

Grant Narrative

Improving Storage and Accessibility of the Oversized and Textile Mill Collections at the Upcountry History Museum

Organization Overview

The Upcountry History Museum (UHM), established in 2007, is a Smithsonian Affiliate located in Greenville, South Carolina, that preserves and interprets historical subjects pertaining to Upstate South Carolina while bringing quality museum offerings from around the world to the area. The Museum's mission is to connect people, history, and culture through its collections, programs, and exhibitions.

The Upcountry History Museum's collection includes a diverse assortment of objects, photographs, documents, and books, all of which have relevance to the Upstate and environs. Begun in the early 2000s, the collection grew out of the Historic Greenville Foundation's holdings, which focused on artifacts and records pertaining to the Greenville area. The collection has since grown to include items from the 15 counties of Upcountry South Carolina, dating from the 18th century up to the present.

The approximately 1800* 3D artifacts range from historic toys to a horse-drawn Victorian hearse, and include furniture, clothing, and textiles that represent all aspects of life in the Upstate for the past 200+ years. Some highlights from the Artifact collection include:

- Military uniforms and accessories from five American conflicts
- A textile collection that includes clothing from families within the area as well as a variety of quilts including crazy quilts from the late 19th century
- A furniture collection that includes steamer trunks, baby carriages, chairs, a Victorian sofa, horse drawn hearse, and a 1920s player piano
- Personal and household items including kitchen appliances, eyeglasses, handkerchiefs, medical supplies, and toiletries
- Indigenous crafts including Catawba pottery and Cherokee baskets
- A collection of 1920s-era women's hats from Greenville department stores
- Two Draper looms and cloth samples from Upcountry SC textile mills
- A set of five 18th century miniatures

The Library collection consists of approximately 3965 items, and is a combination of books, magazines and newspapers, audio recordings, and digital tapes and discs. These include hundreds of volumes of South Carolina history; volumes of magazines on SC life; national magazines donated for their coverage of seminal events in US history; and newspapers, primarily from the Greenville area, covering events of national or local significance. There is also a collection of children's books from the early 20th century.

**All collection item counts are estimates. The Museum's first full-time Collection Manager was hired in 2022 and is currently conducting a full inventory.*

The Archival collection is in the process of being catalogued but is estimated to be approximately 85 cubic feet. Included in this are documents, photographs, postcards, maps, and videotapes. Some examples are:

- Records from the Greenville County Tuberculosis Hospital dating from the mid-20th century
- Extensive records and scrapbooks documenting the work of several area women's clubs from the 1920s to the 1990s
- Court records and transcripts from the 1930s and 1940s courtroom of Greenville Judge J. Robert Martin
- An extensive mill-related collection, including the records of SC industries and technical drawings of mill machinery and operations, as well as photographs depicting the work and personal lives of mill workers in the early 20th century
- Advertisements from local businesses and political memorabilia including posters and campaign buttons
- Personal correspondence, official records, and photos from soldiers and their families in the Civil War, both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm.

The total square footage of the Upcountry History Museum is 42,678 sq. ft., which includes all exhibit areas, public spaces, staff spaces, and storage. The Collections storage area is 2800 square feet and is a secure, locked and climate-controlled area accessible only to museum staff. Researchers use the Resource Room, also used for lectures and meetings, and are instructed as to correct use of materials, with a staff member checking in frequently.

The Museum is open to the public six days per week: Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–5 pm; Sunday, 1 pm–5 pm; and is closed on major holidays. The Museum employs seven full-time and eight part-time employees. Annual visitation is 46,700 including admission and programming; special events and facility rentals account for another 4,200 people.

The Museum's annual budget is \$1.2 million. The sources of funding are admission fees (\$10/adults; \$9/senior adults; \$8/children aged 4-18; free/children under 3 years of age); membership dues (begin at \$65/individual); sponsorships; foundation and government grants; fees for services; corporate contributions; and individual donations and major gifts.

The fire suppression system consists of two dry chemical fire extinguishers in Collections storage and a water-based suppression system throughout the building.

The Upcountry History Museum has an existing Emergency Preparedness Plan, updated in 2022, which covers departmental and individual responsibilities; evacuation details; equipment locations; specific procedures for dealing with fire, bomb threats, medical emergencies, power outages, water leaks, theft, and weather-related emergencies; disaster prevention and accidental damage protocols; and emergency maps and floorplans.

The Collections Policy was written in 2009 and is in the process of being updated, with the hiring of a full-time collection manager necessitating changes in staff responsibilities.

Project Description/Summary and Plan of Work

The monies received from this grant opportunity will be used to address the inadequate housing conditions of two large collections.

Oversized Collections

The Upcountry History Museum has a sizeable collection of oversized documents dating from the early to mid-20th century. Representing a varied cross-section of American life and progress, the broadsides, maps, and surveys show the rapid changes that characterize the 20th century and have a visual impact that is unique for use in exhibits and in educational programming. They include:

- Maps covering a period of more than 150 years, including hand drawn property maps, early Greenville County road maps, and mid-20th century maps showing growth of cities and road systems
- Broadsides including political posters and military recruitment posters
- Early 20th century plats showing land ownership in the Upstate
- Folios from the Aviation Center Collection that include master plans, surveys, and blueprints from the development of the Donaldson Air Force Base.

Statement of Need: The Museum currently owns one flat file cabinet which is at maximum capacity, requiring other oversized items to be stored on shelves or folded in boxes. The addition of another flat file cabinet and oversized archival file folders will allow us to better organize and store the collection. Under the supervision and guidance of a staff member, volunteers will organize and rehouse the entire collection, checking the description accuracy in the catalog and updating locations as needed. Any data, including a brief condition assessment, will be added to the PP database.

Three cubic feet, fair to good condition.

Textile Mill photographic collections

Upstate South Carolina history includes the development of the textile mill industry, and over the years organizations and individuals have gifted their corporate papers and personal photos to the museum. This regional history is significant for several reasons: the prevalence of women and children in the workplace; the migration into the state of agricultural workers, coal miners, and others looking for work; and the paternalistic communities associated with the mills. Because this is such an interesting period for researchers and because the Museum has a very popular permanent exhibit devoted to textile history in the Upcountry, we would like to rehouse and make this history more accessible to researchers and staff. We'll be working with four collections that give a good look at the varied types of textile mill history here.

- The Reeves Brothers Collection documents the history of the Mills Mill, established in Greenville in 1904 and active until 1977; the bulk of the photos date to the mid-20th century. Photo subjects include the Mills Mill Millers baseball team; the "E" awards ceremony (c. 1943), recognizing the company's contributions in producing materials for

naval combat operations; company events, both corporate and social; factory inspections; and modeling of clothing and fabrics.

- The Susan Ball Collection includes photos of Appleton Mill, which was established by the owners of Anderson Mill, originally located in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1927. Appleton Mill produced flannels and dress goods and ceased operation in 2009. The photos are primarily of domestic life, the baseball team, and social activities, along with some working pictures, and cover most of the 20th century. There are also stock receipts, company histories, and company postcards.
- The Draper Collection was donated in 2018 by a former employee of Southern Machinery/Draper Loom and resident of Greer Mill Village who worked as a weaver and whose wife worked in the cloth room at the company. The collection documents the residents and employees both at home in the village and at social and vacation destinations, and date from the 1920s to the 1970s.
- Her Majesty Industries, Inc., Collection dates primarily from the 1950s and includes an assortment of posed company photos as well as candid shots. The company had three plants operating in South Carolina from the 1930s – 1970s and produced knitted sleepwear. This is the only one of the four collections that has not been scanned; captions were donated with the photos originally but have been separated, necessitating time to correctly identify the photos in the database.

Total: 6.5 cubic feet, fair to good condition

Statement of Need: The photographs are in varying states of preservation. Many are simply stacked in boxes or left in non-archival albums. Under the guidance of staff, volunteers will rehouse photos into appropriately sized polypropylene sleeves and then into archival albums; they will then be organized appropriately on shelving purchased for the project. Any information from the backs of photos or accompanying captions, as well as location updates, will be captured in the Past Perfect database.

Personnel

Collection Manager Martha Wiley will oversee the project work (with assistance from Curator of Collections Kristina Hornback as needed), working with long-time volunteers John and Ellie Mioduski. Having volunteered with the Museum in various capacities for more than a decade, the Mioduskis are detail-oriented and have expert organizational skills. For the last four and a half years, they have consistently dedicated one afternoon/week to work in the collections department. During that time, they have assisted with cataloging both new and prior gifts to the collection, researching, numbering, entering data, and re-housing individual objects. Their dedication has helped to maintain consistency in the processing of hundreds of objects within the collection storage.

Abbreviated resumes for Martha Wiley and Kristina Hornback are attached.

Objectives

The objectives of the rehousing project are:

- to ensure proper housing of the documents and photos entrusted to the care of the Museum in perpetuity
- to update and correct, if necessary, the existing information in the collections management database
- to make the use of the images and information more easily accessible to staff, researchers, and the public

Publicity and future

The Upcountry History Museum has an active Education and Program division, with monthly lectures, specialized tours and school programs scheduled regularly. The textile mill exhibit is one of the most popular in the Museum, and the newly housed photos in binders will be used to supplement both guided tours and school programming.

Although impractical to share the oversized map collection in this fashion, items from the collection will be featured in the Museum's social media outreach, including the Museum website, Facebook page, and Instagram. Progress of the project will be posted, with information about the photos and documents shared with the public.

This project is just one step in the ongoing comprehensive inventory and assessment of the Museum's collections and will serve as a prototype for future projects.