2023 Awards of Merit
Nomination Guidelines

Website: http://www.clho.org/awards/

Deadline: February 15, 2023

About the Awards of Merit

The Connecticut League of History Organizations recognizes excellence in Connecticut history through its annual Awards of Merit. The awards recognize institutions and individuals who demonstrate the highest professional standards and who enhance and further the understanding of history in Connecticut. The purpose of the awards is to recognize the care, thought, and effort invested in these contributions and to inspire and encourage others by acknowledging exceptional contributions to state and local history.

The Awards of Merit program is also a stepping stone to national recognition through the American Association for State and Local History's Leadership in History Awards. We encourage organizations with eligible projects to consider submitting to both award programs. For more information about the AASLH awards, visit https://aaslh.org/programs/leadership-in-history-awards/ or contact state representative Nick Foster at nfoster@wiltonhistorical.org.

Award Categories

CLHO presents Awards of Merit in two categories: Projects and Individual Achievement.

Projects include most types of public-facing research and interpretive work, including but not limited to exhibitions, research projects, websites and digital history/digital humanities projects, online exhibitions, books and other publications, educational and other public programs, talks and lecture series, documentaries/films/videos, demonstrations, restorations, preservation projects, etc. We accept and review nominations for projects presented in-person, in print, virtually/online, or in hybrid forms.

Individual Achievement awards are intended for people who have made significant and longstanding contributions to Connecticut history beyond the local level. While we recognize that there are countless individuals who are worthy of recognition, this statewide award is intended for those whose achievements rise beyond a single town or locality. We encourage towns and local history institutions to recognize the contributions of important individuals at the local level with their own awards and accolades.

Statement of Excellence

Projects recognized with an CLHO Award of Merit should demonstrate an effort to go above and beyond the ordinary for an organization or individual. Qualified projects should show a level of "excellence" and serve as an example for others in the field to follow. Projects can show excellence in a number of ways, including (but not limited to):

- Discussing or examining difficult and/or diverse topics, such as class, ethnicity, race, gender identity, mental health. The project should seek to create a sense of inclusion and be reflective of the most up to date standards of interpretation within the history field.
- Demonstrating effective use of historical sources to tell new stories, reinterpret common stories from new perspectives, or uncover "hidden history" which alters or expands our shared understanding of the past.
- Exploring innovative methods to teach history to a broad and diverse audience. Excellent projects can offer multiple avenues for audiences to interact and engage with the material that best suits their learning style.
- Showing how history is relevant to the present and the future.

Eligibility

We accept nominations from individuals, history organizations, and other cultural institutions in Connecticut. We strongly encourage history organizations to nominate their own work, and to recognize outstanding contributions by peer organizations with a nomination. Individuals may nominate their own work in the project category, but they may not nominate themselves for individual achievement awards.

All projects completed in Connecticut or by Connecticut organizations within the preceding 18 months are eligible for nomination. Individuals under consideration for achievement awards should reside in Connecticut and have a track record of significant contributions to Connecticut history beyond the local level.

For a list of past award recipients in all categories, visit http://www.clho.org/awards/past/.

Nomination Process

To make a nomination, follow the instructions below and submit your package to the 2023 CLHO Awards of Merit Dropbox by the deadline.

Nominations open in November and are due by **February 15, 2023**. The committee meets in early March to deliberate. Award recipients will be notified in mid to late March, and awards will be presented at CLHO's Annual Business Meeting and Awards of Merit Presentation on April 18.

Nomination Materials and Instructions

Please prepare your nomination materials as a set of digital files and upload them to the 2023 CLHO Awards of Merit Dropbox. We accept the following formats: PDF, Microsoft Office-compatible files (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), JPG, GIF, PNG, TIFF. Please ensure your images are saved at a suitable resolution (150 dpi minimum, 300 dpi maximum) and are properly oriented. This helps us prepare our slideshow for the Awards of Merit Presentation.

If your submission includes a large number of images, we ask you to be mindful of our Dropbox space by not uploading needlessly large files when suitable smaller versions may be created.

For large submissions, you my upload a ZIP file. If your nomination package includes video or other very large files that are available on the web, we prefer that you include links to those files rather than the files themselves. If you have questions about the format of or best way to transfer any of your files, please contact Amrys Williams at director@clho.org.

Your nomination will contain the following:

- Cover sheet
- Narrative
- Budget (project nominations only)
- Two letters of critical evaluation
- Supporting publicity (if applicable/available)
- Documentation

Please ensure that all files adhere to the following naming convention: Nominee-TypeofFile (for instance, TownHistoricalSociety-CoverSheet, TownHistoricalSociety-Narrative, TownHistoricalSociety-Budget, or JohnDoe-CoverSheet, JohnDoe-Narrative). This helps us keep track of all the files in your nomination package. You may also upload a single ZIP file to keep things together.

Cover Sheet

Download and save the cover sheet form and complete it with the information indicated.

Narrative

Your nomination narrative should be no more than four pages of 12-point type and should include the following. Please use the numbered headings indicated below to organize your narrative.

1. **Abstract:** Provide a brief description of the nominated project or individual and its/their significance. What makes this project or person exceptional or important? This description will be used for publicity purposes should your nomination receive an award.

2. **Background:** Please provide background on the nominated organization or individual. For organizations, this should be a concise description of your institution, its mission, programs, staff, audience, and membership. For individuals, this should be a short biographical statement.
3. **Audience:** This section should provide an overview of the project or individual's audience and their response to the project or the individual's work and contributions. For projects, describe the intended and actual audience, how you reached them, how successful you were in doing so, and how they responded to the project. For individual nominations, describe the groups and communities that were reached and affected by the individual's work, and those communities' response to it. If known and applicable, please included demographic information, attendance numbers, etc.
4. **Goals and Outcomes**: Outline the original goals for the project and how these goals were achieved or modified during the course of the project. Did you achieve your aims? What were the outcomes of the project? For individuals, please describe the aims and impact of the nominee's work. You may include demographic information, evaluation data, survey responses, or other evidence in this section.
5. **Notes and Sources:** Provide a brief explanation of historical research conducted and sources consulted for your project. This may take the form of a brief bibliography or essay on sources. Publications must include a bibliography.
6. **Funding:** Describe the sources of funding for your project, including any grants or other special funding you received and the sources of those grants/awards. You can think of this as a brief budget narrative.
7. **Legislators:** Provide the names, mailing addresses, and email addresses of your state legislative representatives. For projects, this should be the representatives for the nominated organization's district. For individuals, this should be the representatives for the nominee's district. You may look up your state legislators here. If your nomination receives an award, we will ask you to contact your legislators to share the good news and invite them to the Awards of Merit Presentation. CLHO will provide a template email for this purpose.

Budget (projects only)

Provide a detailed budget for the nominated work. Include all relevant income and expenditures. This should be the budget for the project, not the entire institution. Please note that the size of the budget does not determine awards. We evaluate each project based on the quality of work that was done with the resources reflected in the budget. Bigger budgets do not necessarily mean better projects, or a greater chance of an award. They simply offer context for the committee to evaluate the project.

Letters of Critical Evaluation

Provide two letters from people able to critically evaluate the quality and significance of the nominated project or individual and their work. This does not mean that they need to be

critical of the project or person, but that they should come from someone with the relevant knowledge and expertise to thoughtfully describe and assess their significance. Letters of critical evaluation **cannot** come from individuals affiliated with the nominated organization, project, or individual, or who would otherwise benefit from the nominee receiving the award.

The best letters of critical evaluation come from other professionals in the history and museum field who have firsthand knowledge and experience with the nominated project or individual's work. Examples of good people to write letters of critical evaluation include: historians, scholars, and practitioners with knowledge of the project's subject matter or individual's field of expertise; colleagues in the Connecticut or New England history and museum community, such as curators, authors, museum consultants, or other professionals; or leaders at neighboring history organizations with relevant experience and expertise to the subject matter and/or medium. The type of project or individual's field of expertise should inform your choice of letter-writers. For an exhibition, you might select a historian with expertise in the period or subject explored, or a curator with knowledge of the types of material on display and the challenges involved in displaying and interpreting it. For an individual, you might invite letters from other professionals in the field. For a digital project, you might choose to have one of your letters be from someone with experience in digital projects of a similar sort.

Letters of critical evaluation should **not** come from people—whether directly affiliated with the project/nominee/organization or not—who have an interest in the granting of an award. Local government officials, friends of the museum/nominee, local people who visited the exhibit/read the book/attended the program may be able to write a glowing letter or to say what they appreciated about the work, but they are not able to offer a critical evaluation of the project as a work of public history. Letters of this sort do not aid the committee's ability to assess the value and significance of the nominated work or individual.

The sooner you approach someone about writing a letter to evaluate your project, the better. We recommend you reach out to several people from whom you may wish to solicit letters, invite them to experience the project, and follow up with them about writing a letter of evaluation for your nomination package. For exhibitions, public programs, and other limited-time offerings, it is especially important to approach your letter-writers while they are able to experience the nominated work alongside the rest of the public.

You can think about selecting evaluators as an opportunity to broaden your and your institution's professional networks in Connecticut and beyond. Are there researchers whose work informed your interpretation who you'd like to know? Are there other museum and history people in the state and region with whom you'd like to collaborate in the future? Reaching out for a letter of critical evaluation is a great way to make that first connection.

If you have questions about selecting evaluators, please contact Amrys Williams at director@clho.org.

Supporting Publicity

Please include any available media coverage, reviews, social media buzz, or other publicity for the project or individual being nominated. This need not be exhaustive—a representative sample is fine, no more than five pages please.

Documentation

Proper documentation is critical to the committee's ability to evaluate your nomination. The materials you provide as part of your documentation should enable the committee to experience the project to the greatest extent possible. For individual nominations, documentation should demonstrate the work and impact of the individual.

Unless the nominated work is a publication, project nominations must include photographic and/or video documentation. For on-site exhibitions, please provide a floor plan, exhibit script, a selection of representative exhibit labels, and photographs of the exhibition itself. For educational programs and lectures/presentations, please provide a copy of the program (lesson plans, scripts, slide decks, presentation narrative, etc.). If your program was recorded or has other documentation available online, please provide links to those materials. For digital projects available online, simply provide a link or links.

For publications, please either provide a digital copy as part of your nomination package or mail two physical copies to the CLHO office at the address below.

Individual achievement nominations should include details of the individual's accomplishments, as well as testimonials from individuals. Testimonials may be additional letters of critical evaluation. Please include a complete C.V. or résumé.

If you have questions about properly documenting your nomination, please contact Amrys Williams at director@clho.org.

Submitting a Nomination

All nominations must be submitted electronically via the 2023 CLHO Awards of Merit Dropbox by February 15, 2023. Simply click the link or visit the URL below and you will be prompted to upload your files. Please refer to the nomination checklist below to ensure you are submitting all required files. Incomplete nominations will not be reviewed.

https://www.dropbox.com/request/Rkp6iloIs3FzwJyZjX8x

If you are nominating a book or other print publication for consideration, please send two copies of the publication to the CLHO office at the address below. We welcome PDF copies of publications (for the review committee's use only, of course) to facilitate the circulating of materials to reviewers.

Connecticut League of History Organizations
CCSU Department of History
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050

You will be notified within four days of the receipt of your nomination package to confirm your submission. If you have questions about your nomination, or are having difficulty submitting you materials for any reason, please email Amrys Williams, CLHO executive director, at director@clho.org. If you wish to have any nomination materials returned, please make arrangements with her in advance of the deadline.

Review Process

Nominations are reviewed by the CLHO Awards of Merit Committee, which is composed of at least five history and museum professionals from around the state. The committee includes members of the CLHO Board of Directors, as well as others recruited by the committee chairs. In forming the committee, we try to bring together individuals representing different areas of expertise as well as sizes of institution.

The Awards of Merit are noncompetitive: all projects judged worthy of recognition with an award will receive one. There is no set number of awards that we give each year. Each nomination is judged on its own merits. The Awards Committee may give multiple awards or no award in any category.

To guide its deliberations, the Awards of Merit Committee considers the following questions for each nomination:

- What is the specific historical context or subject matter of the nomination and why is it significant?
- Does it further the understanding of Connecticut history?
- Is it in keeping with current professional standards?
- Is it historically accurate, based on sound research?
- Does it meet the standards laid out in CLHO's Statement of Excellence (see p. 2)?
- Does it offer a fresh approach to relating the subject matter, or otherwise build on what has already been done?
- Does it advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or access in the cultural field?
- Does it serve as a model for others?
- Does it reflect care, thought, and effort?
- Is the nomination clear, easily understood, and properly documented?
- Were best practices followed in the care of artifacts, documents, sites, and other historical materials used in the project to ensure these resources were not damaged?
- What does the budget reveal about the nomination?

- Are the letters of critical evaluation from suitable writers, and do they offer credible and thoughtful endorsements?
- What were the nomination's goals? Were they met?

In order to identify promising public history projects, the Connecticut representative to the American Association for State and Local History will look over your nomination and may contact you for potential submission to AASLH's Leadership in History Awards. For more information about the AASLH awards program, visit https://aaslh.org/programs/leadership-in-history-awards/.

Questions

If you have questions about the Awards of Merit program, your nomination, or anything else related to the awards, please contact Amrys Williams, CLHO Executive Director, at director@clho.org, or call the CLHO office at (860) 832-2674. We look forward to receiving your nomination!

Nomination Checklist

For Project nominations:

- ☐ Cover sheet
- ☐ Narrative (up to three pages, 12 pt font)
- ☐ Project budget
- ☐ Two letters of critical evaluation
- ☐ Supporting publicity
- ☐ Documentation appropriate to the nominated work

For individual achievement nominations:

- ☐ Cover sheet
- ☐ Narrative (up to three pages, 12 pt font)
- ☐ Two letters of critical evaluation on the significance of the individual's work
- ☐ Supporting publicity (e.g., press coverage of the individual's contributions)
- ☐ Documentation (including the individual's C.V./résumé and testimonials)