2014-2015 YEAR-END REPORT
Culture and Heritage Museums
York County, South Carolina

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
From a Presentation to the Commission on July 27, 2015
Mission Statement of the Culture and Heritage Museums
To communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning.

Introduction
On June 30th, 2015, the Culture and Heritage Museums closed a very strong fiscal year that featured quality programming, regional and state recognition, continued fiscal responsibility, positive dispute resolution, and sustained growth at all four sites. It also marked a changing of the guard as the terms expired of the remaining commissioners appointed by the council with the ordinance change of 2011. This body began their service at a time of organizational upheaval and significant uncertainty. Despite the challenges, the museums have continued to move forward over the past four years. Critical needs have been addressed and the visitation numbers are outstanding. I personally am grateful for the support that I have received since my arrival in March of 2012 and would like to thank those who have served the commission over the past two terms. David Plexico, Ragen Craig, and Dennis Getter all served the entire period. Others who served as voting members during this time include Hester Benitez, Jonell Hagner, Rick Lee, Jerry West, and Carlos Bryson as well as David Duncan and Leo Yakutis who continue to serve. In addition, valuable input has been provided by our ex officio members over the past four years including Wade Ferry and Pay Veasey along with Carolyn Mendenhall (whose ex officio service continues) and Nancy Craig who now serves as a voting member. I am also blessed to serve with an experienced, talented, and professional staff.

Visitation Numbers

The overall total number of people served at our sites in 2014-15 at 85,778 has grown 37% since 2010-2011. The Culture and Heritage Museums work towards our mission through five unique types of experiences at four distinct sites spread throughout York County. All four sites enjoyed
five-year highs in 2014-15. The three major attendance categories (general admission, groups, and special events) each were also at their highest levels in at least five years. These totals not only represent a clean sweep of the seven major ways that we analyze attendance, they also indicate sustained growth over the time period. While the number of people we served at our sites was growing, operating expenses were significantly reduced. In 2014-2015 non-capital expenses were more than $500,000 less than they were five years earlier as we continue to serve more people with greater efficiency.

**Historic Brattonsville** is a historic site in McConnells, South Carolina dating from the 1760s to the 1880s that preserves and presents the history of the Carolina Piedmont as portrayed through the structures, landscape, and stories of the Brattonsville community. Visitation to Historic Brattonsville was the highest in five years in 2014-15 at 27,828. This total marks an increase of more than 10% since 2010-11 and a clear growing trend over the past three years following an initial drop in 2011-12. Attendance at special events at the site has been especially strong over the past two years.

![Historic Brattonsville Chart](image)

**The McElvey Center** in York, South Carolina serves as home to two important functions of the Culture and Heritage Museums family. **The Lowry Family Theater** in the old McElvey School building presents the unique heritage of the Carolina Piedmont through the performing arts while maintaining a quality venue for community enrichment. **The Historical Center of York County** preserves the heritage of York County and the Carolina Piedmont through the collection and care of its significant art, objects, and archival material while providing opportunities for research and learning. Visitation to the McElvey Center includes performance attendance, research room visits, and special programming. As with all of the sites, visitation at McElvey reached a five-year high in 2014-15 ranging from 2,326 in 2010-11 to 3,523 in 2014-15.
The Main Street Children’s Museum in Rock Hill, South Carolina prepares young learners and their families for the future through creative play in a unique environment inspired by the art of Vernon Grant. The Children’s Museum opened in December of 2010 and has proven to be very popular in the community. Since its first full year in 2011-12 attendance has grown 39% from 17,096 to 23,745. In addition, the museum has accounted for much of the increase in general membership during that time.
The Museum of York County in Rock Hill, South Carolina collects and preserves the natural history and art of the Carolina Piedmont communicating regional themes and their broader global connections. Attendance at the Museum broke 30,000 in 2014-2015 for the first time in our recent records – perhaps for the first time in its sixty-five-year history. Total visitation has risen steadily over the last five years ranging from 23,298 in 2010-11 to 30,682 in 2014-15. This number represents an increase of almost 32% in just five years. Cate Crane is our site manager at both Main Street and the Museum of York County. She and her staff are deserving of recognition for their hard work, creative new programming, and positive customer service that has been so instrumental in stimulating this growth.

![Museum of York County Visitations](image)

**Visitation by Category**

Overall visitation through *General Admission* has increased by 38% since 2010-11. Of the three visitation categories, the opening of Main Street Children’s Museum in December of 2010-2011 has had the greatest impact in this area which accounts for most of the visitation there. Still, General Admission is up 17% since 2011-12 – the first full year of the Children’s Museum.

*Group* visitation has increased 24% at our sites. The vast majority of visitors from this category are students participating in school field trips. The Museum of York County, with an increase of 94% has shown the strongest increase in group attendance among our sites. The final category, *Special Events*, is up by almost 90% since 2010-2011 with the most significant impact at Historic Brattonsville. While the number is skewed slightly because a few of the events were formerly counted as general admission, the 195% increase in this category at HB is still remarkable. This category was specifically targeted by our marketing efforts.
Membership
As of June 30th, 2015 the Culture and Heritage Museums had 1,262 members. This number has grown 10% from last year and is the highest year-end membership total on record. Because records were kept differently in the past, a better indicator of the strong growth in membership can be seen through income from our general membership levels (levels under $150). While membership rates have not increased, income from general membership is up by 54% since 2010-11. Although we have lost a few larger donors during that period, this performance indicator along with the growth in visitation demonstrates strong broad-based community support.

![Income from General Membership](image)

Finances
The 2014-15 books have not been officially closed at the time this report was prepared. A more detailed report on the organizational finances for 2014-15 will be forthcoming following the completion of the auditor’s report. However, it should be noted that the year-end unaudited actuals indicate that expenses will be under budget by well over $450,000 and net revenue will be positive at more than $300,000. Since 2010-11, expenses have been reduced by more than $500,000 or 14% while the number of people that we serve at our sites has increased by 37%. During that five-year span our fund balance has grown by almost 200% and is projected to be near $1.5 million when the final numbers are in.

Advancement Income (Membership, Grants, and Contributed Income)
After rising steadily over the three previous years, gross income from membership, grants, and contributions has dropped by 35% since 2011-12. The drop is solely related to the drop in capital grants which are generally larger and vary significantly from year to year. To illustrate, we received almost $260,000 in 2013-14 and only $6,000 in 2014-15 from this category. In 2015-16
we anticipate close to $1,000,000 through the funds that will be available to us through the Foundation for the Carolinas. If the capital funding is removed from the CHM advancement totals over the past four years, then gross non-capital or “operating” advancement income has actually increased by 9% since 2011-12. More importantly, advancement expenses have been reduced by 79% over that same time period. Our advancement efforts are actually resulting in more gross operating funds with only a fraction of the costs. Looked at another way, the net operating advancement income has risen by 269% over the past four years. In those four years, the Return on Investment (ROI), including capital funding, for each dollar spent on Advancement has risen from $1.44 to $6.60 while the Cost to Raise a Dollar (CRD) has dropped from $0.69 to $0.15.
CHM Volunteers
In 2014-2015 we had 726 volunteers who provided 25,413 hours of service to the Culture and Heritage Museums. Although this total was a 3% drop from last year's peak, it represents the second highest total in the past five years and is up 18% from 2010-2011

Program Highlights

The *Huck's Defeat Battlefield Trail* opened in July of 2014 helping increase attendance at the battle reenactment to over 1,300. This was its highest attendance in the last five years and was up by 104% from 2010-11. The new trail leads visitors around and through the battlefield while original artwork and interpretive signage tell the story of the battle. A video in the orientation room provides background for the experience. This project and the supporting research led by CHM Historian Michael Seoggins were recognized with the *Award of Excellence* from the South Carolina Confederation of Local Historical Societies.
Way Back When: Ice Age Beasts of the Carolina won its second major award in 2014-15. The exhibition depicting animals and landscapes from three different stages of the Ice Age received the Award of Excellence for the Outstanding Exhibit in its class from the Southeastern Museum Conference. Significantly the exhibition was competing against museums with up to three times its budget. The regional award is in addition to the Award of Merit the exhibit received last year from the South Carolina Federation of Museums. Our Exhibits Director, Teresa Armour and Curator of Natural History, Steve Fields did an outstanding job leading the effort to create this exhibit.

Left: CHM Exhibits Director, Teresa Armor creating Jeffrey, the Jeffersonian Ground Sloth
Right: CHM Curator of Natural History, Steve Fields w/ Armour and awards for "Way Back When"
The *Southern Sound Series* in the Lowry Family Theater at McCelvey featured nationally-acclaimed performers including Grammy Award Winner, Steep Canyon Rangers who played to a sold-out show for the second year in a row. Other great performances featured 2014 Grammy nominee, Della Mae, Americana Award Winner Sarah Jarosz, and three-time Grammy nominee Ruthie Foster. The season was announced with a special performance by South Carolina blues legend and winner of the 2015 National Endowment of the Arts Heritage Fellowship award – Drink Small. One of the most memorable moments of the year came when Ruthie Foster honored Civil Rights pioneers, the Friendship 9, the week that their sentence was vacated after fifty-four years. In an unscripted moment, Dub Massey and David Williamson of the Friendship 9 joined Ms. Foster on stage to sing “Woke up this Morning (with my mind stayed on freedom)”

![Dub Massey and Ruthie Foster](image)

*Dub Massey of the Friendship 9 on stage with three-time Grammy Nominee Ruthie Foster at the Lowry Family Theater at the McCelvey Center*

At the Museum of York County two major exhibits were featured in the Springs Gallery in 2014-15. *Life: A Journey through Time* featuring the photographs of Franz Lanting and “Phyllis” our new replica Coelophysis remained up through May of 2015. In June we opened *Wolves and Wildlands* which will continue until September 13th. Other exhibits from 2014-15 includes *A Salamander’s Tale* – an interactive children’s exhibit, *Art Imagination* featuring Children’s Illustrations created by Winthrop Art Students and two exhibits featuring the work of Vernon Grant: *An Illustrious Career* and *Vernon Grant Holiday*. 
Countdown to Kindergarten was hosted by the Main Street Children’s Museum as a community event to prepare rising kindergartners for their first day of school. In its second year, attendance at this free event doubled to over 1,000 children and their families.
Special Events at Historic Brattonsville continued to be strong in 2014-15. Of particular note was Spirits and Stories: Brattonsville by Twilight which in its third year has doubled its attendance each of the last two years and had over 800 people come out this past October. Our largest event of the year for the second year in a row was Children’s Day on the Farm. Although the 1,410 was short of the all-time single day record of 1,802 set in 2013-14 it was still an impressive turnout. Christmas Candlelight recovered from a rainy first weekend with only 373 people to enjoy its largest single-day attendance on record of 1,301. The annual Civil War Reenactment had a five-year high of 1,434 while Hog Butchering Day, Sheep Shearing Day, and Independence Day each turned in strong numbers as emerging events.

Original Artwork by CHM Integrated Marketing Coordinator, Stephen Crotts

Vignette from Christmas Candlelight
York County Forever worked with the Culture and Heritage Museums to acquire thirty-seven acres along the South Fork of Fishing Creek formerly held by the Breaux family. This land was vital to completing and protecting the eastern boundary of Historic Brattonsville.

Aerial view of Historic Brattonsville showing former property line - the Breaux property is the rectangular area cutting into the eastern side of the property.

Settlement Agreement
Successful resolution of a dispute with our former fund-raising arm resulted in positive advantages for the Culture and Heritage Museums including:

- The establishment of a Capital Projects Fund at the Foundation for the Carolinas exclusively for our benefit worth approximately $8,000,000

- The establishment of an endowment fund at the Foundation for the Carolinas to benefit our collections and exhibits worth $477,000.

- The acquisition of sixty acres of land on the Catawba River.

Planning
In addition to growth in visitation and continuation of quality programming, significant effort was made in 2014-15 to lay the groundwork for the future. This work included the completion and approval of a Three-year Institutional Plan which defines organizational priorities and initiatives, a comprehensive Interpretive Plan for Historic Brattonsville which addresses capital needs for the site, and a preliminary Capital Projects Plan based on the priorities identified through institutional planning.
Summary
The fiscal year ending June 30th, 2015 was a very strong year for the Culture and Heritage Museums. On site visitation reached five-year highs at all four sites and in all three major visitation categories. Expenses were within budget and we ended the year with a significant positive net income which enabled the growth of our fund balance. General membership continued to rise significantly and net fundraising income is heading in the right direction. At the same time, the time donated by our volunteers continued as a strong asset.

In 2014-15 we also received state and regional awards for exhibits. Special events and concerts continued to be well-received and well-attended. Significant time was dedicated to renewing our commitment to professional museum standards as we worked to prepare for reaccreditation. While moving the organization forward, we also made the boundaries of Historic Brattonsville more secure. Between the new land at Brattonsville and the land on the river, we added almost one hundred acres of land to be used to further our mission. Finally, we have plans in place to address capital needs that will further our preservation and programming efforts while significant funding has been secured to move forward in meeting our identified goals.