



## Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-245494-OMS-20  
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Public Access

### Whittier Historical Society

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$49,876
Amount of cost share:	\$ 21,396

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:  
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-245494-oms-20>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2021 Inspire! Grants for Small Museums grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2020 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.



## I) Project Justification

Whittier Historical Society (WHS) proposes to improve stewardship of its historical photograph collection by increasing public access to it, via continued partnership with the Whittier Public Library (WPL). The project director will recruit, train and manage Whittier College volunteers to systematically create high-quality digital images, using best practices. The project director will then write industry-standard descriptive metadata for each of the photographs. The project director will then ingest the digital images and descriptive metadata into the Whittier Public Library (WPL)'s CONTENTdm database for access and preservation, as well make them available for harvest into Calisphere, a statewide digital library project of the University of California.

WHS's photographs were collected over its 49-year history, and have been stored at the Whittier Museum since 1983, when WHS purchased a building in Whittier and opened it as an exhibition space and archive to the public. This project will address the problem of inaccessibility – currently, only in-person visitors may access the collection, via an outdated process of browsing 3-ring binders of photocopies, organized by subject. This project will also address the problem of digital quality – currently, once a museum visitor has identified a photograph they would like to use, the Museum Curator scans the photo using a document scanner, which produces a file with inadequate resolution. This cumbersome, piecemeal approach to access, which produces subpar results, will be replaced by a streamlined digital approach, in which researchers and the public can search and browse by multiple fields in order to identify photographs vital to their research, and then download a high-resolution copy.

Community interest in WHS's photograph collection has partly been gauged by WHS statistics: in fiscal year 2018/2019, there were 4,978 visitors to the Whittier Museum; 375 active members, who subscribe to the monthly newsletter *Whittier Gazette*; and 57 visitors to the archive. Evidence of community interest in historical photographs is also gauged by WPL CONTENTdm statistics: in August 2019, there were 3,416 page views of six collections totaling 2,155 items.

WHS primarily serves the City of Whittier, population 85,313, and the surrounding unincorporated Los Angeles County communities of West Whittier, South Whittier, and East Whittier, which have a total population of approximately 85,696 (all demographic and population figures from U.S. Census Bureau estimate of July 1, 2018). The greater Whittier area consists of 23.6 square miles and is located 13 miles southeast of Los Angeles, California. The community served by WHS is ethnically diverse. **In the City of Whittier proper**, 67.6% of people are Hispanic, 24.8% White, 4.6% Asian, 3.4% two or more races, 1.6% African-American, 0.4% Native American, and 0.1% Pacific Islander. **In unincorporated West Whittier**, which has a population of 25,540, 89% of people are Hispanic, 7.7% are White, 2.6% are two or more races, 1% are African-American, 2.5% are Native American, 1.1% are Asian, and 0.2% are Pacific Islander. **In unincorporated South Whittier**, which has a population of 57,156, 78.1% of people are Hispanic, 14% are White, 4.9% are Asian, 3.6% are two or more races, 0.9% are African-American, 0.7% are Native American, and 0.1% are Pacific Islander. **In unincorporated East Whittier**, which has a population of less than 5,000, 56.4% of people are Hispanic, 36% are White, 6.1% are Asian, 3.5% are two or more races, 0.7% are Native American, 0.4% are African-American, and 0.1% are Pacific Islander. Those who will benefit from WDHC are members of the public interested in local



history (typically genealogy and history of home research); and academic researchers and students interested in local, regional, and state history.

As one of the largest incorporated towns in the area during its early history, Whittier's history is integral to an understanding of the history of California as a whole. Whittier was once known as a world-class agricultural center, home to citrus orchards and a packing house, and in 1887 earned the distinction of largest walnut producer in the world. Whittier was further distinguished in its early years by Whittier College, established 1887, and Whittier State School. Later known as Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility, this institution was open from 1891 to 2004 and during the first part of the twentieth century, was considered one of the best job-training and music schools in the state. A significant figure in Whittier history is resident Pío Pico, the last governor of California under Mexican rule. His ranch house, where he lived from 1852 to 1892 (preserved today as Pío Pico State Historic Park), stood on the nearly 9,000 acre Rancho Paso de Bartolo, which included half of present-day Whittier. The documentation of oil drilling in the Whittier Hills is relevant to understanding how natural resource extraction has shaped the landscape of our state. All of these subjects are covered by WHS's historical photograph collection (see *Supporting Document 2 – samples of WHS Historical Photograph Collection*). Access to, and long-term preservation of, these unique photographs is crucial to understanding California's past environment and people groups, including Native Americans, Spanish rancheros, Japanese and Central American farm workers, Quakers, and immigrants.

Stakeholders in WHDC include WPL Director of Library Services Paymaneh Maghsoudi (see *Supporting Document 3 – Letter of Commitment*), Whittier College Instructional Technologist Sonia Chaidez (see *Supporting Document 4 – Letter of Support*), and the Board of Directors of the Whittier Museum, who approved this grant application. They have all contributed to the planning of this project, which has been led by Erin Fletcher Singley, Local History Librarian at WPL.

Piloting the WDHC project supports longtime goals first set by WHS in 1972: to maintain, publish, and disseminate archival collections for research, as well as the education and enjoyment of the general public. An item in the strategic plan published in 2016 specifies an obvious next step toward meeting those goals: "Pursue grant opportunities to digitize the photograph collection and publish it online in an expansion of the Whittier Digital History Collaboration, in partnership with the Whittier Public Library." One of WHS's strengths as an organization is in leveraging community partnerships to achieve goals beyond its limited financial and staffing capacities. WHS has identified WPL as a reliable partner in project planning, execution, and expert knowledge of industry standards; and Whittier College as a reliable provider of a diverse body of interns eager to equip themselves with knowledge in the history and archives fields.

WDHC has thus far consisted primarily of a partnership between WHS and WPL. WHS contributes its collections; WPL contributes its expertise in industry-standard descriptive metadata and cataloging practices; and third parties such as California Revealed and University of Southern California have served as digitization vendors (the latter as part of a Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian grant to support L.A. as Subject Digital Residency and Training Program). Since 2015, WHDC has resulted in the digitization of 120 oral histories, 75 periodicals, five films, and four complete runs of historical newspaper titles, all belonging to WHS. WDHC has also included in-house digitization partnerships



between WPL and other local institutions with vital collections, such as First Friends Church and YMCA of Greater Whittier. WDHC, in both its exploratory phase and its planned piloting phase, aligns with the IMLS project category of Public Stewardship and Public Access by enabling the discovery of collections, broadening access, and deepening engagement. This project furthers WHS’s capacity to meet IMLS’s Transforming Communities goal to “increase access to information, ideas and networks”.

## II) Work Plan

This project will begin on September 1, 2020 and continue for two years, to August 31, 2022. It will have four cycles (following Whittier College academic semesters) of recurring activities in the process of: managing an intern team to produce high-quality digital files; creating the associated descriptive metadata; ingesting the files and metadata into CONTENTdm; and harvest into Calisphere. (See *Supporting Document 5 – Digitization Cost Calculator tables*, for timetable rationale.) Simplified project activities over the two years, arranged chronologically, are to:

1. Purchase scanning equipment, computers, software, and supplies.
2. Create a training module based on FADGI standards (see *Digital Product Form*), to teach student interns to operate scanning equipment to produce high-quality digital files.
3. Create a metadata template tailored to WHS collection needs, using Extended Dublin Core metadata schema, Library of Congress subject headings, and WPL’s Whittier-specific controlled vocabulary lists.
  - Send metadata template to Calisphere for review, and update as needed.
4. Divide photographs into eight batches of 1,000, one batch for each intern, at two interns per semester for four semesters, while retaining original order.
5. Each month:
  - Define monthly goals and targets;
  - Report on monthly completed entries/results to project manager;
  - Summarize evaluation results.
6. Each semester (Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022):
  - Interns: Recruit, hire, and train two interns from Whittier College.
    - Define hours, start/end dates; complete work agreement; clarify intern evaluation procedure.
    - Define goals, provide Excel template for identifier and caption transcription, and assign teaching aids to complete.
    - Train interns in use of hardware and software for digital image capture.
  - Digital images:
    - Perform Quality Control checks to ensure consistency and quality of digital files, as well as to ensure identifiers and captions entered into Excel match each file. Review and refine process to resolve problems.
    - Back up digital files on two external hard drives at the end of each shift; back up weekly batches on additional external hard drive stored at WPL; back up monthly batches on additional external hard drive stored at Whittier College.
    - Ingest TIFF files into CONTENTdm, which auto-generates JPEG2000 files and thumbnails.
  - Metadata:



- Upon ingest into CONTENTdm, project director adds descriptive metadata for each photograph, in addition to the identifier and caption information already entered.
- End previous/begin new intern cycle:
  - Ensure smooth hand-off from previous interns to new ones.
  - Review quarterly goals and targets. Adjust number of interns or pace of digitization as needed.
- 7. Following completed ingest of photographs and metadata into CONTENTdm, notify Calisphere the collection is ready to be harvested.
- 8. Evaluate progress semiannually to ensure benchmarks within each phase are achieved. Internally address performance progress issues.
- 9. Report to IMLS: Submit financial and narrative reports as required. Share results as appropriate with stakeholders.

WHS is in the piloting phase with this project. In previous partnerships with California Revealed and University of Southern California/L.A. as Subject, WHS and WPL have “taken what others have tried before” and “tested what works best” (in the words of the IMLS article “Biscuits vs. Granola”). WHS and WPL have a strong foundation in working together to create metadata descriptions for collections of up to 150 items large. WHS has a long partnership with Whittier College, dating back to the 1980s, in which interns perform work that benefits the Museum while meeting their own educational goals. WPL has a strong foundation in in-house digitization work, both with its own collections, and that of partnering institutions, such as First Friends Church and YMCA of Greater Whittier.

This piloting of WDHC will combine different ingredients (student interns performing digitization work, rather than research or cataloging) and different proportions (a collection of 8,000 photographs, rather than a few hundred). WHS will discover what instructions interns need in order to perform the work with precision, and in evaluating the project, will tailor its workflow and processes to meet challenges that arise.

Challenges may include finding two high-quality interns each of the four semesters, whose schedules, communication ability, and technical literacy are crucial to making progress. If any of these elements falters, the project could fall behind. This will be mitigated by working with Sonia Chaidez, Instructional Technologist at Whittier College, to identify motivated and ambitious candidates for this internship. Additionally, WHS has a stable of intelligent, hard-working volunteers, who are available to fill any gaps in intern work. Another risk is losing digital files before they are preserved by CONTENTdm. This will be mitigated by backing up on multiple external hard drives at regular intervals throughout the project, which are stored at Museum, Library, and Whittier College.

The project will be managed by WPL Local History Librarian Erin Fletcher Singley, who has substantial experience in digital project planning and execution, with support from WHS Museum Curator Nick Edmeier, who is knowledgeable about local history and Museum collections, processes, and procedures. (See *Key Project Staff and Resumes*). As outlined in the budget, staff time and equipment are the major resources needed to carry out this project. This includes 45% of Fletcher Singley time,



which is doable as other WPL librarians can cover her work while she is engaged with this project. Fletcher Singley will also track and evaluate the project's results.

WHS and WPL will advertise the results of this project with enthusiasm, linking the collection as whole as well as individual highlights, on their: websites; social media accounts; newsletters; fliers; as a slide on the City cable access channel; and in-person, with signage at both institutions. WHS and WPL will co-sponsor an event with a presentation of highlights from the collection, and will share findings from this project with other historical organizations as well.

### **III) Results**

Benchmarks regarding the number of photographs digitized, described, ingested into CONTENTdm and harvested by Calisphere will be set, tracked, and adjusted as needed. As of November 2019, a Google Analytics account has been attached to WPL's CONTENTdm database, for more precise usage statistics that will serve as a baseline for usage activity and trends by September 2020 when this project begins. WPL will continue collecting that data following the project to determine: where visitors are coming from; what terms they are searching for; and what subjects and time periods are most popular. WPL will generate monthly reports and track trends on these data points.

The results WHS strives for are accessibility and preservation. Making this vital, 8,000-piece photograph collection searchable and browsable, by both the general public and academic researchers, will be a crowning achievement of the organization, and a demonstration of its 49-year commitment to serving its community. Preserving the high-quality preservation files and associated metadata on CONTENTdm's ISO-certified servers, with copies at data centers around the world, will ensure that this achievement is carried forward for future generations.

Piloting WDHC will improve the care of the photographs, as they will be spread evenly throughout currently overfull and empty file cabinet drawers following digitization and metadata work. It will also improve access to the photographs, as users will be able to search and browse the collection without leaving their homes. Lastly, it will improve use of the photographs, as the copies that appear in publications will be high-quality and faithful to the original prints.

Tangible products will include physical publications that include photographs from this collection; reproductions of high-quality prints that appear in revamped Whittier Museum exhibits; and postcard reproduction fliers and other materials produced by WPL to showcase its work on this project. Intangible products, of course, include digital images and metadata.

WPL will sustain the benefits of this project by continuing to pay hosting and preservation fees for the digital files and metadata. This commitment is in accordance with its institutional mission, "Connecting people to knowledge, to ideas, and to one another," as well as its vision, [to] "provide facilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century where people of all ages and backgrounds will find a welcoming environment, outstanding collection, access to the latest technology, and services that are in keeping with the Library's tradition of excellence".

