Accomplish Mission:** The Museum's mission is to inspire wonder, knowledge and understanding of the natural world. This project will support the museum accomplishing its mission and completing its conservation plan by preserving and securing the museum collections and using them for public exhibitions, research and programs and by providing new preservation training and knowledge to Maine museum's staff and visitors.

