



2020 | Greer Heritage Museum Campaign for the **FUTURE**

GHM Revitalization Plan

December, 2019



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Greer Heritage Museum Campaign for the **FUTURE**

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HISTORY
IS A GUIDE TO NAVIGATION
IN PERILOUS TIMES.

HISTORY
IS WHO WE ARE
AND WHY WE ARE
THE WAY WE ARE.

— DAVID MCCULLOUGH



Bill Dobson, founder of Dobson Hardware

2020

Introduction

For the Greer Heritage Museum, 2020 will be a critical inflection point. It stands on the brink of shuttering its doors. But an ad hoc turnaround team has a bold vision for the future, in which GHM is a vibrant complement to the rich cultural fabric of Greer. Come join us!



the Durham family, 1940

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Our History

GHM first opened at 208 Trade Street in 1998. The Museum was a 20-year dream for Carmella Hudson, a WWII nurse turned school teacher. In the years leading up to the opening she built the collection from nothing, pulled together a board of directors, and established a non-profit. In 2008, GHM moved to its permanent home: the historic 1935 Greer Post Office. Then-director Joada Hiatt, a retired librarian, organized and displayed the collection. After Joada's retirement in 2015, the museum entered a period of decline.



Carm Hudson, 2015

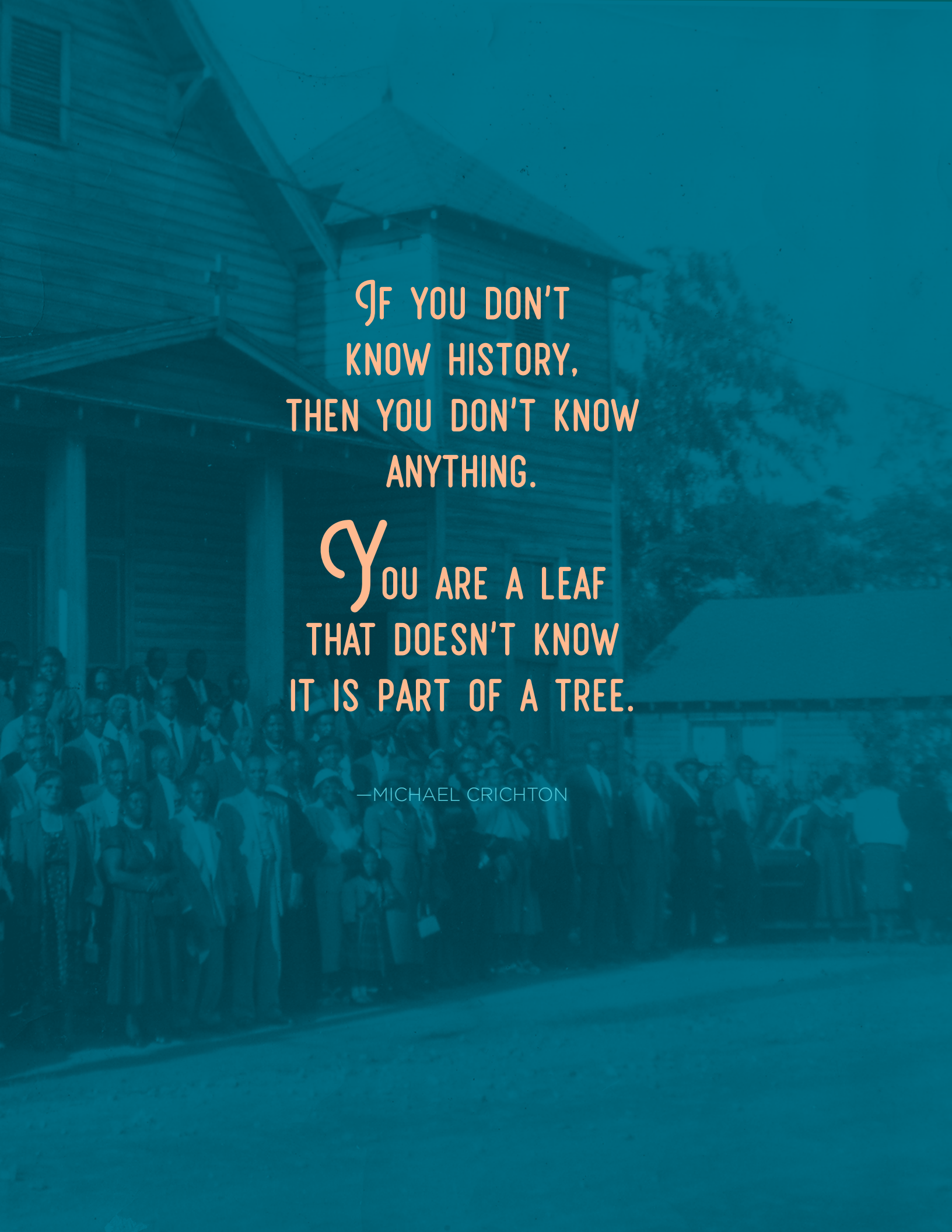
2020

GHM Today



GHM is at a crossroads: mothball the collection and lock the doors, or revitalize the Museum. GHM is now closed more than open, shrunk to the point of disappearing. Yet a strong collection of artifacts lives in an historic building, waiting for caring partners to breathe in new life. And a new Greer, flush with growth, waits for the Museum to step up and fill its critical role in community education of heritage and culture.

Greer officer Willis Foster, shot and killed by bootleggers, 1904



IF YOU DON'T
KNOW HISTORY,
THEN YOU DON'T KNOW
ANYTHING.

YOU ARE A LEAF
THAT DOESN'T KNOW
IT IS PART OF A TREE.

—MICHAEL CRICHTON



GHM will become an integral part of the educational and cultural fabric of Greer through meaningful and memorable educational experiences that meet the public where they are, transport them to a different place and time, and use the past to inform their present. **We will help everyone find their place in the ongoing story that is Greer.**

2020 THE FUTURE

2020



Greer Heritage Museum Revitalization Plan

THE GHM TURNAROUND TEAM WILL:

- **Cast a compelling vision** of a thriving GHM that engages the community in valuable interactive educational experiences.
- **Transform the Board of Directors** into a reengaged leadership team investing their wisdom, guidance, time, relationships, and resources.
- **Build an extensive team** of community partners including businesses, government, educational institutions, donors, volunteers, and history and museum specialists.
- **Install a collections care system** to protect the artifacts entrusted to us.
- **Enhance the museum's reach**, image, and professionalism to make it a compelling organization for the whole community.
- **Develop a full GHM Strategic Plan** for 2020–2025.



Let Your Dollars Have More Cents by Depositing
Them where they will Draw Interest

BANK OF GREERS

CAPITAL \$50,000

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Greer Heritage Museum

NEXT STEPS

Hold a signature event to roll out Greer Heritage Museum's 2020 Campaign for the Future.

Begin a capital campaign and renew the endowment campaign for sustainability and growth.

Meet with leadership of the City of Greer to strengthen collaboration.

Draft a strategic plan and secure board approval.

Begin development of a collections management plan, and implement where urgent.

Develop an exhibit plan and begin incremental upgrades.

Successfully run an adult enrichment event.



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Greer Heritage Museum A Vision for Success

Nannette Iatesta
niatesta@yahoo.com



A Vision for Success

My name is Nannette latesta and I am new to this area, having moved from Colorado two years ago. We decided on this area to be close to our children and grandchildren; and though we bought a historic house in Taylors, we also own property in Greer and consider it our new hometown.

After arriving, I visited the Greer Heritage Museum and volunteered. I have been working weekends there ever since. I currently spend a lot of time learning about the area's fascinating early history: the Cherokee Nation period, agricultural past, Dark Corner connections, the mill era, the recent unprecedented growth... and the people and events that put the flesh on that framework of our history.

One of the things that struck me right away was the similarity between my hometown of Lafayette, Colorado and Greer. Given that they are miles apart a person would not automatically think there is a connection, but the comparisons are remarkable. Lafayette's history began with the Ute and Cheyenne tribes living and hunting in the area. Then came the agricultural era; mostly farming wheat and other grains. Finally, the big game-changer came in the 1870s when a widow discovered a coal vein on her farm. She became the first female bank president in the nation... and promptly founded a town on her land. Things were never the same. Between the coming of the railroad and the discovery of coal, Lafayette became the center of the Colorado coal fields and the energy provider for the front range of the state. We had coal camps instead of mill towns, and camp houses similar to Greer's mill houses. There were company stores, ball teams, churches, and doctors... and the silk-stocking row, similar to "boss hill."

When the nation turned from coal to gas, the town's economy was destroyed. Luckily, we were close to Denver, so people traveled there for jobs; Denver was like Spartanburg and Greenville. There was a huge plant 10 miles away that made nuclear weapon triggers. Many miners transitioned from mining to nuclear manufacturing.

In the last 20 years, the nation has discovered Colorado... especially unhappy Californians! We went from 3,000 to 30,000 in record time, with a technology park and tourism (we were 20 minutes from the gateway to the Rocky Mountains). The city now forms the northern edge of the metropolitan Denver area, much like your connection to Greenville: separate always, yet connected. All of this is a backdrop for a remarkable comparison.

Lafayette Miners Museum & GHM: Remarkable Similarities

I have volunteered in my hometown's Lafayette Miners Museum since 1978, held almost every office in the historical society and have been a board member and committee chair for decades. I took a break for a few years for other endeavors and family responsibilities. I returned to find the organization in a crisis mode, suffering from



A Vision for Success

the aging and death of the people running it. They had gathered the local narrative and artifacts, established the museum, and kept it open and successful for 40 years. But there was no one to take their place. The city owned and maintained the building and grounds, but had nothing to do with operation. The number of visitors was down, the volunteer pool was almost nonexistent, the displays were outdated and the city had put the museum on the back burner.



Turnaround

In a few short years the museum was brought back to life, enhancing the downtown area and the whole city — passing on the historical narrative to generations of school children and adults who had no idea of the people on whose shoulders they stand. With the help of the city and volunteers the museum was revitalized. It is now a force for good, a treasured source of information for the community — and a vital part of the city identity.

Greer's museum has enjoyed support and help from the city in the way of a building that houses the museum, financial support, and city employees helping keep the museum open. Mr. and Mrs. Hudson had the foresight to gather artifacts, organize the narrative and establish the museum with help from a multitude of individuals. These people gave their time and money to create a repository for the items and stories that make up the tapestry of what Greer is today. There would be no museum if it had not been for the city and devoted people of Greer.

I have been impressed with the forward thinking of this city while not forgetting its past. My favorite quotation came from City Administrator, Ed Driggers: "What we have is pretty good. We're just going to make it better." I hope this will be the rallying point for our Greer Heritage Museum as well.

Joada Hiatt's article in the CenterG magazine is a reminder of what Trade Street once had been, and how it could be given new life to create a vital downtown once again. Greer's history is one long life lesson of creativity, endurance, patience, risk and compassion. Its history is not perfect because people are not perfect, but it becomes a guide and bridge for understanding as new generations see how those who have gone before experienced many of the same obstacles and challenges — and rose to meet them. People complain less when they know the hardships faced by townspeople of a different era. They have a timeline; they can see both mistakes and progress.

Close to Closing the Doors

The Lafayette Museum was very close to closing its doors in the Spring of 2015. The founders had passed away, the board members were aging and tired from shouldering the responsibilities for years, and the volunteer pool was low. Today, The Greer Heritage Museum is in exactly the same spot. There are 3 active volunteers and one

A Vision for Success

occasional volunteer; the building has maintenance issues that need immediate attention; the internet is not functioning well; displays have not been updated or changed; and the artifacts, papers and photographs need to be digitized to bring the museum into the 21st century. We are in the middle of a digital revolution, so our younger visitors respond and learn from an updated visual approach. The Upcountry Museum shows how much can be accomplished with less clutter. Greenville Memorial Hospital has a history display using columns from the old hospital, great labeling, lighting and visuals to get a lot of information across in a small space without crowding. Now is the time for planning the future of Greer's museum and making it the very heart and centerpiece of our city.

After a visit with the Lafayette city administrator in 2015, we were told we would have to show ourselves worthy of what we were asking from the city. There were only two of us at the time. We set to work to show that the museum was essential to historic preservation of structures in the city, a draw for tourism, and actively educate younger generations in its early history and accomplishments. We picked up a few more supporters along the way, so we hired two young graduates from the University of Colorado. One was a film major who created a new promotional film for the museum. The other had been a museum science major. She opened our eyes to the world of a legitimate museum with properly cared-for artifacts, a digital record of what is in the museum, and how to create an infrastructure out of our board and membership. The museum was now on our community's radar. City council members who had never been to the museum began to realize what a valuable asset to the culture and business they had right in town.

The two part-time employees did a tremendous job of building a museum process; creating new displays; thinning out and storing artifacts; giving the museum a new public face on social media; making the public aware of the downtown area's heritage as a baseline for renovation; and providing a new venue for events in the city. This could be the same for the Greer Heritage Museum if the city could see the value of the people's history materially. History draws, inspires and sells, when presented correctly. Families moving to Greer often visit the museum to see where it all started and get a grasp of Greer's context. But our current situation is not sustainable. I respectfully suggest that the City of Greer restore and maintain the building, and provide income for a part-time professional museum administrator to transform the Greer History Museum into what it needs to be to flourish. This could include a visitors center/museum, an intimate venue used by the city and others for smaller events, a place for people to volunteer, and an enhanced genealogy library. It is amazing what can be accomplished with a trained employee on site for 25-30 hours a week.

This letter by its nature is long, I know, but I trust that you would consider these suggestions. I have observed that the current situation is critical. The people keeping the museum alive have created, established and sustained it, but what is needed now is a vision for the future and a rightful place for the Greer Heritage Museum in transforming Greer.

Thank you,
Nannette latesta



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Greer Heritage Museum Preliminary Analysis and Recommendations

David Lovegrove
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Greer Heritage Museum

Preliminary Analysis and Recommendations



Executive Summary

In October, 2019, I performed a preliminary situational analysis of the Greer Heritage Museum. Though the review was cursory, I can say without hesitation that the Museum is at a critical cross-roads and needs immediate attention.

The museum has the components necessary to become an important component of the cultural heritage of Greer: an historic facility, a well-rounded collection, and devoted volunteers who love and support the Museum. Its potential is large, easy and fast to tap into. The Museum is in the extraordinary position to substantially increase educational and cultural benefit to the community with minimal time and investment.

However, it is on a cliff-edge of survival. The facility has water damage that threatens both the structure and the collection; the collection suffers neglect, with a lack of conservation and security leading to the destruction of irreplaceable treasures; and elderly volunteers have run out of the years and dollars that have kept the Museum in operation.

If immediate action is not taken, the Museum is likely to lock its doors within 12 months. The intervention required for its survival is minimal, and the path to establishing the Museum as a strong cultural and educational component is short. I urge the City of Greer to provide the minimal support necessary to transform the Museum's existence.

Who am I? I'm David Lovegrove, Chief Marketing Officer at Bob Jones University and an experienced museum exhibition designer. I was invited to review the Museum situation by David Duncan and Nannette Iatesta. A more detailed biography is included at the conclusion.

Situation analysis and recommendations

COLLECTION

Collection Analysis

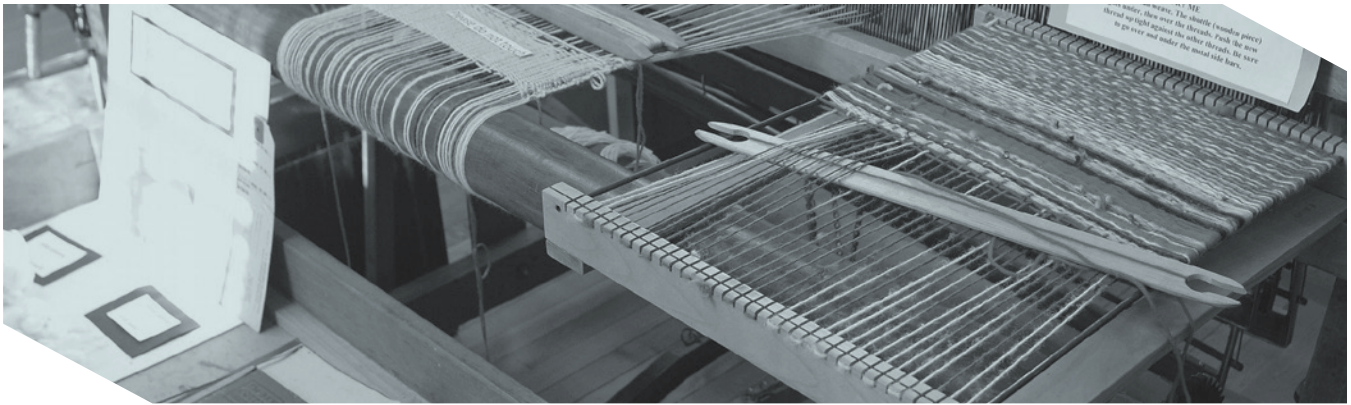
ARTIFACTS: The museum collection is surprisingly robust. It covers the history of the Greer area, with areas of focus that include a Cherokee village located here before the town's establishment; artifacts from the mills and mill village; personal artifacts from early settlers; and commercial artifacts from the earliest businesses and industry in Greer. A research library contains original documents from a broad spectrum of Greer history, government, business, and genealogy. None of this library has been digitized, and the vast majority of documents are one-of-a-kind without duplicate.

DISPLAY: Limited work has been put into serious exhibition design and presentation. Artifacts are thoughtfully grouped in a mix of chronological and thematic order. The majority of small objects are displayed in an assortment of reclaimed retail cases, with incomplete labeling and minimal interpretive or educational information. Large objects are clustered along walls and in corners. Side rooms are packed and cramped, while the main open area appears to not use its space well. Visitors leave having seen many things, but having learned very little; this would be easy to improve.



CONSERVATION & SECURITY: The Museum is weak in both aspects of conservation and security. Original photography and artifacts are openly exposed, causing visible fading, damage and destruction. Few display materials are archival in composition. Objects outside of cases are easily accessible, and many show signs of wear and damage from being handled. Cases themselves are unlocked and exposed. Numerous people have direct private access to the collection; it is almost certain that the most valuable objects have long since disappeared. One particular area of concern is water damage; several leaks have occurred, and there is visible water damage to the facility. Temperature and humidity control appear to be at average commercial standards; there is a humidifier in the basement. I was not able to evaluate integrated pest management.

MUSEOLOGY: It is apparent that the collection has been maintained by people who cared deeply for it; and a primary caretaker for the last decade or more was a librarian by trade, and maintained a card catalog and accession record. I found limited recordkeeping of provenance or research for any objects. There are no copies or facsimiles of any part of the collection, and no part of the collection has been digitized. This puts the entire collection at high risk of loss.



Collection Recommendations

Most of these recommendations are simple, inexpensive, and relatively quick to implement.

URGENT and IMMEDIATE:

- It is imperative that any remaining water intrusion be stopped immediately.
- An individual trained in museum science should be hired. This is the one missing puzzle piece from a beautiful jigsaw puzzle that is otherwise complete. That individual would guide the establishment of essential standard museum practices, create and implement a plan for improvement and promotion, train volunteers and guide their efforts into areas that build and improve the Museum and its impact on the community. This could be a part-time position, if necessary.
- A curator should be identified immediately; that could be a volunteer at first, but the museum professional listed above should likely take the role once hired. This individual should take immediate steps to identify significantly valuable and at-risk objects and secure and protect them. The curator should be given the authority to change current practices that put the collection at risk, including access to the building and the current practice of seasonal decoration of the artifacts. The curator should establish basic policies and procedures to protect the collection. This person should also make sure that well-meaning attempts to help the museum do not end up doing further damage or harm (a common problem repeated across many museums).
- A better-informed initial plan should be developed and implemented to secure the museum's existence, seize current damage and decay, and lay out a path for the future.

ESSENTIAL:

- The initial plan should then be extended into a strategic plan for the transformation of the Museum and its role in the community.
- This plan should paint a clear vision for the community impact of the Museum, and that vision should be shared with businesses in the community to gain their support and participation.
- An object conservation plan should be developed, along with plans for security and protection, emergency planning, and reporting.
- A computer with internet access should be installed in the library.
- A catalogue system should be selected, and the process of recording and labeling should begin.
- All known information about artifacts should be gathered and recorded in this system.
- Volunteer labor should be trained and applied to the process of digitization of the collection, beginning with the research library.
- A sequential, phased plan should be developed and implemented for transforming the current

exhibits into a non-formal educational experience that leverages the collection for exploration, study, observation, critical thinking, contemplation, dialogue, and other culturally-relevant benefits. The exhibits should be reorganized to tell a story over time, with interpretive graphic panels that illustrate and explain. Information should be presented in a hierarchy, so that a visitor learns and leaves enriched no matter how much time they have to spend.

- A children's educational experience should be developed to connect children with the past and their role in the story of history. An additional "Museum on the move" experience could be developed to take this educational experience out into local schools.
- A few key dramatic visual elements should be installed quickly, both inside and outside the Museum, to demonstrate movement and growth and direction. I would suggest the installation of a well-designed initial introductory panel immediately inside the entrance as a first step.
- The curator needs to make thoughtful decisions about reducing clutter and storing some objects currently on display so as to better communicate and display the objects and information that are truly important, and display them in a manner that best tells the story.

FACILITY

Facility Analysis

The building which houses the Museum is a beautiful, historic facility. It has a perfect location geographically in the center of town with easy access to foot traffic, though the lack of parking is a problem that needs informational and directional signage to correct. The building underwent major renovation in 2008 and is in generally good condition. However, numerous leaks have developed in the roof, and visible water damage is occurring in many places. Some of that damage is substantial. Any remaining leaks need repaired along with subsurface damage and paint. Other than the areas damaged by water, interior paint and finishes look fresh and new. The exterior is showing wear and needs painted. A mold problem has recently been addressed and corrected in the basement. The basement is now a great asset as a substantial and empty additional space for development, archiving, storage, and conservation work.

Recommendations

URGENT and IMMEDIATE:

- It is imperative that water intrusion be stopped immediately.

ESSENTIAL:

- Existing water damage should be repaired.
- A more detailed arrangement for facility management should be developed, specifying exactly what aspects will be provided by the city and what aspects are the responsibility of the Museum (this might already exist).
- A building inspector should review the current state of the structure and provide recommendations for appropriate upkeep and care. A plan should be developed and implemented to maintain the structure over time.
- As noted in the prior section, there are security concerns with broad access to the building; these need to be addressed.
- Improve curatorial workspace for accessioning and preservation.

PERSONNEL

Personnel Analysis

Professional staff

- The Museum has no professional staff.
- The city provides 3 hours a week to help keep the doors open; various employees rotate in this position.

Board

- The current board is minimally functional. There has not been a board meeting in the past two years; aside from the chairman, board members are rarely involved in the operation or support of the museum.

Key volunteers

The volunteer staff have dwindled to the point that the museum is not able to maintain open hours. There are currently three critical key volunteers:

- David Duncan, with deep roots in the community, has adopted the Museum as his personal project and has invested a great deal of his own money in it. Unfortunately he suffers from health issues and his time is divided with family, work, and other responsibilities; but his passion and community connections will be instrumental in establishing the future of the Museum.
- Nannette Iatesta has recently moved into the community. She has a passion for history and, most importantly, experience turning around a small-town museum in a comparable situation. Her experience and expertise will be invaluable in transformation of the Museum.
- Ellen Henson is a retired school teacher who functions as coordinator for Museum volunteers and regularly staffs the Museum herself.
- Mary Hudson LaChapelle handles treasurer, accounting and government matters.
- There are other potential volunteers, including myself, who are hesitant to invest effort if the Museum does not have the foundational support necessary to make certain its continued existence and impact; simply put, we want to invest our time in projects that will provide substantial value for our community.



Docents

- There are currently no trained docents.

Personnel Recommendations

- The Museum needs a professional staff member, part- or full-time, who is trained in museology.
- I recognize that Board issues are difficult and political, and I don't know all the dynamics there; on the surface, it appears that the Museum needs to dissolve the current board and establish a new board comprised of interested, involved, invested members (which might include current board members who are reinvigorated by a new vision).
- If a clear vision exists and has initial support from the City, a core team of volunteers stands by ready to provide expertise and work toward the success of the Museum.
- Volunteers should be divided into two primary groups (though any given individual could certainly participate in both groups): docents, trained in the collection and history of Greer; and assistants, who initially need to be applied to the digitization and cataloging of the collection.
- Relationships with local schools and colleges should be developed to provide internships and opportunities for students to volunteer and, in the process, gain invaluable experience, skill, and portfolio resources.

Finances and Funding

Funding Analysis

In broad terms, the current tenuous position of the Museum appears to be more caused by a shortage of manpower than of money. To the best of my understanding,

- ...the building is 10 years in to a 20-year lease from the city, which was exchanged for \$1.
- ...the Museum has approximately \$40,000 in available funds.
- ...the Museum is responsible for repairs that cost less than \$1,000 and the city will manage repairs above that. There is apparently a controversy regarding \$30,000 that was spent to mitigate a mold and water incursion issue in the basement.
- ...there are no current city, county, state, or national grants currently in effect.
- ...there are no existing business partnerships or sponsors.
- ...there is a minimal annual patronage program.

Funding Recommendations

Unlike many comparable organizations, the Museum is in a surprising good financial position. The major financial challenge will be finding the funds for the hire of a professional staff member. However, there are substantial opportunities to gain funding through grants, patronage and, especially, through partnerships with local businesses. As an initial step, I recommend consideration of an awareness event:

- Develop a clear vision for what the Museum could become, and the path to get there;
- Create storyboards that visualize that vision;
- Position the storyboards around the Museum in a thoughtful, informative presentation;
- Invite community leaders of all sorts to a special social event at the Museum;
- Present the vision, and ask for support.

BIOGRAPHY



David Lovegrove is the Chief Marketing Officer for Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

Since 2002, he has served as the lead exhibition designer for Bob Jones University Museum and Gallery and the Sargent-Wilson Museum and Gallery at Heritage Green. In this role he designed more than a dozen major interactive educational exhibits, including *Rublev to Faberge: the Journey of Russian Art and Culture to America*, which received the Southeastern Museum Conference Exhibition Award. He has designed exhibit spaces and traffic flow; modeled exhibits and spaces in 3D and created all shop drawings; functioned as project manager for production and installation of the exhibits; designed casework, including security and climate controls; and designed and built artifact mounts. He has designed, produced, and installed museum graphics, informational panels, educational and interactive displays. He has also created countless artifact facsimiles and reproductions, particularly for objects too fragile or sensitive to be placed on public display.

For the exhibit *Tommaso: Twilight of a Tradition*, David and the M&G curator, John Nolan, worked with the J. Paul Getty Museum to reunite a set of triptych panels separated for centuries. David designed the complex artwork mount necessary for display of the unified triptych. He then created a chapel facade based on the architecture of the Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence to elevate the experience for the viewer.

David lives with his wife, Bethany, and 15-year-old son, Jonathan, in Greer, SC. Contact him at dlovegro@bju.edu.



WE ARE MADE BY HISTORY.

—DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



Victor Mill, Greer, SC



GREER HERITAGE MUSEUM

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