

# Woodhull Sentinel Newspaper Digitization and Preservation Project

## Collection Owner Representative

Leslie Smith, Town of Woodhull Community Historian, Town of Woodhull NY

## Project Manager

Adam Smith, Principal, AJ Smith Consulting, Brooktondale NY

## Total Funding Sought

\$5129.52

## Project Completion Date

December 31, 2025

## Project Summary

This project aims to digitize weekly print newspapers published throughout the 1930s by the **Woodhull Sentinel**, documenting the life and events of the small village of Woodhull New York and the surrounding rural communities. The initiative will result in high-resolution, searchable digital archives that will be distributed to local historical societies, libraries, and educational institutions. In addition, the project will implement a preservation plan to ensure the long-term safeguarding of the fragile print artifacts. By combining digital access with enhanced physical preservation, this effort seeks to protect and promote an invaluable historical resource.

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# Historical and Cultural Significance

The Town of Woodhull is a small rural community in Steuben County, New York, in the Southern Tier of the Finger Lakes region. Woodhull is 55.4 square miles along New York State Route 417 and the Tuscarora Creek, and its southern town line is the border with Tioga County, Pennsylvania.

**Landmarks of Steuben County** describes Woodhull NY in the early 1900's as "a center of trade" and "one of the most important of the unincorporated villages in the county, and is situated near the center of a large farming district, hence attracts trade of such character as to materially advance all local interests. Moreover, the village is noted for its delightful situation and beautiful surroundings."

The **Woodhull Sentinel** newspapers of the 1930s provide a unique lens into a pivotal era in American history, marked by the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the years leading up to World War II. For small rural communities like Woodhull, these papers were not just repositories of local news; they were vital records of the social, economic, and cultural fabric of their time. Stories of community resilience, agricultural developments, local government initiatives, and the day-to-day lives of ordinary citizens are captured in these pages, offering a rich, underrepresented perspective within broader historical narratives.

Preserving and digitizing these newspapers ensures that this local history is accessible to future generations and researchers. The project addresses a pressing need to prevent the loss of primary source material threatened by degradation and provides opportunities for educational programs, genealogical research, and community engagement. By creating a bridge between past and present, the project will contribute to a deeper understanding of rural America during a transformative period in the nation's history.

## Collection Description

Titles	Date Ranges	Number of Editions
Woodhull Sentinel	6/5/1930 - 6/15/1939	309
Addison Advertiser	8/17/1939 - 1/2/1941	62
Canisteo Times	6/29/1933	1
<b>Total Newspapers</b>		<b>372</b>

For each edition:

<b>Page Count</b>	8 pages (two sheets folded in half)
<b>Page Width</b>	16 inches
<b>Page Height</b>	22 inches

**2976 total pages to digitize.**

**General condition:** The papers were stored in the attic of a Woodhull home for many years, in cardboard boxes with each edition folded in half twice. The papers were packed tightly together, so the folds have resulted in very tight creases. Many of the papers are otherwise in excellent condition and clear and should OCR well, assuming they can be unfolded faithfully. But there are also many with extra folds, tears, etc., and generally, many pages are brittle, especially on edges and near folds. Several editions have considerable dirt on them.

## Project Goals

1. Digitally **photoscan** each page at high resolution, creating files suitable for digital preservation and distribution.
2. Digitally **transcribe** each page to enable text-based searching.
3. **Distribute** all digital files, including images, transcriptions and metadata to identified local and online archives, free of charge for non-exclusive use.
4. Physically **preserve** the original print newspapers in archival quality storage.

## Roles and Responsibilities

**Leslie Smith** is the primary custodian of this collection and has collaborated on project organization and funding. She will provide ongoing resource support and long-term stewardship of the collection.

Leslie has been the Town of Woodhull Community Historian for over 8 years, and in that time she has actively collected, catalogued, digitized, and preserved many crucial photographs, documents and other physical artifacts from Woodhull's past. Since 2021, Leslie has organized and operated a local museum of Woodhull history: the Milo "Pick" Edwards Community Center (formerly the historic Woodhull United Methodist Church originally established in 1846). The "Pick Center" was recently featured on the Steuben County Historical Society's Museum Trail. Leslie is a life-long resident, and for many years, has been a business and community leader in Woodhull NY.

**Adam Smith** is primarily responsible for project management, technical oversight, quality control, budget management, stakeholder and vendor communication, and reporting.

Adam is Founder and Principal of AJ Smith Consulting, LLC., specializing in digital preservation of local historical artifacts. Adam was born and raised in Woodhull NY and has more than 30 years of experience as an academic librarian and project manager specializing in digital preservation. Adam spent most of that time at Cornell University where he worked on several large scale digitization projects with Google, Microsoft and HathiTrust, and his work on preservation repositories and preservation specific metadata standards has been published in Information Technologies and Libraries and D-Lib Magazine, and presented at the Digital Library Federation Conference and at the International Conference on Digital Preservation, among others.

## Vendor Selection

**Backstage Library Works** (bslw.com) has been identified as the vendor responsible for digitizing this collection, including digital scanning, optical character recognition (OCR) and metadata encoding. Backstage has over 35 years of experience working with many different types of cultural heritage institutions on digital preservation projects.

Adam Smith reached out to Erika Jenns, Engagement Consultant with the Southern Tier Library System, which encompasses the Woodhull area, and identified Backstage Library Works from their recommended vendor list, initially based on matching their expertise with the needs of this project, along with their relative geographic proximity, which simplifies the physical handling of this fragile collection. Adam has personal knowledge of Backstage from work they have done for Cornell University, and he confirmed their willingness and ability to work on a project of this nature and scale with a local historical society after consulting with Joe Crance of the Middletown Historical Society in the neighboring town of Addison NY, who worked with Backstage in the recent past on a small scale microfiche collection digitization project and reported a very positive experience. Adam subsequently reached out to Bethany Brevik at Backstage Library Works, who consulted with him on final specifications and a cost estimate.

Based on Backstage's qualifications for performing the work needed, their earned reputation for high quality work, their clear and attentive communication, and finally, their reasonable cost estimates, Adam decided it was unnecessary to seek other vendor estimates for a project of this scale, and has focused instead of completing the project efficiently with Backstage Library Works. Subsequent communications with our primary distribution target, the New York Historic Newspapers (NYHN) project, confirmed that they have had many positive experiences working with Backstage, and Backstage is very familiar with NYHN requirements.

## Digitization and Preservation, Process and Specifications

Because the New York Historic Newspapers (NYHN) project is the primary distribution target for the digitized images, and they have the most specific requirements for ingesting content into their collection, the digitization specifications will ensure that the NYHN requirements are met. The NYHN website at <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/?a=p&p=contribute>, describes their "required file specifications" as:

- PDF with Optical Character Recognition (OCR) already completed and embedded behind image
- 400 DPI greyscale (300 DPI bitonal minimum)
- 1 newspaper page (1-up not 2-up)
- approximately 3:4 in size
- no larger than 5000px wide
- 8 bit color (greyscale) or less
- named in the format: NewspaperTitle-YYYYMMDD-page#  
Example: nowhere-ville-gazette-18590621-001.pdf
- file size no larger than 5 MB

When digitized by Backstage, the papers will be unfolded, the creases ironed, and basic mending done, and then photographed with an overhead area array camera. After digitization has been completed,

Backstage will store the newspapers in archival quality storage boxes with acid-free paper interleaved between newspaper editions and returned. Adam and/or Leslie will transport the newspapers back and forth between the museum in Woodhull NY and the vendor location in Bethlehem PA.

## Distribution of Digital Files

An important goal of this project is to distribute the digitized files to a variety of potentially interested parties so that more people will have more opportunities to discover and use this collection. Further, we reason that more copies of these files in various collections will increase the likelihood that the underlying data will be preserved into the future.

To that end, the digital files will be provided to interested parties free of charge for non-exclusive use and with appropriate attribution to the Town of Woodhull NY. Recipients are granted the right to use, reproduce, and distribute the files, including charging for access within their own systems. No recipient is granted exclusive rights, and the Town of Woodhull reserves the right to provide these files to other parties under the same or different terms. The Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) should adequately address these requirements.

The most relevant online distribution target for the digitized newspaper files is the New York Historic Newspapers (NYHN) project which “exists to digitize and make freely available for research significant runs of historic newspapers for every county in the state.” As such, it is the most logical place for interested researchers to discover the **Woodhull Sentinel**, and its addition will also greatly benefit the entire NYHN project, as Steuben County is greatly underrepresented in the current collection.

Local historical archives and libraries:

- **Woodhull NY** (collection owner)
- Addison NY (Middletown Historical Society)
- Jasper NY
- Canisteo NY
- Steuben County Historical Society
- Southern Tier Library System
- New York State Library

Online archives:

- **New York Historic Newspapers** ([www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org](http://www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org))
- Newspapers.com (owned by Ancestry.com)
- Newspaperarchive.com
- FultonHistory.com
- Archive.org
- Library of Congress (Chronicling America/National Digital Newspaper Program)

Adam has already reached out to many of these proposed targets and has gotten positive confirmation of interest from several. Most importantly, the NYHN project is aware of this proposal and has confirmed the costs summarized in the budget section.

## Budget

<b>Professional Services</b>	
Leslie Smith	donated
Adam Smith	donated
<b>Vendor Services</b>	
Backstage Library Works (image capture, OCR transcription, metadata, various digital files created to specifications, transportation and archival storage)	\$5020.00 (estimate valid for 2025)
<b>Distribution Expenses</b>	
New York State Historical Newspapers (\$50 import fee, plus \$0.02 per page)	\$50.00 \$59.52 (= 2976 pages x \$0.02)
<b>Total Known Expenses</b>	<b>\$5129.52</b>

## Communication Plan

**Ongoing Updates:** Adam will be in regular contact with Leslie regarding progress and any issues encountered, and Leslie will inform the Town of Woodhull Board accordingly.

**On-Demand Reporting:** At any time, the Town of Woodhull can request more formal updates from Adam, and Adam can make himself available to attend board meetings upon request and mutual agreement.

**Final Report:** At the end of the project, Adam will furnish Leslie and the Town of Woodhull with a final report that will include summaries of the following along with any other relevant information:

- **Funding:** A summary of funding sources approached and all incoming funds received.
- **Financial Accounting:** A complete list of expenses incurred and a final accounting of funds after all expenses are paid.
- **Project Milestones and Deliverables:** A summary of milestones achieved, issues encountered, status, and quality review of deliverables.
- **Return of Physical Items:** Confirmation that all physical items are back in possession of the Town of Woodhull, complete (with re-inventory) and in approximately the same condition of repair as they left, stored in the specified archival storage.
- **Digital File Distribution:** A summary of digital file distribution, including specific information on the import of files into the New York Historic Newspapers system.