

Oldham County Historical Society

Strategic Plan 2019-2020

Mission: To collect, record, and share the rich history of Oldham County and its communities. To create a sense of place and connect our residents and visitors, young and old, with the past.

Partnerships: To be a good community neighbor and partner by making our resources available.

Facility Plans:

J.C. Barnett Archives and Library (circa 1840): A designated site on the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network.

History: The J.C. Barnett Archives and Library in 2016 received the designation as a site on the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network. The original owner of the building was James Mount (1796-1864) and his wife, Amanda Railey Mount (1810-1888). A collection of Mount family artifacts was donated to the Oldham County History Center in 2004 that contained slave ownership papers, bounty hunter documents and want ads for runaway slaves. James Mount at one time served as Jailer for Oldham County and had placed the ads in the Louisville Democrat. Amanda Railey Mount had received and signed slave deeds and bounty documents for runaway slaves.

Plan for the Library and Archives: The library and archives contain numerous original courthouse documents that were designated to be housed and cared for by the Oldham County Fiscal Court. In addition the archives holds the LaGrange City Minute books, family documents and images, artifacts from Oldham County, rare book collections and genealogical information. These artifacts are being cleaned and stored following archival standards. Currently volunteers and staff are working to preserve the artifacts, records and images. Collections are being digitized. Completion for digitization of records is targeted for 2025.

Action: Records will be catalogued and digitized with end goal reached in 2025.

The Peyton Samuel Head Family Museum (originally the Risely House, circa 1840).

The museum has undergone a major and updated renovation of exhibits to meet current standards for accessibility and interaction for visitors. It was closed from 2015 until it re-opened on Jan. 7, 2017. The museum offers two National Park Service Passport Stamps: The J.C. Barnett Archives and Library stamp and the Bibb Escapes/Gatewood Plantation stamp. The museum is open weekly throughout the year, closing only on legal holidays, Sundays and Mondays.

Action: The history center will offer two rotating exhibits each year in order to keep attracting new visitors.

The Peyton Samuel Head Root Cellar

The root cellar is the original cellar of the Risely House and was renovated in 2007 after the roof collapsed. The root cellar is unique attraction that educates visitors about food preparation and storage in Antebellum America. It now uniquely ties- in with the new Dahlgren Pioneer Barn colonial hearth and bread oven and the Colonial Garden completing the connection of people to their environment. These authentic connections deepen the understanding of human relationships and interactions with land and local resources.

Action: Repairs will be made to the north facing door jams so that the rocks are stabilized and safe for visitor experiences. In addition the cellar will be cleaned on an annual basis.

The Rob Morris Chapel Education Building (circa 1880)

The Rob Morris Chapel Education Building was originally built as a Presbyterian Church. The land was donated by Mrs. Amanda Mount. The chapel became the church of Dr. Rob Morris, founder of the Order of the Eastern Star and the 19th Century Poet Laureate of Freemasonry. Morris moved to LaGrange in 1860 to teach at the Kentucky Masonic College which was located on the corner of First and Jefferson Street until it burned down in 1911. In 2005 the Oldham County History Center renovated the chapel with the help of the Peyton Samuel Head Trust and a Kentucky Transportation Grant. The chapel exterior was restored to its original condition which required replacement of window casings, some siding and a new roof. Interior ceilings were removed to reveal the original sanctuary of the church. Four large chandeliers were found tucked inside of the false ceiling and they were restored and placed back in the sanctuary. In the mid-20th Century a concrete slab addition which contained storage and classrooms. The history center renovated the addition so that two handicapped accessible bathrooms were added, a kitchen and upstairs storage area.

Action: Carpet will be replaced in the auditorium and some minor changes made to the kitchen to make it easier for catered events.

The Rachel Wheeler Horton Colonial Garden

The Colonial Garden was created in 2005 to feature heirloom and native plants that were part of early pioneer and Native American life in Oldham County. The garden plan was created through members of the Master Garden Program of the Oldham County Extension Service. It has been carefully maintained by volunteer Jan Jasper. The garden is an important part of the education experience to connect our visitors to the natural resources that sustained those in our past and ground our understanding of place in our world today.

Action: The Colonial Garden requires replenishing of soil and compost.

The Jail Stone Sculpture and Fountain

Limestone carved blocks are foundation stones from the original Oldham County Jail (circa 1840) on the courthouse square in LaGrange. Many of these blocks were placed on the history center grounds

and used as benches. In 2013 the Oldham County History Center with the assistance of a Board of Director, Brann Clore, 3 of the stone blocks were repurposed for an entrance sculpture and fountain for the history center campus. This unusual and popular feature requires annual maintenance and care. In addition there is a foundation stone from the Kellar house from Brownsboro, that was placed in front of the center block. The fountain is lite at night and can be changed with various colored lights.

Action: The Fountain will have annual maintenance from professional pool services. The fountain does not operate between November through March.

The Dahlgren Pioneer Barn

The Dahlgren Pioneer Barn was completed in August 2018 and includes a colonial hearth with bread oven. The hearth was built by local stonemasons Jody Edgerton using limestone blocks that are native to the region. Each block was had hewn and placed. The barn design was by local architect Gant Jones and reflects a “dog-trot” style which is a pioneer building that included a breezeway placed in the central area of a building, creating two separated enclosed areas.

Action: Chimney and oven will be inspected and cleaned when needed.

The Oldham County History Center Campus

A landscape plan should be created to link the buildings and create a visually appealing campus. Pavers were laid in 2018 to connect buildings to meet accessibility standards and provide opportunities for programs and events. Special personalized bricks have been sold to have assist with program costs.

Action: A landscape plan will be created for placement of trees, plants and flowers.

The Road Warrior Sculpture

In 2015 the Oldham County History Center added a Road Warrior Sculpture to the Campus Renovation Plan. The sculpture is a tribute to WWII Veterans and features Oldham County native E. Bruce Heilman, a WWII veteran and spokesperson for the Greatest Generation Foundation. The history center has commissioned Wyatt Gragg to create and build the sculpture. Cost of the sculpture is \$200,000.

Action: \$50,000 has been raised for the sculpture with a remaining \$150,000 left to be raised. In August 2018 the Road Warrior Rally was held to raise funds and awareness for this project. Completion date is estimated for 2020.

Membership

The history center offers memberships that include annual admission to the museum and archives and exclusive benefits for programs. For example, the preschool History Hounds program is included as a part of the membership as well as discounts on events and activities throughout the year. Current membership revenue account for 2018 (as of September) are \$18,415.27 or 7% of the earned income.

Action: The Oldham County History Center projects to raise membership earned income to \$25,000. There are membership records that indicate lack of solicitation on the history center's part to follow up on membership notices.

Action: The history center will track membership income and follow-up solicitation for dues that are late. More events could be targeted for "Members Only" as special incentives such as the Annual Christmas Party and meeting. More effort should be made to let members know that research and library fees are waived for members.

Annual Gala Benefit

The 2018 Annual Gala Benefit raised \$58,375. \$23,850 of the total came through corporate sponsorships and \$14,650 came through ticket sales. Total expenses for the gala were \$19,382 making the total profit from the Gala Benefit at \$38,993. The Oldham County History Center depends on the annual gala for 14% of the annual income.

Annual Grants

Each year the history center applies for grants for continued operation. The projection of grants for 2018 are \$97,000 or 37% of the projected annual income.

Programs and Museum Income

As of Sept. 2018, \$11,351 has been taken for programs and museum income which is currently under the projected \$47,845. Part of this projection included an estimated \$23,445 for the Underground Railroad Bus Tour. We projected 30 people to participate on the tour but our expectations have fallen short and we have 11 paid that have signed up. We reduced our transportation costs and cut our expenses but we still will fall short on income.

Action: Current programs are being evaluated for 2019. Education programs for children and family events tend to be our biggest draw. Adult tours and lecture programs also tend to bring in the most income. The new addition of the hearth and bread oven will expand adult offerings. With completion of the Dahlgren Barn the history center will offer event rentals to increase income. The history center will seek more partnerships to attract schools and sponsorships for special events.

Research and Oral History

The Oldham County History Center has been a partner with the Library of Congress for the Veterans Oral History Project since 2002 resulting close to 100 veteran's oral history interviews, most of which are WWII Veterans. Since 2007 the Oldham County History Center launched the Living Treasures Oral History Project in partnership with the Oldham Era. These oral histories are monthly features in the Oldham Era newspapers. The Oldham County History Center partnered with the Louie B. Nunn Oral History Library to share the Veterans Oral Histories and the Living Treasures program where they are digitized and accessible through the internet.

Since 2005 the Oldham County History Center began identifying significant historic sites both with the National Park Service and with the Ky. Historical Marker Program. This has resulted in 2 sites, the Bibb Escapes/Gatewood Plantation and the J. C. Barnett Library and Archives to be placed on the National Underground Railroad Network with the National Park Service. The history center now offers National Park Service Passport stamps for these two sites.

In addition the Oldham County History Center partnered with the Oldham County Tourism and worked to place each year, a new Ky. Historical Marker that identifies a significant historic site or building. The following are now added to sites for Oldham County:

The Rosenwald School in LaGrange (2015)

The Richard Jacob Oglesby site in Brownsboro (2016)

The Annie Fellows Johnston home in Pewee Valley (2017)

The James and Amanda Mount House in LaGrange (2018)

Action: The Oldham County History Center will continue to partnership with the Oldham County Tourism to add a historical marker for Oldham County each year. The history center will continue to contribute oral histories to the Living Treasures Program and Veterans Oral History Project. The history center will continue to research historic sites that could be added to the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network.

Governance

The Oldham County Board of Directors is responsible for the care and maintenance of the Oldham County History Center campus and this includes annual evaluation of the liability and insurance policies to make sure that building codes and safety are included.

It is also responsible for staff and operation of the facility. In addition the Oldham County Board of Directors must annually evaluate its membership and follow the guidelines and procedures as written in the bylaws for the Oldham County Historical Society.

Action: The Board of Directors will conduct annual evaluations of staff and policies to assure that performance meets strategies and operation of the Oldham County Historical Society.