

ERIE LACKAWANNA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Larry A. DeYoung, Chairman, Archives Steering Committee

Report and Recommendation to The Board of Directors April 7, 2008

Collection Placement Options

1. Negotiation with Cleveland State University of a term-limited deposit agreement of 5-10 years, encompassing the entire collection, but with the understanding that the society will undertake aggressive measures to reduce the physical size of the collection in the short-term. Society retains ownership.
2. Donation of full collection to the Federal Government, Bureau of the Interior at Steamtown National Historic Park in Scranton, PA, Society to retain some materials that fall outside the scope of the park's mandate. Society relinquishes ownership of collection with right of return should Steamtown close or de-accession collection or portions thereof.
3. Continue current storage arrangement in private facility pending further research for alternative locations
4. Move collection to a less expensive private facility pending further research and negotiations with as-yet-unidentified archival locations.
5. Divide collection, with most materials going to Cleveland State under a term-limited deposit agreement and the remainder to Steamtown as a donation.

Committee's Ranking

In order from most favorable to least favorable: 1, 5, 2, 4, 3.

Site Evaluations:

1. Cleveland State University

a. Advantages:

- i.** Location is close to the current storage location, which will keep moving costs low, and ample local support for the move is available.
- ii.** Several other collections at CSU, such as the NKPHTS complement the focus of the ELHS collection.
- iii.** The Archivist, Bill Barrow, has pursued our collection aggressively and has taken a personal interest in seeing our collection located at CSU.
- iv.** The society retains ownership of the collection and the ability to direct its use.
- v.** Furthermore, the society retains the right to sell materials, whether they are excess, duplications of materials, or other products created from the collection to benefit further collection acquisitions and archival funding.

- vi. There is an active volunteer organization, though currently one focused on other railroads.
 - vii. The ELHS maintains an active relationship with its collection.
 - viii. The entire focus of the site lies with the archival collections, it has a proper reading room, designated as such. Bill Barrow's official responsibilities begin and end with the archives at CSU.
 - ix. Location has current working relationship with university academic departments.
 - x. Curatorial experience working with photographic collections
 - xi. Established record of locating and winning outside grant support for railroad and railroad-related collections.
 - xii. Established record concerning making the larger academic community aware of the collections through on-line catalog listings and efforts through OCLC, NIDS and NUCMC.
- b. Disadvantages:
- i. CSU suffers from a lack of space for expansion, and the ELHS collection is larger than any of the current collections on location. Consequently, we must reduce the physical size of the collection quickly more or less contemporaneous with the move itself. The collection could bear some slimming, particularly in the area of duplicates and the bulk of accounting materials, the majority of which the society can safely discard.
 - ii. A move to CSU will require a "good faith" donation of several hundred dollars and the purchase of shelving, though in all this should total no more than \$1200.00.
 - iii. The uncertainty of succession after Bill Barrow retires. The effort to hold railroad-oriented collections at CSU began with Bill. It is my instinct that the size of the railroad holdings, especially in relation to the holdings of the archives as a whole, has now passed the stage where the university administration would be able to excise this or any of the railroad collections without significant opposition.
 - iv. The ELHS collection maintains an active relationship with the collection, in other words, Bill expects us to create and sustain an active cadre of volunteers to work with the collection. We have not been terribly successful with this to date, though the difficulties of working with the director at Akron contributed to this problem.

2. Steamtown National Historic Site (ST)

- a. Advantages:
- i. ST provides a permanent solution to the archive issue, the society need not revisit the question five or ten years hence.
 - ii. Steamtown possess ample (essentially limitless) space for the collection and thus we will not need to undertake the more severe reduction in the size of the collection required for placement at CSU.
 - iii. There is an active volunteer organization and they, in concert with staff, have made significant (in fact extraordinary) strides in processing collections.
 - iv. Several current Steamtown volunteers have particular interests in EL materials.

- v. There are synergies with current Erie and DL&W materials found in other collections on site
- b. Disadvantages:
 - i. The Society loses control and ownership of the collection in perpetuity. This is a permanent solution without recourse or second thoughts.
 - ii. Concern that later Steamtown staff may move to de-accession Erie west-end materials as falling outside the scope of the park's official mandate.
 - iii. There are no designated research and reader facilities, nor are any of their collections currently listed on the various archival databases.
 - iv. Current backlog on processing collections is between two and four years.
 - v. The primary focus of the site is not the archives and only a tiny portion of the staff (one person – Patrick McKnight) is responsible for the archives, and, at that, it is only part of his responsibilities.
 - vi. Placement of collection with Steamtown will eventually take the society out of the loop concerning donations. Donors unaffiliated with the society over time will make donations directly to Steamtown, this depriving the society of access to those new materials for future revenue projects.
 - vii. Steamtown has no current working relationships with local universities, though they are working to change that situation.
 - viii. Necessity for society to arrange for holding materials deemed outside of the scope of Steamtown but which, for various reasons, the society should or must retain such as society records.
 - ix. Pending future (known) donations of photographs (numbering in the tens of thousands of images) will never come into the possession of the society or will require future efforts to locate a different archival location. This is a serious issue for the society over the next ten to twenty years. In the long-term, aside from valuation maps, reproduction of photographic images represent the most likely lucrative revenue stream aside from membership to fund future society efforts.