

**Culture & Heritage Commission  
Board of Commissioners Meeting  
August 26, 2025  
6:00 PM  
Museum of York County**

**Person Presiding: David Duncan**

**Members Present: Katie Rutland, David Duncan, Jeff Lyon, Margaret Parson-Willins, Annie Laurie Wheat**

**Members Absent: Dorothy Johnson**

**Ex Officio Members Present: George Sheppard**

**Ex Officio Members Absent: Eddie Lee**

**Staff Present: Richard Campbell, Dabney Scholler, Jillian Bingham**

**Others:**

**Call to Order**

- David Duncan called the meeting to order at 6:00pm
  - Note for the Agenda: We will go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Prospective Acquisition of Real Estate.
- David Duncan presented the minutes from the meeting and asked for changes or corrections.
  - No corrections to be made, minutes are accepted as written.

**Calendar Review**

- August
  - Election of Officers
    - Postponed from June, due to Commission seat changes and no meeting in July.

**Reports and Presentations**

- Director's Report
  - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
  - Visitation
    - CHM site-wide visitation for the month of July, visitation totaled eight thousand, one hundred and sixty-one.
  - School Groups
    - For the month of July, school group visitation totaled three hundred and fifty-nine.
  - Membership
    - Membership has increased by one hundred and eighty-eight memberships and one hundred twenty renewals, with a total revenue of \$14,670. The CHM overall memberships are at one thousand, three hundred and forty-seven.
  - Past Events

- Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday
  - On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Main Street Children's Museum welcomed three hundred and seventeen visitors by hosting Winnie the Pooh Silly Saturday. The museum was transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood, encouraging visitors to participate in fun themed activities.
- Cell Phones: How They Come from Our Earth
  - The Museum of York County hosted a drop-in program on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, inviting visitors to explore the Carolina Piedmont minerals that are used in cell phones. Fifteen visitors participated and the museum earned a stipend for participating in this Smithsonian-partnered program.
- Messy Maestros
  - Throughout the summer, Main Street Children's Museum hosted Messy Maestros each Thursday. For the month of August, the theme was sculpting, where participants used both paper and clay. Fifty-nine participants came out on August 7<sup>th</sup> and seventy-seven were in attendance on August 14<sup>th</sup>.
- World Lion Day
  - On August 9<sup>th</sup>, Museum of York County hosted World Lion Day. Fifty participants learned about the American Lion that once lived in the Piedmont and compared it with modern African lions.
- Red Wolf Day
  - Red Wolf Day took place at the Museum of York County on August 16<sup>th</sup>, where twenty-two participants learned about the endangered red wolf, its historical presence in the Carolinas, and ongoing conservation efforts.
- Upcoming Events
  - By the Sweat of Our Brows Descendants Dinner
    - On September 12<sup>th</sup>, CHM will be hosting the annual Descendants Dinner at Hightower Hall. Both Black and White Bratton descendants will be in attendance for this event and will continue to build upon their shared heritage.
      - Margaret- Parson Willins said that we have had around thirty in attendance in the past but may have more this year, as the commission is invited.
  - By the Sweat of Our Brows
    - On September 13<sup>th</sup>, Historic Brattonsville will be hosting By the Sweat of Our Brows. This annual event is to honor the legacy of the enslaved community by involving their descendants in presenting a more complete history of the site. The program provides opportunities for visitors to engage directly with both Black and White Bratton descendants and to learn about their shared heritage. This year, *Beyond the Fields*, will begin with the traditional *Calling of the Names* from Harriet Bratton's 1865 Freedmen's List. Scheduled activities include interpreter-led demonstrations of enslaved clothing, natural dyeing, operation of the historic cotton gin, and African American foodways. Family and children's programming will feature baseball, historic toys, and games, with baseball games scheduled for 11:00am and 3:00pm. Additional highlights include a Special Descendants Presentation at

1:00pm, *Lineage and Legacy: Conversations Across Generations*, a guided tour of Historic Brattonsville, and a tour of the Enslaved Ancestral Burial Ground.

- Wizard of Oz Science Saturday
  - On September 20<sup>th</sup>, visitors will journey down the yellow brick road to the land of MYCO Oz. Visitors have the opportunity to dig for gems with Dirt Dauber Deb, test courage with mystery boxes, explore the science of rainbows and light, investigate the power of wind and tornadoes, and enjoy other themed activities.
- Worldwide Day of Play
  - In partnership with Nickelodeon and Association of Children's Museums, Main Street Children's Museum will be hosting Worldwide Day of Play on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Visitors will be invited to celebrate the joy of play with fun, active games and activities throughout the day.
- Get SMART-1 (MYCO)
  - On September 27, Museum of York County will host Get SMART1, where visitors will learn about the European Space Agency's SMART-1 mission, launched on September 27, 2003. Visitors will also learn about our closest space neighbor, the Moon.
- CHM Project Updates
  - Lowry Family Theatre Repair
    - Midwest Maintenance, Inc. has completed the installation of all stainless-steel plates and saddles reinforcing Trusses 1–5. On August 11<sup>th</sup>, the truss rods were tensioned with Terracon Consultants verifying proper load levels, completing structural stabilization of the roof. On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Oswalt & Sons removed the jacks beneath the trusses, with confirmation of expected settlement of 3/16" in Trusses 2–5 and 7/16" in Truss 1. Bennett Preservation Engineering was onsite to supervise each stage of the process. The roof is now fully self-supporting. Next steps include painting the auditorium walls by McNeely Brothers Painting, completing exterior pattsess plates, and re-installing attic mechanical systems. Project completion is projected for mid-October. CHM Preservation has begun preparations for reopening, including updating the fire notification system per City of York standards, evaluating the elevator and auditorium HVAC system for repair or replacement, and restoring full auditorium lighting functionality.
      - George Sheppard asked if we could have the board meeting at the McCelvey Center in the future. Richard Campbell said that we could once everything is complete.
  - Colonel Bratton Cabin Preservation Project
    - Preservation work on the Colonel Bratton Cabin continues with replacement of the classroom floorboards currently in progress. Repairs and repainting of window sashes and frames in the classroom have been completed. J.D. Clark Co. is under contract to patch and re-plaster all areas of the Seminary walls where plaster is missing. This work is expected to begin by mid-September.
  - Hightower Hall Projects

- Midwest Maintenance, Inc. was awarded the contract for gutter replacement at Hightower Hall, with work expected to begin by mid-September. Painting of the recently replaced back steps has been completed, and painting of the front steps is currently in progress.
- Jefferson High School Historical Marker
  - On Saturday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am the dedication ceremony of the Jefferson High School Historical Marker will take place. The Historical Marker booklet has been drafted, professionally formatted, and sent to the printer for production. Operations set the post on Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> and the marker itself to be installed on Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. A press release was issued and has already generated a significant amount of attention from the community and beyond. In addition, on Monday, August 25, the *Post and Courier* met with several Jefferson Alumni at the Historical Center to conduct interviews, further highlighting the historical importance of the project and building anticipation for the dedication.

*[Note: A full copy of the Director's Report is attached to these minutes as Addendum A]*

- Hightower Hall Proposal
  - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
  - Ethical Use and Interpretation of Hightower Hall at Historic Brattonsville.
    - Richard Campbell gave a summary of the history and use of Hightower Hall and a proposition of the future use of the historic structure. He also touched on the future use of the McCelvey Center.
- Katie Rutland made a motion to accept Richard Campbell's recommendation for the discontinued use of celebratory events at Hightower Hall and to revert the name back to Forest Hall.
  - George Sheppard seconded the motion
    - A vote was taken and the motion passed

*[Note: A full copy of the Hightower Hall Proposal is attached to these minutes as Addendum B]*

### **Committee Reports**

- Collections Committee
  - *Presented by Jillian Bingham*
  - TC492
    - Collection of furniture, artwork, and archival material belonging to and/or related to the Bratton, Witherspoon, Hemphill, and McClure families of York County.
      - Donor Name: Elizabeth Peyton Wooldridge

- David Duncan said that the recommendation for accession come from the Collections Committee, as a seconded motion and asked if there were any questions or comments.
  - Hearing none, David Duncan called for a vote to accept the items to the Collection and remove the selected items from the Collection.
    - A vote was taken and the acceptance passed.

*[Note: Copy of the above Recommendation for Accession is attached to these minutes as Addendum C]*

- Finance Committee
  - *Presented by Margaret Parson-Willins*
    - Nothing to report, everything looks good
    - Richard Campbell added that normally we do the Budget Amendment in September, we are going to have a big-ticket item, we are getting cost estimates for the replacement of the projector for the Planetarium. It will probably be \$200,000, out of Fund Balance, so it will be in October, unless anything changes.
- Governance Committee
  - *Presented by Annie Laurie Wheat*
    - Nothing to report, everything looks good

#### **Executive Session**

- Margaret Parson-Willins made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss the Prospective Acquisition of Real Estate
  - Annie Laurie Wheat seconded the motion.
    - A vote was taken and the motion passed.
      - Executive Session entered into at 6:54pm

#### **Reconvene to Open Session**

- Open Session reconvened at 7:03pm
- George Sheppard made a motion that the Commission allows Richard Campbell to pursue his conversations in regards to Real Estate discussed during the Executive Session.
  - Katie Rutland seconded the motion.
    - A vote was taken and the motion passed.

#### **Old Business**

- None

#### **New Business**

- Election of Officers

- David Duncan discussed the three seats that need to be filled for FY25-26, Chair, Vice Chair (who is head of the Governance Committee by design), and Secretary/Treasurer (who is head of the Finance Committee by design). David Duncan would like to propose a slate, nominating:
  - Katie Rutland as Chair
  - Annie Laurie Wheat as returning Vice Chair and head of the Governance Committee
  - Margaret Parson-Willins as the returning Secretary/Treasurer and head of the Finance Committee
- David Duncan asked if there were any more nominations, hearing none, the nominations were closed. He declared that Katie Rutland is the Chair, Annie Laurie Wheat is the Vice Chair, and Margaret Parson-Willins is the Secretary/Treasurer.

#### **Commission Member New/Non-agenda Comments**

#### **Adjourn**

- David Duncan made entertained a motion to adjourn
  - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to adjourn
    - Margaret Parson-Willins seconded the motion
      - A vote was taken and the motion passed.
        - Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm

**Prepared by: Dabney Scholler**

**Submitted by: Margaret Parson-Willins, Secretary/Treasurer**

## **Culture and Heritage Museums Director's Report August 26, 2025**

*Mission: to communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning.*

### **Total Served – July 2025**

- Total Served: 8,161
  - Museum of York County: 4,249
  - Historic Brattonsville: 1,233
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 2,625
  - Historical Center of York County: 54

### **School Groups – July 2025**

- Total school group visitation: 359
  - Museum of York County: 343
  - Historic Brattonsville: 16
  - Main Street Children's Museum: 0

### **Membership – July 2025**

- New memberships: 188
- Renewal memberships: 120
- Membership revenue: \$14,670
- Total Memberships: 1,347

### **Past Events**

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#### **Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday (MSCM)**

Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday was held on August 2. The exhibit was transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood, where visitors helped Eeyore find his tail, read stories with Owl, attended a dinner party with Rabbit, and participated in other themed activities. The event welcomed 317 participants.

#### **Cell Phones: How They Come from Our Earth (MYCO)**

This drop-in program occurred on August 2 as the third in the museum's Smithsonian partnership series. Visitors explored minerals mined in the Carolinas that are used in everyday cell phones. Fifteen participants attended, and the museum provided feedback to the Smithsonian, earning a \$1,500 stipend for its contributions.

#### **Messy Maestros (MSCM)**

Messy Maestros ran on Thursdays throughout the summer, concluding in August with the theme

“Sculpting.” On August 7, participants created paper sculptures, with 59 attendees. On August 14, they made clay sculptures, with 77 attendees participating.

### **World Lion Day (MYCO)**

World Lion Day was held on August 9. Visitors learned about the American Lion that once lived in the Piedmont and compared it with modern African lions. The program had 50 participants.

### **Red Wolf Day (MYCO)**

Red Wolf Day took place on August 16. Participants learned about the endangered red wolf, its historical presence in the Carolinas, and ongoing conservation efforts. The program was attended by 22 participants.

## **Upcoming Events**

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### **By the Sweat of Our Brows Descendants Dinner (HB)**

Scheduled for Friday, September 12 at Hightower Hall. The annual event, hosted by CHM for Bratton descendants, is designed to stimulate conversations and interactions between Black and White descendants of the Bratton family.

### **By the Sweat of Our Brows (HB)**

Each September, Historic Brattonsville holds *By the Sweat of Our Brows*, an event established in 2005 to honor the legacy of the enslaved community and to involve their descendants in presenting a more complete history of the site. The program provides opportunities for visitors to engage directly with both Black and White Bratton descendants and to learn about their shared heritage.

The 2025 event, titled *Beyond the Fields*, will take place on Saturday, September 13, beginning at 10:30am with the traditional *Calling of the Names* from Harriet Bratton’s 1865 Freedmen’s List. Scheduled activities include interpreter-led demonstrations of enslaved clothing, natural dyeing, operation of the historic cotton gin, and African American foodways. Family and children’s programming will feature baseball, historic toys, and games, with baseball games scheduled for 11:00am and 3:00pm. Additional highlights include a **Special Descendants Presentation** at 1:00pm, *Lineage and Legacy: Conversations Across Generations*, a guided tour of Historic Brattonsville, and a tour of the Enslaved Ancestral Burial Ground.

### **Wizard of Oz Science Saturday (MYCO)**

Wizard of Oz Science Saturday will be held on September 20. Visitors will journey down the yellow brick road to the land of MYCO Oz, digging for gems with Dirt Dauber Deb, testing courage with mystery boxes, exploring the science of rainbows and light, investigating the power of wind and tornadoes, and enjoying other themed activities.

### **Worldwide Day of Play (MSCM)**

Worldwide Day of Play will be held on September 27. In partnership with Nickelodeon and the Association of Children’s Museums, visitors will be invited to celebrate the joy of play with fun, active games and activities throughout the day.



### **Get SMART-1 (MYCO)**

Get SMART-1 will take place on September 27. Visitors will learn about the European Space Agency's SMART-1 mission, launched on September 27, 2003, to study the Moon, as well as other efforts to explore our closest neighbor in space.

## **CHM Project Updates**

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### **Lowry Family Theatre Repair (McC)**

Midwest Maintenance, Inc. (MMI), under the direction of Bennett Preservation Engineering, PE (BPE), has completed the installation of all stainless-steel plates and saddles reinforcing Trusses 1–5. On August 11, the truss rods were tensioned under BPE's observation, with Terracon Consultants verifying proper load levels, completing structural stabilization of the roof. On August 12, Oswalt & Sons removed the jacks beneath the trusses, with BPE confirming expected settlement of 3/16" in Trusses 2–5 and 7/16" in Truss 1. The roof is now fully self-supporting. Next steps include painting the auditorium walls by McNeely Brothers Painting of York, completing exterior patten plates, and re-installing attic mechanical systems. Project completion is projected for mid-October.

CHM Preservation has begun preparations for reopening, including updating the fire notification system per City of York standards, evaluating the elevator and auditorium HVAC system for repair or replacement, and restoring full auditorium lighting functionality.

### **Col. Bratton Cabin Preservation Project (HB)**

Work on the Col. Bratton Cabin continues with replacement of the classroom floorboards currently in progress. Repairs and repainting of window sashes and frames in the classroom have been completed. J.D. Clark Co., of Winston-Salem, NC, is under contract to patch and re-plaster all areas of the Seminary walls where plaster is missing. This work is expected to begin by mid-September.

### **Hightower Hall Projects (HB)**

Midwest Maintenance, Inc. (MMI) was awarded the contract for gutter replacement at Hightower Hall, with work expected to begin by mid-September. Painting of the recently replaced back steps has been completed, and painting of the front steps is currently in progress.

### **Jefferson High School Historical Marker (HC)**

The dedication ceremony for the Jefferson High School Historical Marker is scheduled for Saturday, August 30, at 11:00am, marking the formal unveiling of the marker. The Historical Marker booklet has been drafted, professionally formatted, and sent to the printer for production. It was confirmed that there were no subterranean utilities that would interfere with the installation, and Operations set the post on Friday, August 22, with the marker itself to be installed on Friday, August 29. A press release was issued and has already generated a significant amount of attention from the community and beyond. In addition, on Monday, August 25, the *Post and Courier* met with several Jefferson Alumni at the Historical Center to conduct interviews, further highlighting the historical importance of the project and building anticipation for the dedication.



**Subject:** Ethical Use and Interpretation of Hightower Hall at Historic Brattonsville

**Submitted by:** Richard Campbell

**Title:** Executive Director

**Institution:** Culture & Heritage Museums

**Date:** August 26, 2025

### **Executive Summary**

This proposal outlines a mission-centered strategy for the future use of Hightower Hall, a historically significant plantation home located at Historic Brattonsville. Hightower Hall is an enduring symbol of the region's antebellum past and serves as an essential site for understanding the complex history of the Carolina Piedmont.

In alignment with evolving ethical standards and public expectations regarding the interpretation of historic properties, Culture & Heritage Museums (CHM) recommends a redirection of Hightower Hall's use. This plan prioritizes public education, historical integrity, and ethical stewardship by discontinuing celebratory rentals and transitioning the building to a house museum focused on its full historical context.

### **Background**

Hightower Hall was constructed in the 1850s as the home of John Simpson Bratton Jr., son of the original Bratton patriarch, and served as the plantation headquarters. As part of Historic Brattonsville, the house plays a central role in interpreting the region's layered history of wealth, labor, and social development.

In the early 2000s, York County invested over \$1.5 million to rehabilitate Hightower Hall for use as a small conference center and multi-use facility. Since then, it has hosted public programs, professional meetings, and private events, including weddings.

As societal expectations evolve regarding the responsible use of historic properties, CHM recognizes the need to align Hightower Hall's function with its core mission and ethical obligations as a public history institution.

### **Purpose of This Proposal**

This proposal recommends a single, proactive course of action to:

- Interpret the full historical context of Hightower Hall.
- Ensure all uses of the site align with CHM's educational and ethical standards.
- Address public expectations for responsible stewardship of historic sites.
- Position CHM as a leader in transparent, mission-driven public history.

### **Recommendation: Full Historical Redirection and Mission Alignment**

#### **Overview**

This approach repositions Hightower Hall as a dedicated site for historical education and interpretation. It ends all celebratory rentals and focuses the site's future use on museum programming, guided tours, exhibitions, and professional activities that support CHM's public mission.

### Key Actions

- **Immediate End to Weddings and Celebratory Functions:** Weddings, receptions, and other celebratory events will no longer be permitted. Existing bookings will be honored.
- **Revised Rental Policy and Code of Ethics:** The facility may continue to host professional, non-celebratory functions under updated rental guidelines aligned with CHM's mission.
- **Construction of Dedicated Meeting Spaces:** Two ground-floor rooms will be renovated and furnished for professional use and rentals, in accordance with the new policy and code of ethics.
- **House Museum Transition:** Hightower Hall will be transitioned into a house museum, emphasizing the historical context of plantation life, labor practices, and community development in the region.
- **Integrated Visitor Transportation Plan:** CHM will develop improved transportation links between the main Visitor Center, Hightower Hall, and surrounding historic sites to enhance access and unify interpretation across the landscape.

### Pros

- Aligns Hightower Hall's use with CHM's ethical and educational mission.
- Expands opportunities for accurate, meaningful storytelling.
- Demonstrates transparency and leadership in public history.

### Cons

- Loss of event-based revenue, including weddings.
- Requires investment in transportation infrastructure, interior renovations, and interpretive development.

### McCelvey Center

The plan includes transforming part of the McCelvey Center into a Conference and Meeting Center. The Spratt Room and other smaller spaces will accommodate meetings and conferences. The kitchen will be modernized to serve professional events. The Rental and Events Manager will collaborate with community partners to ensure ample meeting space, offsetting the revenue loss from discontinued weddings at Hightower Hall.

### Conclusion

Hightower Hall is more than a historic structure—it is a site of profound historical significance and ethical responsibility. This proposal affirms Culture & Heritage Museums' commitment to interpreting the full story of the Carolina Piedmont. By ending celebratory use and transforming Hightower Hall into a center for education and interpretation, CHM ensures the site serves the public with integrity, accuracy, and respect for its historical legacy.



## RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCESSION

Temporary Custody ID:	Collection Type:	Method of Acquisition:
TC492	History, Art, and Archives	Gift

Name of Source:
Elizabeth Peyton Wooldridge

Description of Accession:
Collection of furniture, artwork, and archival material belonging to and/or related to the Bratton, Witherspoon, Hemphill, and McClure families of York County
<i>**Itemized inventory starts on page 6 **</i>

Overall Condition: ☒ Excellent ☒ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

General/Comparable Size of Collection
The smallest silhouette portrait (.009): 4.75" x 3.75"
Secretary Desk (.002A-B): 39.5" x 21" x 63"
The archival collection will fit in existing archival storage boxes.

Significance/Ownership History	Mission Rating: 5-4 (Scale of 1 – 5; 5 matches mission 100%)
<p>The donor, a great-granddaughter of Sophia Bratton and Robert Witherspoon, inherited the furniture, artwork, and archival material from a variety of family members over the years, including her maternal grandmother, Helen Witherspoon Hemphill.</p> <p><b>Sophia Bratton (1860-1937)</b> was one of 10 children born to Harriet Jane Rainey (1826-1912) and John Simpson Bratton, Jr (1819-1888). John built Forrest Hall/Hightower in 1853 where the family lived permanently on the Bratton Family Plantation. Sophia married Robert Witherspoon (1851-1930) in York, SC in 1884. Together, they had four daughters: Harriett "Reita" Bratton Witherspoon (1887-1970), Julia Hamilton Witherspoon (1889-1966), Helen Witherspoon (1891-1980), and Nancy Reid Witherspoon (1893-1954). They lived in Hightower/Forest Hall as their permanent home until they moved to the "Witherspoon House" located at 109 E. Liberty Street in York. The house was razed in 1971 by Duke Energy to build a new location, which still stands today. Newspaper articles and census records indicate that Sophia and Robert were living at Hightower Hall with their daughters and Sophia's elderly mother Harriett Bratton as early as 1893 through 1910.</p> <p><b>Robert Witherspoon (1851-1930)</b> was born to Nancy Reid Witherspoon (1829-1905) and Hamilton Gaillard Witherspoon (1824-1873) in Sumter County, SC in 1851. His maternal grandfather was I.D. Witherspoon Sr. By 1880, Robert was working as a farmer, starting on the Witherspoon family's farm in Sumter County and then later on the Bratton Plantation while living in Forrest Hall/Hightower Hall with his and Sophia's young family.</p>	

**Isaac Donnom "I.D." Witherspoon Sr. (1803-1858)** moved to Yorkville, SC in 1824. He graduated from South Carolina College and was admitted to the SC Bar in 1826, practicing law in York for a while. He later got involved in politics, serving as a SC Senator for the York District from 1840-1856, while simultaneously serving as the SC Lieutenant Governor from 1842-1844. I.D. Witherspoon Sr. suffered from a stroke in 1857 and died a year later in 1858. Before his passing, he helped construct the First Presbyterian Church in York, where he was also a member. He is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in York with many other members of the Witherspoon family.

The donor's grandmother, **Helen Witherspoon (1891-1980)** was born in York County in 1891 married John McLure Hemphill of Chester, SC in 1913. They welcomed three children: Robert Witherspoon Hemphill, John McLure Hemphill, Jr., and Helen Adair Hemphill (the donor's mother). They lived in Chester County, SC and both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery located in Chester, SC. She was often referred to as "Babe" or "Baby".

**John McClure Hemphill (1887-1952)** was born in Chester, SC to parents Elizabeth "Bessie" McIntosh McLure (1861-1907) and Paul Hemphill (1860-1912). He graduated from the University of South Carolina and was admitted to the South Carolina Bar in 1910. He worked as a lawyer with his father Paul Hemphill and grandfather James Hemphill, practicing law throughout the state including Chester, York, Fairfield, and Lancaster Counties. According to John's obituary, he was a member of Purity Presbyterian Church, Kappa Alpha Fraternity, the Hejaz Shrine, Knights Templar, a Mason, and a former Grand Chancellor of the Knight of Pythias of South Carolina.

The donor's uncle, **Robert W. Hemphill (1915-1983)** earned his law degree from the University of South Carolina Law School in 1938. He would go on to serve in WWII as a bomber pilot until 1945 before being elected into the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1945. He would go on to have a long political career serving various roles including Solicitor, Congressman, and Chief Judge of South Carolina.

The donor's great aunt **Harriet "Reita" Bratton Witherspoon (1887-1970)** was the daughter of Robert Witherspoon (1851-1930) and Sophie Bratton Witherspoon (1861-1937). She was born in York County and lived her entire life there. Reita was a descendant of the Bratton and Rainey families through her maternal grandparents John Simpson Bratton Jr. and Harriet Jane Rainey Bratton. Also, her paternal great-grandfather was lawyer and politician Isaac Donnom Witherspoon Sr. In 1935, Reita was appointed to write a travel guide sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) highlighting historical locations in York County.

**Potential Uses:** X Research X Exhibition X Loan

All items are great candidates for research, exhibition, and loan on topics including but not limited to prominent York County families including the Bratton, Witherspoon, and Hemphill families, York County politicians and judges, portraiture, historic York homes, and early twentieth century material culture.





**Restrictions:**

None

**Unusual Costs:**

None

**Staff Recommendation (Signature & Title):**

**Date:**

*Trish Bright* DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS 7/17/2025

**Executive Director Recommends (Signature):**

**Date:**

*Rebecca Campbell* 7/17/2025

**Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission on:**

**Executive Director Signature:**

**Date:**

*Rebecca Campbell* 8/27/2025



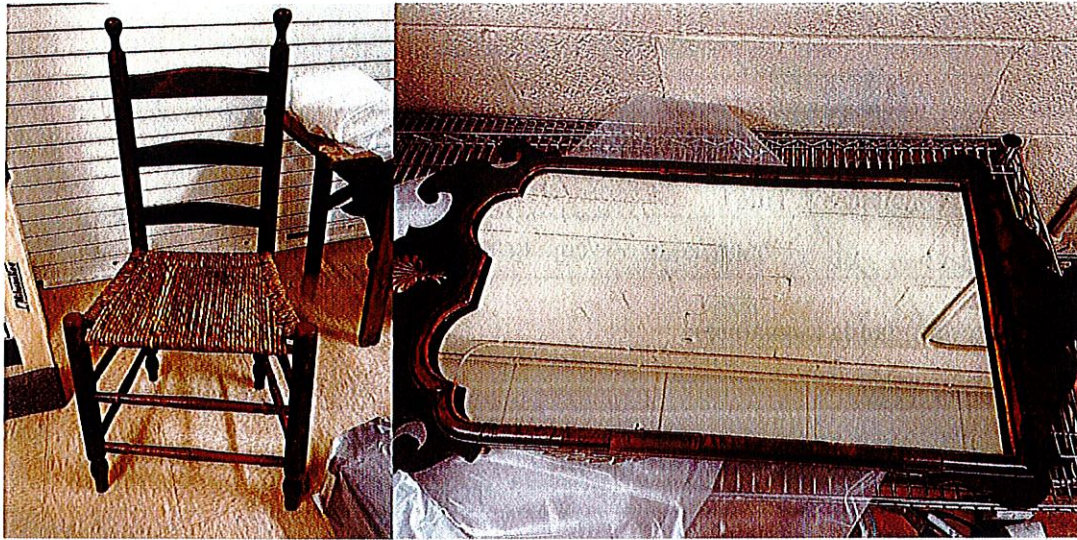
.002B – Bottom of Secretary Desk



.002A – Top of Secretary Desk











## **TC492 Itemized Inventory**

### **Archives:**

- Framed Bratton Coat of Arms
- Uncle Tom's Cabin, 1853, Illustrated
- Gospel Hymns Numbers 5 & 6, 1892, Mrs. Robb. Witherspoon handwritten on cover
- The Tailor of Gloucester by Beatrix Potter, 1903
- Dortch's Gospel Voices No. 3, 1903
- Photograph, on back "Salem Black River Presbyterian Church Mayesville, SC Sumter County - Witherspoon graves: Coldstream Plantation"
- Newspaper clipping, Wedding Announcement of Helen Witherspoon to John McLure Hemphill (1913?)
- Will of Harriet B. Witherspoon, 1968
- Miss Reita Witherspoon address
- Witherspoon Seal
- Handwritten genealogy note regarding James C. Brawley and Mary Huggens
- Letter to Rita & Baby, June 8, 1954
- Scanned Robert Hemphill in Memoriam booklet
- Scanned photography of Robert Witherspoon
- Scanned black scrapbook containing pictures of Witherspoon family members, S. K. Lowry House and (possibly) Dr. Bratton's house

### **Collections (History and Art)**

- .001 -Low loveseat, brown upholstery
- .002A-B -Secretary desk
- .003 -Ladder back chair
- .004 -Wall hanging mirror with gold shell motif
- .005 -Pencil drawing of Helen Witherspoon as a baby; "Babe 'With-a-Spoon' "
- .006 -Small pen sketch of Witherspoon house at 109 E. Liberty Street in York, SC
- .007 -Framed silhouette of Helen Witherspoon
- .008 -Framed silhouette of unidentified female, simple black frame
- .009 -Framed silhouette of unidentified female, in a black frame with oval opening
- .010 - 5.5" dime store plate featuring an image of three boys playing yard games, c. 1935
- .011 - 5.5" dime store plate featuring an image of a little boy and girl playing, c. 1935
- .012 - 5.5" dime store plate featuring an image of two little girls playing with hoops, c. 1935
- .013 -8" dime store plate featuring an image of a woman in blue holding a tray with tea, c. 1935
- .014 -8" dime store plate featuring an image of a man bowing his head holding flowers, c. 1935
- .015 -8" dime store plate featuring an image of a little boy holding a stick, c. 1935