

Culture & Heritage Commission
Board of Commissioners Meeting
June 23, 2026
Museum of York County
6:00pm

Person Presiding: Katie Rutland

Members Present: Katie Rutland, Dorothy Johnson, Maria Duncan, Jeff Lyon, and Annie Laurie Wheat

Members Absent: Margaret Parson-Willins and Jimmy Fitzpatrick

Ex-Officio Members Present: Ed Stewart

Ex-Officio Members Absent: George Sheppard

Staff Present: Richard Campbell, Dabney Scholler, Nancy Sambets, Sarah Lewis, Windy Cole, and Michelle Thoterow

Call to Order

- Katie Rutland called the meeting to order at 6:00pm
- Katie Rutland presented the minutes from the May 26th Commission Meeting and asked for changes or corrections.
 - No corrections to be made.
 - Maria Duncan made a motion to accept the minutes as written.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat seconded the motion.
 - A vote was taken and the motion passed to accept the minutes as written.

Calendar Review

- June- Institutional Plan
- July/August- Election of Officers

Reports and Presentations

- Preservation Video
 - Richard Campbell wanted to share the new Preservation video that goes live tomorrow, that showcases the preservation work performed at Historic Brattonsville.
- Director's Report
 - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
 - Visitation
 - CHM site-wide visitation for the month of May, totaled five thousand and eight. Year-to-date visitation totaled fifty-nine thousand, eight hundred and seventy-five.
 - School Groups

- For the month of May, school group visitation totaled five hundred and ninety-eight. Year-to-date school group visitation totaled eight thousand, six hundred and twenty-four.
- Membership
 - Membership has increased by ninety-five memberships, with a total revenue of \$9,475. Year-to-date memberships total one thousand, three hundred and twenty-seven with a revenue of \$121,745. The CHM overall memberships are at one thousand, four hundred and sixty-eight.
- Past Events
 - Invasion of the Bloodsuckers Family Day
 - Two hundred visitors came out to the Museum of York County on June 6th for Invasion of the Bloodsuckers Family Day. The event celebrated the opening of the traveling exhibit and get a deep dive on what's biting them with activities throughout the museum. One Blood was also in attendance, collecting eighteen units of blood that will help fifty-four patients locally.
 - Fangs at the Lugosi: A Vampire Murder Mystery
 - Fifty attendees enjoyed the CHM Member-Exclusive murder mystery at the Museum of York County on June 13th. Guests came dressed for vampire themed party that was celebrated alongside the opening of the new bloodsuckers exhibit. The night began with the head museum educator being found dead, looking like a vampire attacked them. With the delay of the police department, it was up to the guests to crack the case to see if a vampire was among them, before the killer struck again!
 - Living History Saturday: Juneteenth
 - On June 13th, Historic Brattonsville hosted a Living History Saturday focused on Juneteenth and the importance of Emancipation and the end of slavery in South Carolina. Sixty-eight visitors enjoyed ongoing activities including cooking demonstrations, military demonstrations by the 25th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry, and traditional banjo music. Visitors also had the unique opportunity to meet the descendants of enslaved individuals at Bratton Plantation.
 - DIY with Dad
 - Also on June 13th, the Main Street Children's Museum hosted DIY with Dad. This event gave fathers and their little ones the opportunity to celebrate Father's Day by spend quality time together while creating a special keepsake. Twenty-three participants worked side by side to build a picture frame and then posed for a photograph that could be displayed in their finished project.
- Upcoming Events
 - Wonderfully Weird Wednesdays
 - Each Wednesday this summer, the Museum of York County will be presenting a program series complementing the museum's seasonal exhibit by exploring some of nature's most fascinating, and often misunderstood, creatures. Through engaging drop-in programs, visitors

can learn about a variety of unusual animals and organisms while discovering the important roles they play in healthy ecosystems. The series began on June 10th and will conclude on July 29th, offering an opportunity for visitors to take a closer look at these intriguing species and gain a greater appreciation for their place in the natural world.

- Living History Saturday: Independence Day
 - On June 28th, Historic Brattonsville will celebrate Independence Day as it was observed in the 1850s. Visitors will have the opportunity to explore patriotic traditions and everyday activities from the time period, including sampling refreshments, playing 19th century games, and blacksmithing demonstrations. Hot air balloon launches a reading of the Declaration of Independence, and a toast will also take place, providing an authentic glimpse into how Independence Day was commemorated in the mid-19th century.
- July 4th
 - This special program at Historic Brattonsville will recognize the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and immerse visitors in the experiences of the Carolina Backcountry residents during the Revolutionary War. Visitors will have the opportunity to observe military demonstrations, cooking and blacksmithing demonstrations, and enjoy guided tours of the battlefield.
- Slithering Science – World Snake Day
 - The Museum of York County will be celebrating snakes with Slithering Science- World Snake Day on July 18th. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover the fascinating world of snakes and their important role in the environment through education and hands-on activities. Visitors may even get a chance to meet some live snake ambassadors up close.
- BioQuest Camp: The Web of Life in the Carolinas
 - During the week of July 21-24, the Museum of York County will invite young explorers to embark on a journey through the diverse habitats of South Carolina. Through hands-on activities, nature walks, games, and crafts, campers will discover how plants and animals depend on these unique environments to survive and thrive. Each day will focus on a different region of the state and the fascinating plants and animals that call these habitats home.
- Messy Maestros
 - Messy Maestros has returned to the Main Street Children's Museum for the summer with weekly art programs every Thursday morning. During the month of June, visitors will explore the work of famous artists, using their styles and techniques as inspiration for creative projects. Each session features hands-on art activities that incorporate paint and a variety of other materials, encouraging participants to experiment with different forms of artistic expression. The program has already seen a strong response from the community, with 93 participants attending the first session.

- Huck's Defeat
 - The annual Battle of Huck's Defeat will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution with a two-day living history event on July 11th and 12th. Throughout the weekend, staff historic interpreters, costumed volunteers, and reenactors will bring the 18th century to life through military demonstrations, battlefield tours, hands-on activities, and immersive living history experiences. In addition, there will be a keynote presentation from Lynn Heidelbaugh of the National Postal Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate and the American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition presented by the staff of the Charlotte Museum of History. On July 11, visitors can witness a reenactment of the Battle of Eutaw Springs, while July 12 will feature an 18th-century church service led by Rev. Timothy Weiss and a reenactment commemorating the 246th anniversary of the Battle of Huck's Defeat. Active-duty military personnel, veterans, and their families will receive free admission with a military ID through the Blue Star program.
- Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday
 - The Main Street Children's Museum will be transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood for Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday on July 25th. Visitors will have the opportunity to enjoy Winnie the Pooh themed activities throughout the day. Admission is \$12 for visitors twelve months and older.
- MYCO, MSCM, HC Volunteer Appreciation Event
 - On June 28, the Museum of York County will host volunteers and up to five guests for a drop-in volunteer appreciation celebration. Volunteers and their guests can explore the museum, view the Attack of the Bloodsuckers exhibit, and enjoy refreshments. This event also gives the Museum of York County, Main Street Children's Museum, the Historical Center the opportunity to show appreciation to our wonderful volunteers.
- CHM Project Updates
 - Lowry Family Theater
 - Work continues on mechanical repairs and upgrades at the Lowry Family Theater. The initial draft for the fire notification and emergency lighting drawings have been submitted to the City of York, though the review and issuance of a building permit are contingent upon completion of a code evaluation and life safety plan by a licensed architect. Architect Darrell Watts is currently preparing the required documentation, with an estimated completion date of July 7th. The six emergency doors need to be repaired or replaced and CHM Preservation is currently obtaining carpentry quotes to address this issue as soon as possible. Also, the City of York has required a structural life safety assessment of the fire escape. CHM Preservation has received a proposal for this work but the proposal covers only the assessment and not any subsequent design work should repairs be needed. This proposal is currently under review by York County

Procurement. The rigging and curtain installation project is nearing completion, significantly improving the appearance and functionality of the theater's rigging, lighting, and curtains. Fabrication of the exterior auditorium doors is also in progress. Hazard material reports are currently being updated and testing is taking place for environmental safety compliance. CHM Preservation is coordinating vendor documentation to provide assessment and recommendations to conserve and repair the column capitals and stucco.

- Col. Bratton House (Brattonsville Female Seminary)
 - This project is complete, all preservation activities were completed prior to June 15th.

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

- Institutional Plan
 - *Presented by Richard Campbell*
 - The FY2025-2026 Institutional Plan
 - Richard Campbell reviewed: Our Mission, Our Vision, Our Sites and Priorities I- III, and presented Goals and Strategies under each Priority, as completed and ongoing.
 - Priority I
 - Create meaningful, engaging, and authentic visitor experiences.
 - Priority II
 - Strengthen collections and intellectual resources critical to the preservation and appreciation of the Carolina Piedmont's natural and cultural heritage.
 - Priority III
 - Increase capacity and resources to ensure quality and sustainability of facilities, operations, and programming.
 - The Institutional Plan 2017-2026 is available upon request.
 - Jeff Lyon asked if we were rebranding.
 - Richard Campbell said that we will be doing some rebranding, that is part of the Institutional Plan. We are going to look at rebranding for the Museum of York County, the need for the Culture & Heritage Museums is not as strong as it was after the lawsuit, we have now gone past that. The Main Street Children's Museum and Historic Brattonsville will stay the same. We have updated the fonts and colors for each site, through signs and paraphernalia.
 - Jeff Lyon asked if we still offered free Sundays.
 - Richard Campbell said that we used to but it stopped when we reopened after COVID, Museum of York County was the only site that offered it.
 - Windy said that it was originally a Duke Energy sponsorship when it began and then continued it with Viewer Services.
 - Sarah Lewis added that we were not fully staffed on Sundays and did not have the interpretation or planetarium staff on site.

- Richard Campbell said that we did not get much pushback when we discontinued it.
 - Windy Cole said that when we discontinued free Sundays, we did begin Museums4All, so that everyone has access to the museums.
 - Dorothy asked if we could do once or twice a year.
 - Richard Campbell said we could talk about it; he is open to suggestions.
 - Katie Rutland asked the time frame for moving from an Institutional Plan to a Strategic Plan.
 - Richard Campbell said that we want to move from an Institutional Plan, as this was put into place prior to him becoming Executive Director. We will be talking about moving to a strategic plan at the next meeting. Things are changing and we need to move with the changes. The Culture and Heritage Commission has a say in the direction that we want to move forward in.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat asked about the reaccreditation process and would like to know in that process, what kind of a self-study or what kind of materials need to be provided, and is a new strategic plan imperative for that or does that take place after that, in terms of requirements for reaccreditation.
 - Richard Campbell put together a team of Jillian Bingham and Sarah Lewis, who have been working on this process since 2024.
 - Sarah Lewis added that the American Alliance of Museums has such a large backlog, that we were pushed back a year.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat asked if we had dates for AAM site visits.
 - Richard Campbell said that we do not know when the visits are scheduled but we are ahead of the game at each site.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat asked if the Commission would be involved in the reaccreditation process.
 - Richard Campbell confirmed that the Commission will be involved in the process, receiving updates and information as we receive them.

[A copy of the FY25-26 Institutional Plan Update is attached to these minutes as Addendum B]

Committee Reports

- Collections Committee
 - *Presented by Nancy Sambets*
 - TC542
 - .001A-B – glass serving dish with lid, referred to as the Bratton family Berry Bowl, c. 1780
 - Donor Name: Gwen Lazenby
 - Article: *Will the Real Captain Adamson Please Stand Up?* - written by Michael Scoggins
- Katie Rutland said that since item TC542 comes from the Collections Committee, it does not require a seconded motion.
 - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to accept the items 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 C]

- **Finance Committee**

- *Presented by Richard Campbell*
- As of May 2026, we are \$711,344.40 in the black, which will balance out. We are in better shape than we were last year, with revenue over expenses.

- **Governance Committee**

- *Presented by Annie Laurie Wheat*
- Governance will be discussed during Executive Session.

Executive Session

- Katie Rutland made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss a Personnel Matter - Executive Director's Annual Review
 - Jeff Lyon seconded the motion
 - Katie Rutland called for a vote, vote was taken, and the motion passed.
 - Executive Session began at 7:33pm

Reconvene to Open Session

- Katie Rutland made a motion to reconvene to Open Session, with no action taken from Executive Session
 - Dorothy Johnson seconded the motion
 - Katie Rutland called for a vote, vote was taken, and the motion passed.
 - Open Session reconvened at 8:01pm

Old Business

- None

New Business

- None

Commission Member New/Non-agenda Comments

- None

Adjourn

- Katie Rutland entertained a motion to adjourn
 - Annie Laurie Wheat made a motion to adjourn

- Dorothy Johnson seconded the motion
 - Katie Rutland called for a vote, vote was taken, and the motion passed.
 - Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm

Prepared by: Dabney Scholler

Submitted by: Margaret Parson-Willins, Secretary/Treasurer

Culture and Heritage Museums Director's Report June 23, 2026

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

Total Served – May 2026

- Total Served: 5,008
 - Museum of York County: 1,823
 - Historic Brattonsville: 780
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 2,366
 - Historical Center of York County: 39
- Total Served year-to-date: 59,875
 - Museum of York County: 24,208
 - Historic Brattonsville: 11,491
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 22,468
 - Historical Center of York County: 1,708

School Groups – May 2026

- Total school group visitation: 598
 - Museum of York County: 365
 - Historic Brattonsville: 178
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 55
- Year-to-date: 8,624
 - Museum of York County: 4,112
 - Historic Brattonsville: 4,001
 - Main Street Children's Museum: 511

Membership – May 2026

- New memberships: 95
- Membership renewals: 35
- Membership revenue: \$9,475
- Year-to-date memberships: 1,327
- Year-to-date membership revenue: \$121,745
- Total Memberships: 1,468

Past Events

Invasion of the Bloodsuckers Family Day (MYCO)

Invasion of the Bloodsuckers Family Day took place on June 6 from 10-4. Visitors were invited to celebrate the opening of the traveling exhibit and get a deep dive on what's biting them with activities throughout the museum. We had 200 in attendance. We had One Blood here as well hosting a blood drive. They were able to collect 18 units that will help 54 patients locally.

Fangs at the Lugosi: A Vampire Murder Mystery

The CHM Members Only Event takes place on June 13 at the Museum of York County. We are celebrating the opening of the new bloodsuckers exhibit at the Lugosi Museum of Natural History with a vampire-themed party! Attendees will come dressed as their favorite blood-sucking protagonists, and be prepared for a night of mystery and mayhem. The night begins when the head museum educator is found dead, and it looks like a vampire bit them! Is there an actual vampire among us, or a very clever killer? With the Langella Police Department delayed for a few hours, it's up to the attendees to crack the case before the party ends – or the killer strikes again! 50 people were in attendance.

Living History Saturday: Juneteenth (HB)

The Saturday event focused on Emancipation and the end of slavery in South Carolina. Ongoing activities included cooking demonstrations that showcased red foods and traditional “good fortune” foods associated with Juneteenth, as well as military demonstrations by the 25th Ohio Veteran Volunteer Infantry, representing Federal soldiers who occupied York County at the end of the Civil War. Additionally, traditional banjo music was featured. Visitors had a unique opportunity to meet the descendants of enslaved individuals at Bratton Plantation. Despite the extreme heat, 68 people attended the event.

Upcoming Events

Wonderfully Weird Wednesdays (MYCO)

This summer's Wednesday program series complements the museum's seasonal exhibit by exploring some of nature's most fascinating—and often misunderstood—creatures. Through engaging drop-in programs, visitors can learn about a variety of unusual animals and organisms while discovering the important roles they play in healthy ecosystems. The series began on June 10 with *Swimming with Aquatic Blood-feeders*, which attracted 28 participants, and continued with *Flying with Fangs* on June 17 and *Creepy Crawlies* on June 24. Additional programs include *Parasite Pals* on July 8, *Vampire Plants* on July 15, and *The Real Nemos* on July 29. Each session offers an opportunity for visitors to take a closer look at these intriguing species and gain a greater appreciation for their place in the natural world.

Living History Saturday: Independence Day (HB)

This Living History Saturday special program on June 28 will celebrate Independence Day as it was observed in the Carolina Piedmont during the 1850s. Throughout the day, visitors will have the opportunity to explore patriotic traditions and everyday activities from the period, including sampling seasonal fruit and vegetable drinks, playing traditional 19th-century games, and watching blacksmithing

demonstrations. Guests can also try writing with quill pens, participate in hot-air balloon launches, and listen to a reading of the Declaration of Independence. The celebration will conclude with patriotic toasts led by guest presenters, providing an authentic glimpse into how Independence Day was commemorated in the mid-19th century.

July 4th (HB)

In recognition of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, this special program at Brattonsville will immerse visitors in the experiences of Carolina Backcountry residents during the Revolutionary War. Through a variety of demonstrations, tours, and interpretive programs, guests will gain insight into daily life and the challenges faced by those living in the 18th-century Carolina Piedmont. Historic interpreters will highlight the military campaigns that shaped South Carolina's Backcountry, with special attention given to the Battle of Huck's Defeat. Throughout the day, visitors can observe traditional domestic and trade skills, while scheduled activities will feature militia demonstrations, 18th-century cooking, blacksmithing, and guided tours of the battlefield.

Slithering Science – World Snake Day (MYCO)

Celebrate World Snake Day at Slithering Science on July 18 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. as visitors discover the fascinating world of snakes and their important role in the environment. Throughout the event, staff will share information about what makes these reptiles such remarkable creatures and discuss the importance of snake conservation and awareness. Guests can participate in hands-on activities designed to teach more about snakes, create their own slithery friend to take home, and, if conditions allow, meet some live snake ambassadors up close.

BioQuest Camp: The Web of Life in the Carolinas (MYCO)

This fun-filled camp, taking place July 21–24 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., invites young explorers to embark on a journey through the diverse habitats of South Carolina. Through hands-on activities, nature walks, games, and crafts, campers will discover how plants and animals depend on these unique environments to survive and thrive. Each day will focus on a different region of the state, beginning with Coastal Zone Adventures on July 21, where campers will explore sandy beaches, salt marshes, and barrier islands while learning about sea turtles, crabs, and shorebirds. On July 22, Piedmont Explorers will investigate the rolling hills, forests, and streams of the Piedmont and the wildlife that can be found just beyond our doorsteps. Mountain Marvels on July 23 will take campers on an imaginative trek into the Blue Ridge Mountains to learn about black bears, salamanders, and other mountain species. The camp concludes on July 24 with Wetland Wonders, an exploration of South Carolina's swamps and cypress forests and the fascinating plants and animals that call these habitats home.

Messy Maestros (MSCM)

Thursday Fun returned on June 4 and will continue throughout the summer with weekly art programs held every Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon. During the month of June, participants will explore the work of renowned artists Claude Monet, Jackson Pollock, Vincent van Gogh, and Georgia O'Keeffe, using their styles and techniques as inspiration for creative projects. Each session features hands-on art activities

that incorporate paint and a variety of other materials, encouraging participants to experiment with different forms of artistic expression. The program has already seen a strong response from the community, with 93 participants attending the first session.

Huck's Defeat (HB)

Historic Brattonsville will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution with a two-day living history event on July 11 and 12 that explores the Revolutionary War in South Carolina's Backcountry and the significance of the Battle of Huck's Defeat, which was fought on the Brattonsville property in July 1780. Throughout the weekend, staff historic interpreters, costumed volunteers, and reenactors will bring the 18th century to life through military demonstrations, battlefield tours, hands-on activities, and immersive living history experiences. Visitors can explore reenactor camps, learn about military life during the Revolution, view *American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition* presented by the staff of the Charlotte Museum of History, and observe demonstrations of traditional skills such as 18th-century cooking and blacksmithing. Families can also enjoy period toys and games, participate in the "My Dearest Friend" letter-writing activity using pens and ink, and visit sutlers offering historically inspired merchandise.

Special programming throughout the weekend will include cavalry and artillery demonstrations, guided battlefield tours, children's militia drills, and keynote presentations by Lynn Heidelbaugh of the National Postal Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate. On July 11, visitors can witness a reenactment of the Battle of Eutaw Springs, while July 12 will feature an 18th-century church service led by Rev. Timothy Weiss and a reenactment commemorating the 246th anniversary of the Battle of Huck's Defeat. Parking will be available in the field adjacent to the Admissions Barn, and concessions will be available for purchase. Active-duty military personnel, veterans, and their families will receive free admission with a military ID through the Blue Star program.

DIY with Dad (MSCM)

DIY with Dad, held on June 13 from 1 to 4 p.m., gave fathers and their little ones the opportunity to spend quality time together while creating a special keepsake. During the workshop, participants worked side by side to build a picture frame and then posed for a photograph that could be displayed in their finished project. The event provided a fun and meaningful way for families to celebrate Father's Day through creativity and shared experiences, drawing an attendance of 23 participants.

Winnie the Pooh's Silly Saturday(MSCM)

will take place on 7/25 from 10-4. Something magical is happening at Main Street Children's Museum. Our fun exhibit space has been transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood. Help Eeyore find his tail, read books with Owl, have a dinner party with Rabbit and much more. This special event is \$12 for all visitors over 12 months.

MYCO, MSCM, HC Volunteer Appreciation Event will take place on June 28.

CHM Project Updates

Lowery Family Theater (McC)

Work continues on mechanical repairs and upgrades at the Lowery Family Theater (McC). CMTA has submitted an initial draft of the fire notification and emergency lighting drawings to the City of York, though review and issuance of a building permit are contingent upon completion of a code evaluation and life safety plan by a licensed architect. CMTA's sub-consultant, architect Darrell Watts, is currently preparing the required documentation, with an estimated completion date of July 7. During an initial site visit, six emergency exit doors were identified as needing repair or replacement, and CHM Preservation is actively obtaining carpenter quotes to address these issues as quickly as possible.

In addition, the City of York has required a structural life safety assessment of the fire escape. CHM Preservation has received a proposal for this work from Progressive Companies, an A/E design firm on York County Procurement's on-call list; however, the proposal covers only the assessment and not any subsequent design work should repairs be needed. The proposal is currently under review by York County Procurement.

Elsewhere in the project, Paragon Productions continues work on rigging repairs and installation of new stage curtains, a project that is nearing completion and has significantly improved the appearance and functionality of the theater's rigging, lighting, and curtains. CHM Preservation has indicated a potential upcoming change order request, as the original scope was based on an hourly estimate that is now nearing its limit. Fabrication of the exterior auditorium doors is also in progress.

For environmental safety compliance, Katawba Environmental is under contract to revise and update its prior hazardous materials report and to conduct additional testing in previously unexamined areas. Finally, CHM Preservation is coordinating vendor documentation for Building Conservation Associates to complete a conditions assessment of the portico columns and provide recommendations for the conservation and repair of the column capitals and stucco.

Col. Bratton House (Brattonsville Female Seminary)

- COMPLETE; all preservation activities were completed prior to June 15.

INSTITUTIONAL PLAN UPDATE

Fiscal Year 2025–2026

Culture & Heritage Museums

York County, South Carolina

Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission November 10, 2016

Updated to reflect new mission statements and staff changes February 26, 2018

Presented to the Culture and Heritage Commission June 23, 2026

OUR MISSION

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

OUR VISION

To create a community that greatly values natural, historical, and cultural resources.

OUR SITES

We are a family of museums in York County, South Carolina, which includes Historic Brattonsville, the Museum of York County, Main Street Children's Museum, and the McCelvey Campus, which consists of the Historical Center of York County, the Southern Revolutionary War Institute and the McCelvey School, home to the Lowry Family Theater.

Each of our sites serves a distinct role in fulfilling the institution's mission. Therefore, each site's mission reflects its unique resources and programming scope.

Historic Brattonsville

The mission of Historic Brattonsville is to preserve and present the history of the Carolina Piedmont and this Revolutionary War site as portrayed through the structures, landscape, and stories of the Brattonsville community.

Museum of York County (Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission on April 25, 2017)

The mission of the Museum of York County is to enhance understanding of our world by collecting and preserving the natural history of the Carolina Piedmont, communicating regional themes and their broader global connections.

Main Street Children's Museum

The mission of the Main Street Children's Museum is to prepare young learners and their families for the future by providing positive learning through creative play in a unique environment inspired by the art of Vernon Grant.

McCelvey Campus (Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission on February 28, 2017)

The mission of the McCelvey Campus is to collect and preserve the cultural heritage of York County and the Carolina Piedmont while providing programs and educational opportunities that reflect the regional history through research, exhibitions and performing arts.

PRIORITIES

Guided by its mission to communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning, Culture & Heritage Museums strives to inspire audiences to explore and discover their place in the world—to better understand their past, enrich their lives today, and shape their futures.

This Institutional Plan establishes the goals and strategies that guide the organization's work. It provides the framework for directing institutional resources, strengthening research, collections, preservation, and programming, while ensuring continued accountability to the public we serve.

This annual update reports progress made during Fiscal Year 2025–2026 toward accomplishing the goals and strategies established in the Institutional Plan. Projects identified as **Completed** represent significant accomplishments achieved during the reporting period. **In Progress** identifies initiatives actively advancing toward completion, while **Ongoing** reflects continuing institutional responsibilities that have been successfully implemented and continue to evolve through regular operation, refinement, and improvement.

Three priorities reflect the core principles inherent in our mission, vision and values. Serving as the framework for our Institutional Plan, these priorities define and align our collective efforts and guide our path forward.

PRIORITY I

Create meaningful, engaging, and authentic visitor experiences.

PRIORITY II

Strengthen collections and intellectual resources critical to the preservation and appreciation of the Carolina Piedmont's natural and cultural heritage.

PRIORITY III

Increase capacity and resources to ensure quality and sustainability of facilities, operations, and programming.

PRIORITY I: Create meaningful, engaging, and authentic visitor experiences.

GOAL I: Position the Museum of York County as the regional hub for Carolina Piedmont nature-based learning experiences and research opportunities.

STRATEGY 1: Expand resources and opportunities to present dynamic, interactive, changing exhibitions and public programs.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued planning and design for Camp Piedmont: An Early Learner Playscape, scheduled to open in Summer 2028.
- Continued development and rotation of changing exhibitions in the museum's hallway galleries, providing visitors with new educational and interpretive experiences.

STRATEGY 2: Develop and implement a plan to include facility renovations and ensure permanent exhibitions are mission based.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued planning for facility improvements and permanent exhibitions to ensure they remain aligned with the museum's mission.

STRATEGY 3: Engage local stakeholders and municipal agencies in discussing the potential for a new dedicated location to showcase the Vernon Grant collection.

Completed 2025–2026:

- Installed “The Company of Trees: Illustrations by Vernon Grant” in the hallway gallery outside Tot Town, expanding public access to the Vernon Grant collection.
- Expanded partnerships connecting Vernon Grant's legacy with community events, including Come-See-Me and ChristmasVille. Main Street Children's Museum continues to serve as the anchor location for Santa's Main Street Workshop during ChristmasVille.
- Identified a suitable property as a potential permanent home for the Vernon Grant collection.
- Received Culture and Heritage Commission approval for property acquisition funding.
- Initiated the acquisition process in coordination with York County officials and the property owners.

- Upon successful acquisition, staff will develop an implementation timeline for establishing the permanent gallery.

STRATEGY 4: Develop site-specific brand identity that accentuates the clarified role of MYCO as a natural history museum.

Completed.

PRIORITY II: Strengthen collections and intellectual resources critical to the preservation and appreciation of the Carolina Piedmont's natural and cultural heritage.

GOAL I: Continue building a collection of specimens, objects and archives representative of the Carolina Piedmont past and present.

STRATEGY 1: Create a Collections Plan to clearly define the scope of CHM collections and outline the mission-based acquisition of objects to strengthen focus on the Carolina Piedmont.

Completed:

- The 2025–2030 Collections Plan and presented it to the Culture and Heritage Commission on February 25, 2025.
- Established annual staff review of the Collections Plan to ensure continued alignment with institutional priorities.

STRATEGY 2: Ensure that items in the collection are aligned with the organization's mission.

Completed:

- Completed processing, rehousing, and cataloging of the entire Museum of Western York County Archival Collection in PastPerfect.
- Completed all Museum of Western York County finding aids.

In Progress:

- Continued digitization of ownership and acquisition records to strengthen intellectual and physical control of the collection.
- Continued entering new acquisitions into PastPerfect during processing and digitizing newly discovered records as they are identified.

- Continued provenance research on the African Ethnographic Collection to support potential repatriation efforts and better understand associated funding, permitting, and procedural requirements.
- Continued deaccessioning of low-mission collections by transferring appropriate materials to the education collection for hands-on programming, outreach, and living history interpretation. Current priorities focus on Natural History and Historic Brattonsville collections.
- Continued processing backlog collections to improve documentation in PastPerfect and ensure complete physical and digital records.

STRATEGY 3: Expand collections storage capacity and improve conditions to ensure long-term preservation and security of objects.

Completed:

- Completed the Fluid Preservation Room and Freezer Project.
- Installed additional mobile carriage units in Historical Center Archives Storage, creating permanent housing for more than 140 boxes of Museum of Western York County archival materials.
- Installed security cameras and fencing at Historic Brattonsville's Enslaved Ancestral Burial Ground to enhance site security and preservation.
- Consolidated mission-related anthropology collections by relocating materials from the Museum of York County to the McCelvey Center, reducing storage requirements, improving collection access, and creating additional workspace and storage capacity.

In Progress:

- Continued relocating collections from the McCelvey Center to the Historical Center of York County.
- Continued planning storage improvements, including furniture platforms and collection reorganization, to increase long-term storage capacity in preparation for American Alliance of Museums reaccreditation in 2027.
- Continued evaluating organization-wide security needs, with particular attention to aging systems at the Museum of York County and McCelvey Center.

GOAL II: Expand opportunities and investment in professional development.

STRATEGY 1: Consider procedures to document institutional knowledge and experience.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued documenting institutional knowledge and preserving organizational resources.

In Progress:

- Continued development of a digital and physical library of research papers and publications related to Carolina Piedmont natural history. The reprint library currently contains approximately 1,130 references, most of which have been cataloged and organized.
- Continued collaboration with the University of South Carolina to digitize the Bratton Papers.
- Continued review of remaining core governance documents in preparation for consideration by the Culture and Heritage Commission.

STRATEGY 2: Value and pursue staff development opportunities.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued supporting staff participation in professional development opportunities that strengthen institutional knowledge and organizational capacity.

PRIORITY III: Increase capacity and resources to ensure quality and sustainability of facilities, operations, and programming.

GOAL I: Broaden funding resources to supplement County support and allow for programmatic growth.

STRATEGY 1: Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, donors, volunteers, and community partners.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued strengthening relationships with key stakeholders, donors, volunteers, and community partners through institutional outreach, collaboration, and engagement.

STRATEGY 2: Continue to increase membership and visitation.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued member engagement through monthly membership campaigns, exclusive member events, workshops, behind-the-scenes tours, and enhanced member benefits.

- Expanded membership acquisition efforts through monthly and annual appeals, engagement opportunities, and membership programs.
- Continued regular communication through targeted email lists and monthly e-newsletters.
- Increased membership visibility through improved signage, staff training, and implementation of the Versai membership and customer relationship management system.

STRATEGY 3: Seek grant opportunities and new public and corporate sponsorships to support existing and planned programming needs.

Ongoing:

- Continued pursuing grant opportunities and developing public and corporate sponsorships to support institutional priorities and future programming.

STRATEGY 4: Expand retail services at Historic Brattonsville and the Museum of York County with value-added amenities.

Ongoing:

- Continued expanding retail services and visitor amenities to enhance the overall visitor experience.

GOAL II: Develop and implement methods to engage and measure public interest and support.

STRATEGY 1: Increase community advisory opportunities through committees, project teams and program planning.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued engaging community members through advisory committees, project teams, and program planning initiatives.

STRATEGY 2: Increase audience input through various evaluation methods.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued collecting audience feedback through a variety of evaluation methods to better understand visitor interests and experiences.

STRATEGY 3: Review and apply audience input to inform planning for capital projects, programs, exhibitions, marketing and visitor services.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued incorporating audience feedback into planning for capital projects, exhibitions, educational programming, marketing initiatives, and visitor services.

GOAL III: Continue to improve visitor services, amenities and accessibility.

STRATEGY 1: Develop staffing plan to accommodate increasing attendance and institutional growth.

Completed and Ongoing:

- Continued implementing staffing strategies to support increasing visitation and organizational growth.

STRATEGY 2: Improve operational capacity of facilities to ensure audience accessibility and safety as well as security for our resources.

Ongoing:

- Continued improving facility operations to enhance accessibility, visitor safety, and the protection of institutional resources.

STRATEGY 3: Explore ways to better reach underserved audiences.

Completed:

- Continued participation in the Museums4All program, providing reduced admission to eligible families during the program's fifth year.
- Continued partnership with ABS Kids to provide sponsored sensory-friendly museum experiences.
- Expanded visitor access by opening Main Street Children's Museum on Sundays, providing greater flexibility for families, particularly working parents.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCESSION

Temporary Custody ID:	Collection Type:	Method of Acquisition:
TC542	History	Gift

Name of Source:

Gwen Lazenby

Description of Accession:

.001A-B – glass serving dish with lid, referred to as the Bratton family Berry Bowl, c. 1780

Overall Condition: ☒ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

General/Comparable Size of Collection

8.5" tall x 4" diameter (with lid on)

Significance/Ownership History Mission Rating: 5 (Scale of 1 – 5; 5 matches mission 100%)

The donor, Gwen Lazenby, is a direct descendent of Col. William Bratton (1742-1815) and Martha Robertson Bratton (C.1750-1816). Her late mother, Jean Agee, passed the berry bowl down to Gwen, telling her to keep it safe. Since 1984, it was protected by the donor in an electric can opener box. In her old age, she feared that if a family member found the box, they would not look to see what was in it, but simply throw it away.

According to oral family history, two “berry bowls” were gifted to Martha Bratton by “Captain John Adamson”, also known as the “honorable Tory”, as a thank you for saving his life during the Battle of Huck’s Defeat (July 12, 1780), despite him being from the opposing side. At some point in time, the two berry bowls were separated and gifted to different branches of the family. As of June 8, 2026, the location of the second berry bowl is unknown. The donor suspects it was sold or given away without knowing the item’s significance.

Michael C. Scoggins, CHM’s late Historian, wrote an article titled “Will the Real Captain Adamson Please Stand Up?” where he describes the events leading up to the Battle of Huck’s defeat, also known as the Battle of Williamson’s Plantation. On the late afternoon (or early evening) of July 11, 1780, a force of about 120 British Provincial soldiers and Loyalist militiamen arrived at the home of Colonel William Bratton. The British force was commanded by Captain Christian Huck. Huck’s force was about evenly divided into two groups of soldiers: about sixty British Provincials and about sixty Tory militiamen. When a “small squad” reached the house, Martha met them on the porch, asked what they wanted, and was told they wanted her husband. Martha informed them she didn’t know where her husband was. A tory took a reaping hook that was hanging from a peg on the porch, placed it around her neck, and threatened to cut her head off if she did not immediately reveal her husband’s whereabouts. A Loyalist officer leapt upon the porch, drew his sword, and kicked the belligerent Tory to the ground while beating him with the flat of his sword. Then, according to William (Jr.), the officer “turned to my Mother expressing regret at the occurrence and giving his assurance of protection. My

Mother said not a word but turned and went into the house, I still clinging to the skirt of her dress.”

Early the next morning, following the surprise attack on Capt. Huck and his militia, Col. William Bratton was informed that “Captain Adamson” was the man who threatened his wife’s life a day earlier. Adamson was found injured on the battlefield. Col. Bratton was about to hack Adamson to bits with his sword when the wounded officer implored Bratton to call his wife, who would vouch for what actually transpired the previous day. Martha was brought to the battlefield and identified Adamson, and his life was spared. According to William Jr.’s account, Adamson “was not touched by ball or sabre but was thrown from his horse and impaled on a pine sapling stump about the size of a candle. It penetrated his chest. The wound was a terrible one and little or no hope was entertained of his life - but by care of Mrs. Bratton his recovery was complete.” In fact, Martha treated all of the wounded men from the battle, almost all of whom were Loyalists. Many owed their lives to her care. (Source: Scoggins forementioned article)

The title of Scoggins article questions which Captain Adamson was “the Honorable Tory” that saved Martha and in turn was saved by Martha the next day: Lt. John Adamson of the Camden Loyalist Militia (1744-1816) or Capt. William Adamson of the New York Volunteers (unknown-1780). Some research incorrectly applies the rank of Captain to John Adamson despite having earned the rank of Lieutenant. Current CHM Historian Zach Lemhouse believes it was John Adamson and not William Adamson for two reasons. One, because William Bratton, Jr.’s firsthand account where he identified John Adamson. And two, because William Adamson did not survive the War long enough to have later gifted Martha with the bowl. Some accounts claim William Adamson died at the Battle of Huck’s Defeat while other accounts claim he did a month later in Camden, SC.

Despite not knowing for a fact who gifted the berry bowl to Martha, the story about it and its connection to the Battle of Huck’s Defeat speaks highly of Martha Bratton’s character during a time of hostility and uncertainty in the South Carolina back country.

Note: A complete copy of Michael C. Scoggins article is included with the Recommendation for reference.

Potential Uses: ☒ Research ☒ Exhibition ☒ Loan

The berry bowl can be used for research, exhibition, or loan related to Bratton family history, Historic Brattonsville, Battle of Huck’s Defeat, Southern Campaign of the Revolutionary War, 18th century material culture, and glassware.

The berry bowl is currently planned to be on display in the HB Orientation Room during the 2026 Battle of Huck’s Defeat weekend program. It is also currently planned to be included in the Winter 2026 Historical Center Search Room’s display about glassware.

Restrictions:

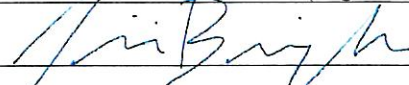
None

Unusual Costs:

None

Staff Recommendation (Signature & Title):

Date:

 DIRECTOR OF COLLECTIONS	6/10/2026
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Executive Director Recommends (Signature):

Date:

	6/12/2026
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Approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission on:

Executive Director Signature:

Date:

	6/26/2026
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