

Culture & Heritage Commission
Board of Commissioners Meeting
March 24, 2026
Museum of York County
6:00pm

Person Presiding: Katie Rutland

Members Present: Katie Rutland, Dorothy Johnson, Maria Duncan, Jeff Lyon, Margaret Parson-Willins, Annie Laurie Wheat, and Jimmy Fitzpatrick

Members Absent:

Ex-Officio Members Present: George Sheppard and Ed Stewart

Ex-Officio Members Absent:

Staff Present: Richard Campbell, Dabney Scholler, Nancy Sambets, and Michelle Totherow

Others:

Call to Order

- Katie Rutland called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.
- Katie Rutland stated that we have a new item under New Business that is not on the agenda that we need to add, regarding McCelvey Usage.
- Richard Campbell announced that we are very sad to announce the passing of Michael Kendree, the York County Attorney.
 - We do not know much on the circumstances but Michael Kendree was a great man, and did a tremendous job for the Culture and Heritage Museums.
- Katie Rutland presented the minutes from the February 24th Commission Meeting and asked for changes or corrections.
 - No corrections to be made.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to accept the minutes as written.
 - Margaret Parson-Willins seconded the motion.
 - A vote was taken and the motion passed to accept the minutes as written.

Calendar Review

- April- 2026-2027 Budget Review

Reports and Presentations

- Director's Report
 - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
 - Visitation
 - CHM site-wide visitation for the month of February, totaled six thousand and forty-seven. Year-to-date visitation totaled forty-three thousand, three hundred and eighty.
 - School Groups
 - For the month of February, school group visitation totaled seven hundred and seventy-four and year-to-date visitation totaled five thousand, one hundred and sixty-two.
 - Membership
 - Membership has increased by one hundred and forty memberships and fifty-two renewals, with a total revenue of \$14,255. Year-to-date memberships total one thousand and thirty-nine and four hundred and thirty-two renewals, with a revenue of \$93,195. The CHM overall memberships are at one thousand, four hundred and seventy-six.
 - Past Events
 - By Way of the Back Door: The Life and Times of Molly
 - One hundred and seventy-eight visitors attended this annual special event at Historic Brattonsville. Each Saturday in February, interpreters and costumed volunteers told the story of Molly, an enslaved woman who lived from approximately 1780 to 1865, and connected visitors to significant moments in American history, from the Revolutionary Era through Emancipation. Each day, visitors participated in a variety of immersive experiences ranging from guided tours to traditional trades.
 - To the Solar System and Beyond
 - Beginning on February 15th, a new seminar series launched at the Museum of York County, with additional sessions taking pace on March 15th and April 12th. Led by Planetarium Manager John Diana, the series explores the solar system, astrobiology, and cosmology, offering participants a deeper understanding of the universe and its origins.
 - Camp Cosmos
 - During the February school break, fifty-five participants, ages 6-13, attended Camp Cosmos, a new education program, at the Museum of York County. The camp covered a range of topics, including early astronomy, the Space Race, and the structure of the solar system and beyond.
 - Gnome Day
 - On February 28th, the Main Street Children's Museum celebrated artist Vernon Grant and his love of gnomes with Gnome Day. The event attracted two hundred and two attendees by featuring interactive activities such as music, movement, and creative play for families.
 - Rebbie Rye

and CHM Marketing will document the visit for post-event use. Refreshments will be offered and “Southern Charm Photo Op” is also being planned. This visit presents a unique opportunity to showcase Historic Brattonsville to a high-profile international audience, strengthening cultural and heritage ties with Germany.

- Gnome Sweet Gnome
 - On April 11th, Museum of York County and the Main Street Children’s Museum will be inviting participants to create gnome-themed terrariums using real plants and Vernon Grant-inspired figures. The program blends hands-on creativity with an educational component about plant life, while also celebrating Vernon Grant’s artistic legacy and love of gnomes.
- Children’s Museum Week
 - Children’s Museum Week be held this year from April 14th-17, and Main Street Children’s Museum will be celebrating with activities designed to highlight the positive impact museums have on early childhood development. Through interactive games and experiences, participants will explore themes such as healthy food choices, teamwork, creativity, and the importance of family connections.
- Froggy Friends
 - As part of the annual Come-See-Me Festival, from April 17th-25th, the Main Street Children’s Museum will be hosting “Froggy Friends”, a week of frog-themed fun. Visitors can enjoy daily crafts and a variety of activities inspired by frogs, offering a playful and memorable experience for families.
- Children’s Day on the Farm
 - Historic Brattonsville will be hosting the annual Children’s Day on the Farm on Aril 25th, and will explore how children were educated in the 18th and 19th century Carolina Piedmont. Participants can engage in a variety of hands-on activities and will collect stamps along the way to complete a historic-style passport. Visitors will also have the opportunity to meet naturalist Dr. Steve Fields and experience guided site tours.
- CHM Project Updates
 - Tryon County Courthouse Historical Marker
 - CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse served on a committee with commissioner Ed Stewart and volunteer Leigh Van Blarcom to prepare a historical marker application for the Tryon County Courthouse. The application was submitted by the sponsoring chapter of the SC Colonial Dames, who are covering all costs for the marker and application fee. The committee benefited from Zach’s historical guidance and support throughout the process.

- Ed Stewart added that not only was the site of the courthouse found but the adjoining property belonged to Ezekiel Polk, grandfather of 11th president James K. Polk.
- Col. Bratton House (Brattonsville Female Seminary) Preservation Project
 - Work has resumed on the preservation project at the Brattonsville Female Seminary, with reconstruction of the partition wall in the east addition now complete. Upcoming efforts will focus on finishing the east addition, including building a door for the new doorway, installing trim, and painting the walls. Additional work will include final touch-ups in other rooms throughout the building and the installation of reproduction door hardware to complete the restoration.
- Lowry Family Theater
 - Progress continues on mechanical repairs and upgrades at the Lowry Family Theatre, with the CMTA services agreement finalized and signed. CHM staff and CMTA conducted an initial walkthrough on March 13th to kick off design work, during which CMTA identified the need for a full-building hazardous materials assessment for lead and asbestos; CHM is currently collecting quotes for this work. The elevator has successfully passed inspection and is now back in service. A rigging inspection has been completed, with Paragon identifying several issues that require remediation and currently preparing a cost proposal to address them, while replacement stage curtains are in production. Additionally, the City of York's Board of Architectural Review approved the proposal for exterior auditorium doors on March 2nd, and CHM is working to finalize vendor paperwork to move forward with fabrication.

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

Committee Reports

- Collections Committee
 - *Presented by Nancy Sambets*
 - TC526
 - 1949 marriage license for Samuel Kenneth Lowry and Anne Robinson
 - Photo of house located at 5 Wright Ave, York, South Carolina
 - Donor Name: Susan Lowry Mason
 - Nancy Sambets brought the items mentioned above for the Commission to see.
 - Katie Rutland stated that since this item comes from the Collections Committee, we do not need a seconded motion, and asked for a motion to accept the item.
 - Dorothy Johnson made a motion to accept the item to the Collection
 - A vote was taken, and the motion passed

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

- Finance Committee
 - *Presented by Margaret Parson-Willins*
 - Nothing to report, the finances look good
 - Richard Campbell added that we are in the black due to the Budget Amendment added on March 2nd, we are in great shape.

- Governance Committee
 - *Presented by Annie Laurie Wheat*
 - The Governance Committee met prior to the Culture and Heritage Commission Board meeting. The committee is in the process of reviewing the documents used to evaluate the Executive Director's Annual Review. Annie Laurie Wheat would like for the commission to review so it can be streamlined. The Governance Committee would like to meet again next month to review again.
 - Dabney Scholler will send the questions out to the Commission

Executive Session

- No need for Executive Session

Old Business

- None

New Business

- Lowry Family Theater Update
 - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
 - Richard Campbell presented an update to the potential use of the Lowry Family Theater at the McCelvey Center.
 - Dabney Scholler will send a copy of the presentation to the Commission
 - This does not have to be included in next month's budget presentation, but there has to be a consensus if the Commission wants to move forward. It will take a while to move staffing through HR, and it may not be approved until Council performs a 3rd reading once the new budget year begins.
- Jeff Lyon asked if we have a challenge getting a 3rd party to come in and manage the theater.
 - Richard Campbell said yes, it was already discussed and we do not want a foundation, as it would be limiting.
 - In his opinion, Option 3 would be our most feasible option.
 - Ed Stewart said that since we have put so much money into the McCelvey Center, we need to start using the building and we need to have control over it, agreeing with Richard Campbell.

- Jeff Lyon said that the building has the capacity of doing a bi-weekly program like Prairie Home Companion.
 - Richard Campbell said that while the building had the capacity but we do not have the staffing capacity.
- There is a vision for the McCelvey Center, with Commission-approved funding attached, where a museum will be on the east side of the building, a conference center on the west side of the building, and of course programming.

[Note: A full copy of the Lowry Family Theater Presentation is attached to these minutes as Addendum C]

Commission Member New/Non-agenda Comments

- George Sheppard asked, in regards to the Bavarian Delegation Historic Brattonsville visit, if we could extend the invitation to County Council and mention the visit to Gary Simirill, as he hosts a show on the goings-on in Rock Hill, as free advertisement for us.
 - Richard Campbell said that we have spoken to the Bavarian Delegation's communication department, and as soon as we get a better understanding of what the visit will look like, we will notify Karen Brogdon. The issue that we have gone back and forth on is, they are coming and purchasing tickets, it is not a public event that is being staged. We want Council to know but do not know if we should invite Council to a private event. We will be sorting everything out tomorrow.
- George Sheppard asked if we could hold the April Commission meeting at the McCelvey Center, so the Commission could see all of the work that has been done.
 - Richard Campbell said that we would have to confirm that it is safe to enter the building, and could look at the Historical Center.
 - Nancy Sambets said that there was enough space in the Historical Center
 - Michelle Totherow mentioned that we could possibly meet at the Government Center and then walk over.
 - Richard Campbell said that we would look into it, we have a month to do so, and could possibly have it in the Spratt Room.
- George Sheppard asked if it was possible to have the *Lowry Family Theater Presentation* document to review. He also thought that the McCelvey Center could help fund this mission. Could we sell McCelvey to the acts that we book?
 - Richard Campbell said that Dabney Scholler would send the document out to the Commission. He said yes, that that was the opportunity cost that he talked about, there is a lot to unpack.
 - Katie Rutland asked if we could have sponsorships for the theater.
 - Richard Campbell said that there was a lot we could do with sponsorships, once we get a development on board, we do not know if the sponsorships could be enough to make McCelvey self-sufficient. This is a multi-faceted project and all of the mentioned points are great.

Adjourn

- Katie Rutland entertained a motion to adjourn

- Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to adjourn
 - Margaret Parson-Willins seconded the motion
 - Katie Rutland called for a vote, vote was taken, and the motion passed.
 - Meeting adjourned at 7:27pm

Prepared by: Dabney Scholler

Submitted by: Margaret Parson-Willins, Secretary/Treasurer

Culture and Heritage Museums Director's Report March 24, 2026

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

Total Served – February 2026

- Total Served: 6,047
 - Museum of York County: 2,556
 - Historic Brattonsville: 763
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 2,455
 - Historical Center of York County: 273
- Total Served year-to-date: 43,380
 - Museum of York County: 17,772
 - Historic Brattonsville: 7,954
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 16,501
 - Historical Center of York County: 1,153

School Groups – February 2026

- Total school group visitation: 774
 - Museum of York County: 326
 - Historic Brattonsville: 402
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 46
- Year-to-date: 5,162
 - Museum of York County: 2,198
 - Historic Brattonsville: 2,577
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 387

Membership – February 2026

- New memberships: 140
- Renewal memberships: 52
- Membership revenue: \$14,255
- Year-to-date memberships: 1,039
- Year-to date renewal memberships: 432
- Year-to-date membership revenue: \$93,195
- Total Memberships: 1,476

Past Events

By Way of the Back Door: The Life and Times of Molly (HB)

This annual special event at Historic Brattonsville, held in recognition of Black History Month, took place each Saturday in February and explored African-American life in the Carolina Piedmont through the story of Molly, an enslaved woman who lived from approximately 1780 to 1865. Recorded in 1865 as an 85-year-old freedwoman living and working on Harriet Bratton's plantation, Molly had been documented as enslaved there as early as 1843 and was part of a family that included a child named Wesley. Through her life story, interpreters and costumed volunteers connected visitors to significant moments in American history—from the Revolutionary Era through Emancipation— offering a meaningful and personal perspective on the past. Visitors participated in a variety of immersive experiences, including guided tours, cooking demonstrations in the Brick Slave House, cotton processing and gin operation, militia drills, and traditional trades such as woodworking, blacksmithing, dressmaking, and quilting, along with interactive activities like children's games and "Look with Your Hands" tours. The program drew 178 attendees.

To the Solar System and Beyond (MYCO)

The Museum of York County launched its new seminar series, "To the Solar System and Beyond," beginning February 15, with additional sessions scheduled for March 15 and April 12. Led by Planetarium Manager John Diana, the series explores the solar system, astrobiology, and cosmology, offering participants a deeper understanding of the universe and its origins.

Camp Cosmos (MYCO)

Camp Cosmos, a new educational program held February 17–20, engaged children ages 6–13 during the February school break. The camp covered a range of topics, including early astronomy, the Space Race, and the structure of the solar system and beyond. A total of 55 participants attended.

Gnome Day (MSCM)

Gnome Day, rescheduled to February 28 due to inclement weather, celebrated artist Vernon Grant and his love of gnomes at the Main Street Children's Museum. The event featured interactive activities such as music, movement, and creative play for families, attracting 202 attendees.

Rebbie Rye (MSCM)

Children's musician Rebbie Rye visited the Main Street Children's Museum on March 17 for a free St. Patrick's Day concert and craft activity. As part of a statewide tour of children's museums, the event provided an engaging and festive experience for families and drew 119 attendees.

The Confederation of South Carolina Local Historical Societies Landmark Conference (HB)

The Confederation of South Carolina Local Historical Societies Landmark Conference is an annual statewide event that brings together historians, preservationists, and volunteers to explore and promote South Carolina's rich history through tours, presentations, and discussions. This year's

conference, held March 19–21 at Winthrop University and Historic Brattonsville, highlighted York County’s local history while connecting it to broader national themes. CHM was a sponsor of the event, with staff actively contributing through presentations and guided tours. Featured sessions include “Sacred to their Memory,” in which CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse examined the history and interpretation of slavery at Historic Brattonsville; “Raise the Roof (a little),” where Preservation/Restoration Specialist Sara Johnson discussed efforts to stabilize the McCelvey Center auditorium’s historic truss system; and the “Historic Brattonsville Through the Eras” tour, also led by Lemhouse, covered the site’s Revolutionary, Antebellum, and Reconstruction periods. Additionally, HB Assistant Site Director and Preservation Specialist Joe Mester led “Soup to Nuts on Caring for Your Heritage Property,” a hands-on workshop focused on assessing, planning, and implementing preservation strategies.

Upcoming Events

Sheep Shearing Day (HB)

The annual Living History Saturday event at Historic Brattonsville will take place on March 28, focusing on sheep shearing and textile production. The program will highlight the full process of turning raw wool into finished materials, with ongoing hands-on demonstrations such as carding, spinning, weaving, tape-weaving, and natural dyeing. Two Gulf Coast sheep will be sheared as part of the day’s featured activities. Timed programs will include animal feeding, sheep shearing, a Historic Brattonsville site tour, and additional demonstrations in natural dyeing and weaving, offering visitors an engaging look at traditional practices.

Come Plant with Me (MYCO)

Scheduled for March 28 at 2pm, this interactive program invites visitors to assist the Senior Interpreter in planting the 2026 Ozone Garden. Participants will learn how certain plants can indicate ground-level ozone conditions while exploring how ozone affects both people and plant life, as well as why monitoring air quality is important to scientists.

President of Bavaria Visit to Historic Brattonsville (HB)

Historic Brattonsville will host a distinguished delegation from Bavaria, Germany, on April 1, 2026, from 2:30–3:15pm, led by Dr. Markus Söder, the Minister-President of Bavaria and leader of the Christian Social Union (CSU). As the chief executive of Germany’s largest state and a national party leader, Dr. Söder is one of the most influential figures in German politics and is considered a potential future candidate for Chancellor. He has served in the Bavarian State Parliament since 1994 and held senior state ministries, including finance, environment, and health. His role in national and international affairs, combined with his board membership at the Deutsches Museum, underscores the significance of his visit.

The visit provides Historic Brattonsville with international exposure, particularly among German visitors, who represent a substantial portion of the sites overseas interest. The delegation is visiting the US on business with BMW, Germany’s largest investor in South Carolina, and will tour several locations

including BMW in Spartanburg, Clemson University, USC, and Columbia before arriving at Historic Brattonsville.

The HB visit will feature a 45-minute tour focused on *The Patriot* movie, filmed on-site, with Forest Hall as a potential refreshment venue. CHM's Collections and Archives will provide images and movie-related items, and CHM Marketing will document the visit for post-event use. A dessert buffet with coffee, tea, and non-alcoholic beverages will be offered, and "Southern Charm Photo Op" is also being planned. The delegation of up to 29, includes major Bavarian government officials, press representatives, and security personnel, and will proceed to the airport immediately after the tour. This visit presents a unique opportunity to showcase Historic Brattonsville to a high-profile international audience, strengthening cultural and heritage ties with Germany.

Gnome Sweet Gnome (MYCO & MSCM)

Taking place on April 11 at the Museum of York County, this collaborative program with the Main Street Children's Museum invites participants to create gnome-themed terrariums using real plants and Vernon Grant-inspired figures. The program blends hands-on creativity with an educational component about plant life, while also celebrating Vernon Grant's artistic legacy and love of gnomes.

Children's Museum Week (MSCM)

From April 14–17, the Main Street Children's Museum will celebrate Children's Museum Week with activities designed to highlight the positive impact museums have on early childhood development. Through interactive games and experiences, participants will explore themes such as healthy food choices, teamwork, creativity, and the importance of family connections.

Froggy Friends (MSCM)

As part of the Come-See-Me Festival, held April 17–25, the Children's Museum will welcome spring with "Froggy Friends," a week of frog-themed fun. Visitors can enjoy daily crafts and activities inspired by frogs, including painting froggy footprints, creating poison dart frogs on leaves, making lily pad paper plate art, paper roll frogs, cupcake liner frogs, and paper frogs with moving tongues—offering a playful and memorable experience for families.

Children's Day on the Farm (HB)

Children's Day on the Farm, an annual special event, held on April 25 at Historic Brattonsville, will explore how children were educated in the 18th- and 19th-century Carolina Piedmont. Through experiences in the schoolroom, barnyard, trade shop, and hearth, the program highlights the skills, trades, and everyday lessons that shaped children's understanding of their world. Participants can engage in a variety of hands-on activities and collect stamps along the way to complete a historic-style passport. Additional experiences include cooking demonstrations, candle-dipping, writing with quill pens, traditional toys and games, 18th-century blacksmithing, mantua-making (dressmaking), animal husbandry, opportunities to meet the naturalist Dr. Steve Fields, and guided Brattonsville site tours.

CHM Project Updates

Tryon County Courthouse Historical Marker

CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse served on a committee with Ed Stewart and Leigh Van Blarcom to prepare a historical marker application for the Tryon County Courthouse. The application was submitted by the sponsoring chapter of the SC Colonial Dames, who are covering all costs for the marker and application fee. The committee benefited from Zach's historical guidance and support throughout the process.

Col. Bratton House (Brattonsville Female Seminary) Preservation Project

Work has resumed on the preservation project at the Brattonsville Female Seminary, with reconstruction of the partition wall in the east addition now complete. Upcoming efforts will focus on finishing the east addition, including building a door for the new doorway, installing trim, and painting the walls. Additional work will include final touch-ups in other rooms throughout the building and the installation of reproduction door hardware to complete the restoration.

Lowry Family Theatre (McC)

Progress continues on mechanical repairs and upgrades at the Lowry Family Theatre, with the CMTA services agreement finalized and signed. CHM staff and CMTA conducted an initial walkthrough on March 13 to kick off design work, during which CMTA identified the need for a full-building hazardous materials assessment for lead and asbestos; CHM is currently collecting quotes for this work. The elevator has successfully passed inspection and is now back in service. A rigging inspection has been completed, with Paragon identifying several issues that require remediation and currently preparing a cost proposal to address them, while replacement stage curtains are in production. Additionally, the City of York's Board of Architectural Review approved the proposal for exterior auditorium doors on March 2, and CHM is working to finalize vendor paperwork to move forward with fabrication.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCESSION

Temporary Custody ID:	Collection Type:	Method of Acquisition:
TC526	Archives	Donation

Name of Source:
Susan Lowry Mason

Description of Accession:
-1949 marriage license for Samuel Kenneth Lowry and Anne Robinson
-Photo of house located at 5 Wright Ave, York, South Carolina

Overall Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

General/Comparable Size of Collection
2 items will fit into existing letter document box with RG-21 Lowry Family Papers

Significance/Ownership History Mission Rating: 5 (Scale of 1 – 5; 5 matches mission 100%)
The donor found this document and photograph among her mother’s belongings. The donor said that every daughter of James Meeks Starr got a house when she got married. Her father’s mother, Mary Estelle Starr Lowry, got the house at 5 Wright Avenue.

Susan Lowry Mason is the daughter of Mary Anne "Andy" Robinson Lowry (1927-2012) and Samuel Kenneth "Bo" Lowry, Jr. (1925-2020). Her parents were married by E. Gettys Nunn, probate judge, on September 7, 1949. They had a church wedding September 15, 1949 in the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd at York, SC.

Mary Anne “Andy” Robinson Lowry (1927-2012) was the daughter of Rev. Clayton Earle Bullis Robinson (1890-1979) and Susan Jeannette Chase Robinson (1889-1976). Andy graduated from Margaret Hall Episcopal High School in Versailles, KY and Woman's College of the University of NC in Greensboro. She was a member of the Tau Psi Omega sorority and Cornelian Society. Andy served as president of the Episcopal Churchwomen of Upper South Carolina in the late 1970s. She married Samuel Kenneth "Bo" Lowry, Jr. (1925-2020) on September 7, 1949. They had two sons and two daughters.

Samuel Kenneth “Bo” Lowry Jr. (1925-2020) was the son of Samuel Kenneth "Bo" Lowry, Sr (1891-1978) and Mary Starr Lowry (1890-1979). He attended York High School and Darlington Academy in Rome, GA. He served as a Pharmacist Mate in the Navy during WWII from 1943 to 1946. He then earned a pharmacy degree from the Medical University of SC in 1950. He owned and operated the York Drug Store for thirty-seven years and was instrumental in developing Kennedy's Mixture with his father. He was a founding member of the York Jaycees and served on the York District School Board and with P.A.T.H. of York County.

Samuel Kenneth Lowry Sr. (1891-1978) was the son of James Ernest Lowry (1849-1945) and Julia

Lethia Bratton Lowry (1852-1933). His maternal grandparents were John S. Bratton Jr. (1819-1888) and Harriett Jane Rainey Bratton (1826-1912). A pharmacist, he bought an interest in York Drug Store in 1918 and operated it for the entirety of his career. With his son and business partner, Samuel Kenneth "Bo" Lowry Jr., he developed Kennedy's Mixture. He was also a charter member of the York Chamber of Commerce and the York Rotary Club. He was a member of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd and both him and his wife, Mary Starr Lowry, are buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.

Mary Estelle Starr Lowry (1890-1979) was the daughter of James Meek Starr (1859-1923) and Sarah Patterson Starr (1857-1918). She married Samuel Kenneth Lowry Sr. in 1915 at the home of her parents in York, SC. Together the couple had one son and two daughters. She was a member of the York Garden Club and the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd.

5 Wright Ave in York, South Carolina was built by Col. William C. Beatty in the 1840s as a plantation house on, at the time, the outskirts of town. It featured double front doors and floor-length windows that opened by sliding them into the walls. In 1915, the house was bought by James Meeks Starr as a wedding present for his daughter, Mary, and her new husband, Samuel Kenneth Lowry Sr. Since the pervious owners had tuberculosis, Starr had the old plaster stripped and replaced. It was during this time that a Greek Revival gallery was added. Mary and Samuel also collected Americana and displayed these items the basement along with art done by the former. This included a mural titled *Down Yonder*, which the present owners allowed Historical Center staff to photograph and document in March 2024.

Potential Uses: Research Exhibition Loan

This donation adds to the Historical Center's existing RG-21 collection for the Lowry family. These materials will aid researchers interested in researching Lowry-Avery family, Starr family, 5 Wright Avenue house, historical places in York, local events, and even family activities of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Restrictions:

None

Unusual Costs:

None

Staff Recommendation (Signature & Title):

Date:

<i>Nancy Sambeato</i> Director of Archives	3-16-2026
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Executive Director Recommends (Signature):

Date:

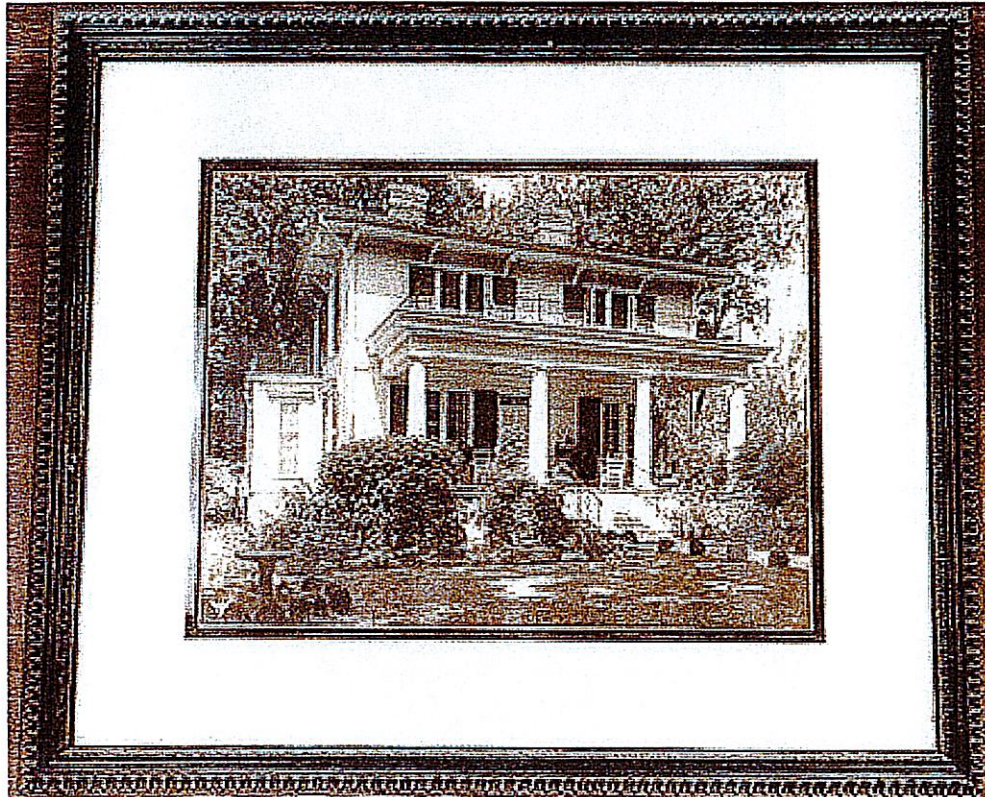
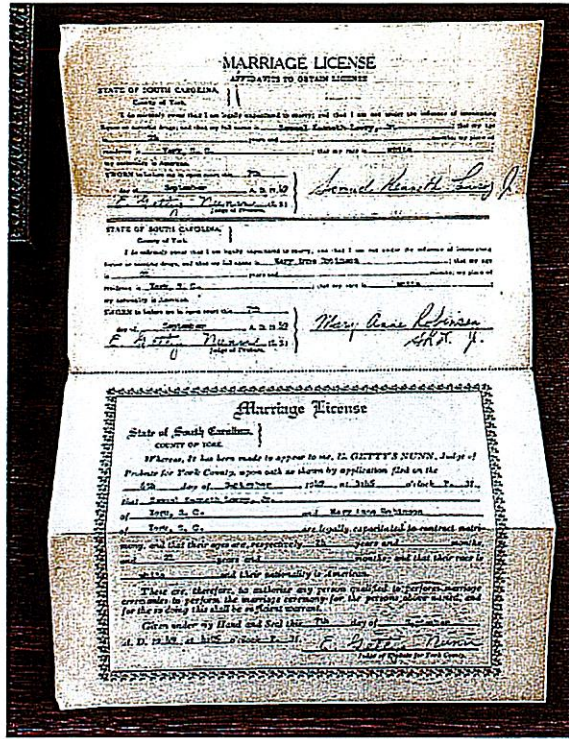
<i>Richard Cogwell</i>	3/17/2026
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Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission on:

Executive Director Signature:

Date:

<i>Richard Cogwell</i>	3/25/26
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Addendum C

Lowry Family Theater at the McCelvey Center Presented to the Culture and Heritage Commission on March 24, 2026

Executive Summary

Repairs to the Lowry Family Theater at the McCelvey Center are expected to be completed by the end of 2026. This state-funded investment will allow the facility to reopen for public use.

With this investment comes increased expectation that the theater will operate as a more active, full-time venue. While this vision is understandable, it reflects aspiration rather than current operational reality. Any expansion of programming must align with the Culture & Heritage Museums' (CHM) mission, staffing capacity, financial resources, and facility constraints. CHM is a museum system that includes a theater; it is not a performing arts organization. Its mission is:

"To communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning."

Theater programming can support this mission, but must remain educational, historically informed, culturally relevant, and grounded in the Carolina Piedmont. This necessarily limits the scope of programming compared to dedicated performing arts venues such as the Newberry Opera House or the planned Arts Center at Fountain Park in Rock Hill.

This report presents three potential approaches to programming:

- Maintain current operations
- Expand through an external partner
- Develop expanded internal programming

Each option is evaluated based on staffing, financial requirements, infrastructure needs, compliance considerations, and overall impact.

Current Operational Strengths

CHM has several assets that support theater use:

- Established online ticketing system
- Strong marketing and social media presence
- Dedicated volunteer base
- Expanded concessions capacity

These strengths provide a foundation for programming, but do not, on their own, support full-scale performing arts operations.

Organizational Context

CHM's core function is to collect, preserve, and interpret regional history while delivering educational programming. While the McCelvey Center includes a theater, CHM does not currently have performing arts expertise or dedicated programming staff. Any expansion must be evaluated within this context.

Staffing

- No current staff have experience in talent booking or performing arts management
- Previous programming relied on staff who are no longer with the organization
- Expanded programming would require dedicated personnel
- At minimum, an initial hire would be needed to manage booking, logistics, and operations, with additional staffing required as programming expands.

Budget Considerations

The current allocation of \$48,000 for programming is consistent with 2019 levels and was already limited in scope. This funding covers talent, technical support, equipment, and security.

Expanded programming would require increased investment in:

- Marketing and promotion
- Technical and event staffing
- Concessions and hospitality

In addition, facility improvements will be necessary over time to remain competitive and support expanded use.

Facility and Compliance Considerations

Facility upgrades may trigger compliance requirements that could significantly increase costs and affect timelines. Key areas include:

- Electrical and mechanical systems
- Fire code and life safety compliance
- Potential phased improvements include:
 - Expanded parking and site access
 - Updated backstage and green room facilities
 - Ticketing infrastructure
 - Load-in capabilities
 - Exterior presentation, signage, and wayfinding

Programming Options

Option 1: Maintain Current Operations

Continue a limited programming model (3–4 events annually) and rent the theater for external use.

Pros:

- Low risk and operationally sustainable
- Supported by current staffing and budget
- No structural changes required

Cons:

- Limited growth and community impact
- May not meet expectations associated with recent investment

Option 2: External Partnership

Support the creation of an independent organization to manage programming, with CHM providing support services in exchange for shared revenue.

Pros:

- Expands programming capacity without internal staffing increases
- Allows broader programming beyond CHM's mission constraints
- Reduces financial and operational burden

Cons:

- Reduced control over programming and messaging
- Dependent on external leadership and funding
- Requires clear coordination to avoid public confusion
- No clearly identified group currently positioned to establish and lead a supporting organization, which would likely extend the timeline and delay implementation

Option 3: Internal Expansion (Phased)

Year 1 (2026–2027):

- Hire initial programming staff
- Resume limited programming (3–4 events)
- Begin planning for expansion and facility improvements

Year 2 (2027–2028):

- Increase to 5–7 events
- Expand operational and marketing support
- Evaluate additional staffing needs

Year 3 (2028–2029):

- Expand to 8–10 events annually
- Assess long-term infrastructure requirements
- Build toward sustained multi-use programming

Pros:

- Full control over programming and alignment with mission
- Opportunity for long-term institutional growth

Cons:

- Significant financial and staffing requirements
- Multi-year implementation timeline
- Potential compliance and capital cost impacts
- Programming remains constrained by mission scope

Conclusion

Expanded use of the Lowry Family Theater is achievable, but not simply driven by expectation. Any path forward must be grounded in CHM's mission, operational capacity, and available resources. Sustainable programming will require deliberate planning, appropriate investment, and a clear understanding of organizational priorities.