

HCA's 2024 Annual Report

**Scott AME Zion Church,
Wilmington Delaware
2024 listing to the National
Register of Historic Places**

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

With the support of Governor John Carney, Secretary of State, Jeffrey Bullock and the Delaware Assembly, 2024 brought numerous strides in preservation. Many of our projects reached monumental turning points in their planning, with some coming to fruition in their entirety.

HCA broke ground on the construction for the John Dickinson Plantation Visitor Center with an anticipated opening in mid-2026, with an exhibition titled “One Land: Many Voices.” Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site planning continued through the National Park Service Semiquincentennial grant with the official opening of the site anticipated in mid-2027, the anniversary of the Battle of Cooch’s Bridge.

2024 brought the completion of projects in several areas:

- Following renovations, the Weldin House in Edgemoor will hold its grand opening in January 2025 and be available for use by various community groups.
- Richardson Hall in Dover, location of HCA’s administrative staff and the State Historic Preservation Office, has completed its rehabilitation.
- Buena Vista Conference Center and the Fenwick Island Lighthouse saw completion of major preservation projects.
- Design of the online Historic Preservation Tax Credit application platform was completed, with release in 2025.

The division continues to work with state and national partners on historic preservation efforts and educational and interpretive programs. Work to address diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) initiatives continues through staff training, events, museum programs, exhibits and loans.

Through listening, seeking outside expertise and new perspectives we are committed to preserving and sharing all of Delaware’s history, including those that may prove difficult to face. HCA is pursuing movement forward into a better future by sharing all of Delaware’s history, to help make Delaware a better place to live, work, visit and explore.

All of the work in the 2024 annual report is the result of the work of HCA’s excellent, dedicated staff and our incredible partners. New staff have joined the team to offer different perspectives, which blends with current staff views, resulting in new endeavors not just for staff, but for HCA as a whole.

Thank you to our staff and our partners for your incredible efforts throughout 2024. As the director, I am very proud of the work we have accomplished in 2024, and look forward to everything we will achieve in 2025 and beyond.

Suzanne Savery

Director and State Historic
Preservation Officer

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM

New Tax Credit Application System

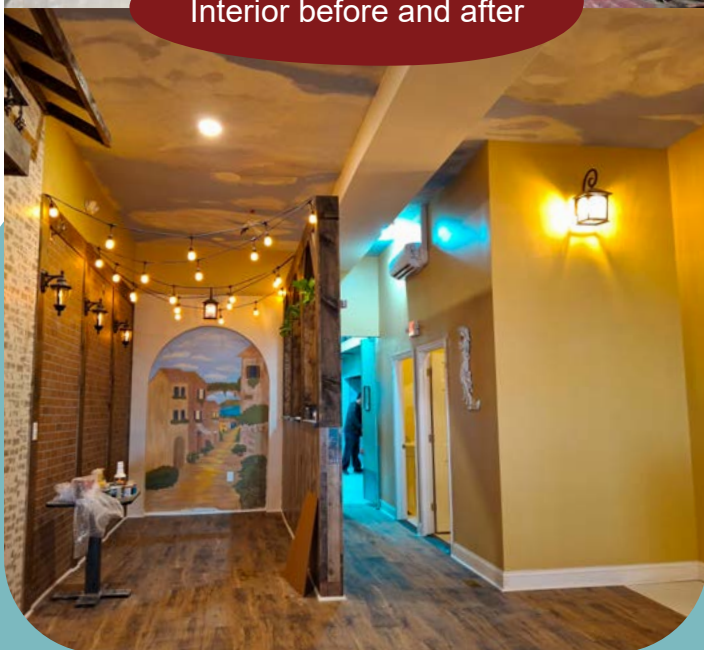
A new online platform for the Tax Credit Program is nearing completion, expected to launch in early 2025.

218 North Market Street

The 218 Grille at 218 North Market Street in Wilmington suffered a terrible fire several months ago. Thankfully, original architectural elements such as pressed metal ceilings and the original staircase, although terribly smoke damaged, survived. Through the State Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, the property was rehabilitated and will soon be reopening in its previous use as a restaurant under a new name. The project serves as an example of successful rehabilitation in calendar 2024.



Interior before and after



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Scott AME Zion Church (Wilmington, DE)

Scott African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, located in Wilmington, was built between 1868 and 1872 in the Romanesque Revival style. Significant for its architecture, social history, and connection to African American history, Scott AME Zion Church represents layers of community history within the City of Wilmington and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on March 28, 2024. Plans are to undertake repairs of the church, with assistance from the State Historic Preservation Tax Credit program.



Compton Park Apartments (Wilmington, DE)

Built in 1968 as part of the Compton Village urban renewal project, Compton Park Apartments, a garden apartment complex with 55 one- and two-bedroom units, was designed to create integrated middle-class housing within Wilmington's East Side. Today the apartments continue to serve low-income individuals and families, and the property is currently participating in the State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive programs. Compton Park Apartments was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 1, 2024, for its architecture and significance to the history of community planning and development.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

John Dickinson Plantation Visitor Center

Construction on the new John Dickinson Plantation Visitor Center began in December, marking the final stage of the five-year project. The new building will cost approximately \$14.5 million and add an additional 14,500 square feet to the historic site's exhibition, administrative and activity space. The project's construction and design are headed by Delmarva Veteran Builders and architects Davis, Bowen & Friedel Inc.

Richardson Hall Refurbishment

HCA's main administrative offices underwent major rehabilitation this year. The historic home in Dover had all 65 windows removed and taken to be reglazed, repaired when needed, and repainted; they were then reinstalled. Additionally, the building's wraparound porch saw a replacement in kind to its decking and repairs to its railing, spindles, and columns. The project began in January and ended in October, and involved the temporary movement of several HCA staff to other offices.

Belmont Hall Unveils New Pavilion

In mid-June, HCA and the Friends of Belmont Hall celebrated a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the site's new pavilion. The structure is able to accommodate up to 100 people for special events and gatherings. Construction began in January and was led by Conventional Builders.

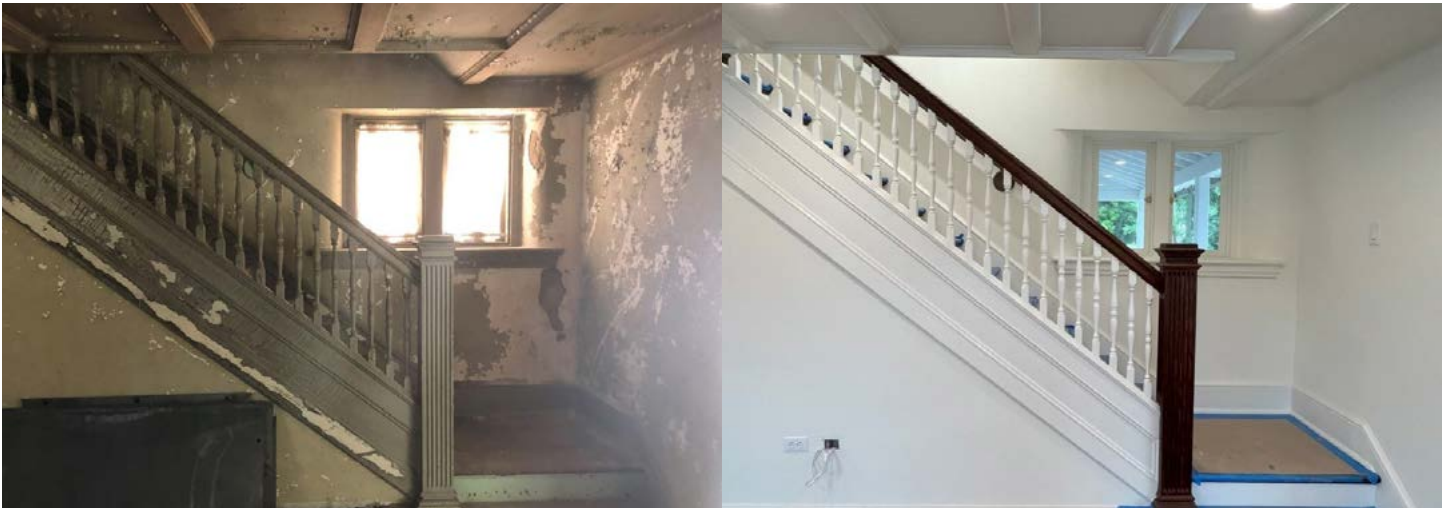


Weldin House Completes Rehabilitation and Welcomes New Tenants

Originally a four-room house built in the late 1700s, the Weldin House was expanded over the centuries, with the final addition occurring in the 1940s.

HCA took on the rehabilitation of the house, including the demolition and rebuilding of the back addition, reconstruction of 18th century stone walls, repairs to windows and the demolition and reconstruction of the late-19th century porch on the south side of the building.

The nonprofit Eastern Brandywine Hundred Coordinating Council will be settling into the historic stone structure on Philadelphia Pike, where it will work with other community organizations, associations and civic groups to utilize interior and exterior spaces that can be used as offices, meeting rooms and for community gatherings.



Upgrades Made to Fenwick Island's Historic Lighthouse

Significant preservation and restoration improvements were made in 2024 to the 165-year-old seaside structure.

The lighthouse was repainted and recoated to remove staining and deterioration. Inside, rust was removed from the stairway's handrail which was restored with a fresh coat of paint. Two broken stair treads were recreated to establish safer access while still keeping the original features.

Window frames on the lighthouse, which were damaged by the harsh natural elements along Delaware's Atlantic Ocean coast, were repaired. New mesh panels were installed around the top lookout area and the ceiling was restored, providing further protection for the historic light.

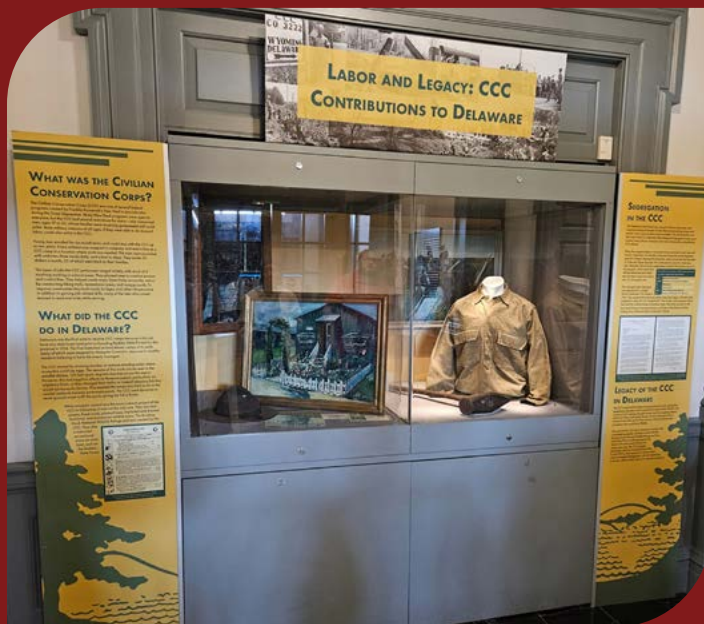
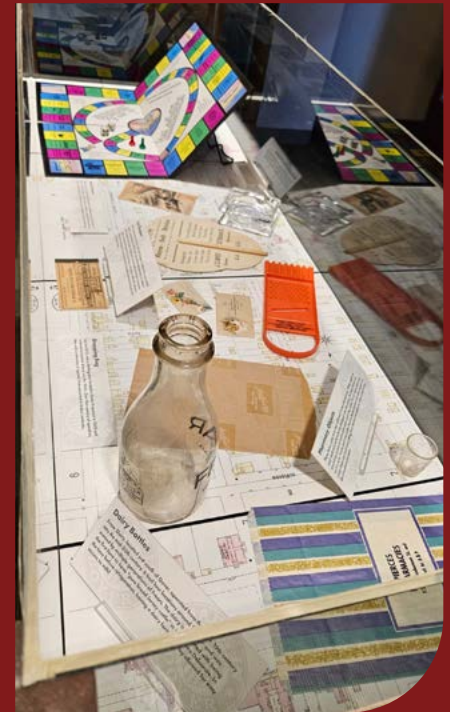


COLLECTIONS

Library Exhibits

In 2024, HCA began a partnership with Dover Public Library to have rotating collections on exhibit. In the Spring, artifacts related to Delaware's work on the Apollo Program and moon landings were put on display. This exhibit ran from March to September.

Then in fall, HCA installed a new exhibit at the Dover Public Library that explored Dover businesses throughout history and showcased pieces in our collection that relate to the variety of industries Dover has been and is still home to. Businesses featured ranged from retail to hotels to manufacturing, with objects telling the diverse history of entrepreneurship in our state capitol.



Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Exhibit

Opened at Dover's Legislative Hall in July, this exhibit discusses the impact the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had on people and nature in Delaware, both immediately following their work and in subsequent years afterward. The CCC was a national program started by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 as a way to give work and education opportunities to young, single men during the Great Depression. Several projects were undertaken in Delaware by the CCC, most notably in the creation of Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge and the work of the African American enlistees who developed the site.

LGBTQ+ History Project Website Launch

The finished website for HCA's LGBTQ+ research project database was launched in June, providing the public with various histories from Delaware's LGBTQ+ community. Contributions for oral histories are still open and ongoing, with 4 community members interviewed since the website's launch.



Nassau School Research Project

The Nassau School in Lewes was one of the DuPont schools, a group of schools throughout Delaware that provided education to Black students in the 1920s and 1930s, before Delaware's public schools were integrated. Researchers on HCA's collections team began an oral history research project this year to gather information about the experiences of students and staff who attended the Nassau School while it was in operation. There is still an ongoing open call for contribution of oral histories from members of the community to aid in this research.

Roosevelt Inlet Shipwreck Artifact Desalination

In July, HCA started the process of desalinating about 130 shipwreck artifacts preserved in water from the Roosevelt Inlet Shipwreck site. When artifacts are recovered from a saltwater environment, salt from the surrounding water remains inside of them. If the object is dried out without removing these salts, then the salt can crystallize and expand, destroying the object. For this reason, there are many objects recovered from the Roosevelt Inlet Shipwreck that remain in water in order to preserve them.

The desalination process (the process of removing salt from sunken artifacts) involves soaking the artifacts in distilled water, which is free of minerals and salt. Over time, the salt content of the artifacts in distilled water will lower; the distilled water will be changed out until the salt content reaches its lowest point.





Jewelry from the collection

Object Inventory and Rehousing

Curatorial staff undertook the work of inventorying and rehousing thousands of objects within the state historic collection throughout 2024. This work would not have been possible without the aid of a student from the University of Tennessee who assisted the collections team for a summer internship placement. Objects including jewelry, medical bottles, and purses were moved to better storage locations.

Equal Justice Initiative Freedom Monument Sculpture Park

HCA staff traveled to Montgomery, Alabama in June to attend the opening of the Equal Justice Initiative's Freedom Monument Sculpture Park, where the Sussex County whipping post is on loan for display.

Hip Hop Summit Collaboration

For the Delaware Art Museum's 2nd Annual Hip Hop Summit, HCA lent a small selection of historic items from the Victor Talking Machine Company to introduce summit goers to the roots of sound recording. HCA staff demonstrated early Victrola models and records on display and gave a presentation about the history of modern music on the day of the event, and the objects for the exhibit were on loan and displayed for several months.



PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH



Make a Splash

695 fourth graders, teachers, and chaperones visited the John Dickinson Plantation and the St. Jones Preserve in April, where they learned about the historical and scientific significance of water. This program was partially funded by the National Park Service. Several local organizations participated to present at this year's event, and included the Lewes Historical Society, the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, various State Parks, and HCA staff from the Zwaanendael Museum, the Old State House, the New Castle Court House Museum, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The event also required the help of several volunteers and HCA's Preservation Maintenance and Horticulture teams.

History Revival

History Revival is hosted annually at the New Castle Court House Museum and the Zwaanendael Museum, giving residents across Delaware the opportunity to explore fascinating pieces of our state's rich history. This year's programming was centered around Delaware's culinary history, exploring the rich history of agriculture on the Delmarva peninsula and the unique goods that have graced Delaware's tables over the centuries.

History Revival reached 637 patrons across both sites this year.



Travels with Darley

PBS's *Travels with Darley* visited several HCA sites as part of their "Revolutionary Road Trip" celebrating the 250th anniversary of America's independence. Darley and her production team toured the New Castle Court House Museum, Cooch's Bridge Historic Site, the Old State House, the John Dickinson Plantation, and the Zwaanendael Museum to explore the rich Revolutionary history that the Delaware Museums provide. Episodes are set to release in spring of 2025.



Travels With Darley visiting Cooch's Bridge Historic Site

Plantation Stories Website Launch

The Plantation Stories webpage was launched in early 2024, providing members of the public with easier access to various documents and names of enslaved and indentured servants who lived, worked, and died on the John Dickinson Plantation during the 18th and 19th centuries. The goal of the project is to name every single enslaved or indentured person throughout the site's history - so far, 132 have been listed.



Saving the Past, Shaping the Future

Two events on the New Castle and Dover Greens hosted hundreds of fourth grade students with various presentations and activities to teach them about different aspects of historic preservation, ranging from art to nature and archaeology. Dozens of partners participated in both events, and activities included dances and games from the colonial era, a demonstration on historic brick making and building, and learning how to churn butter.



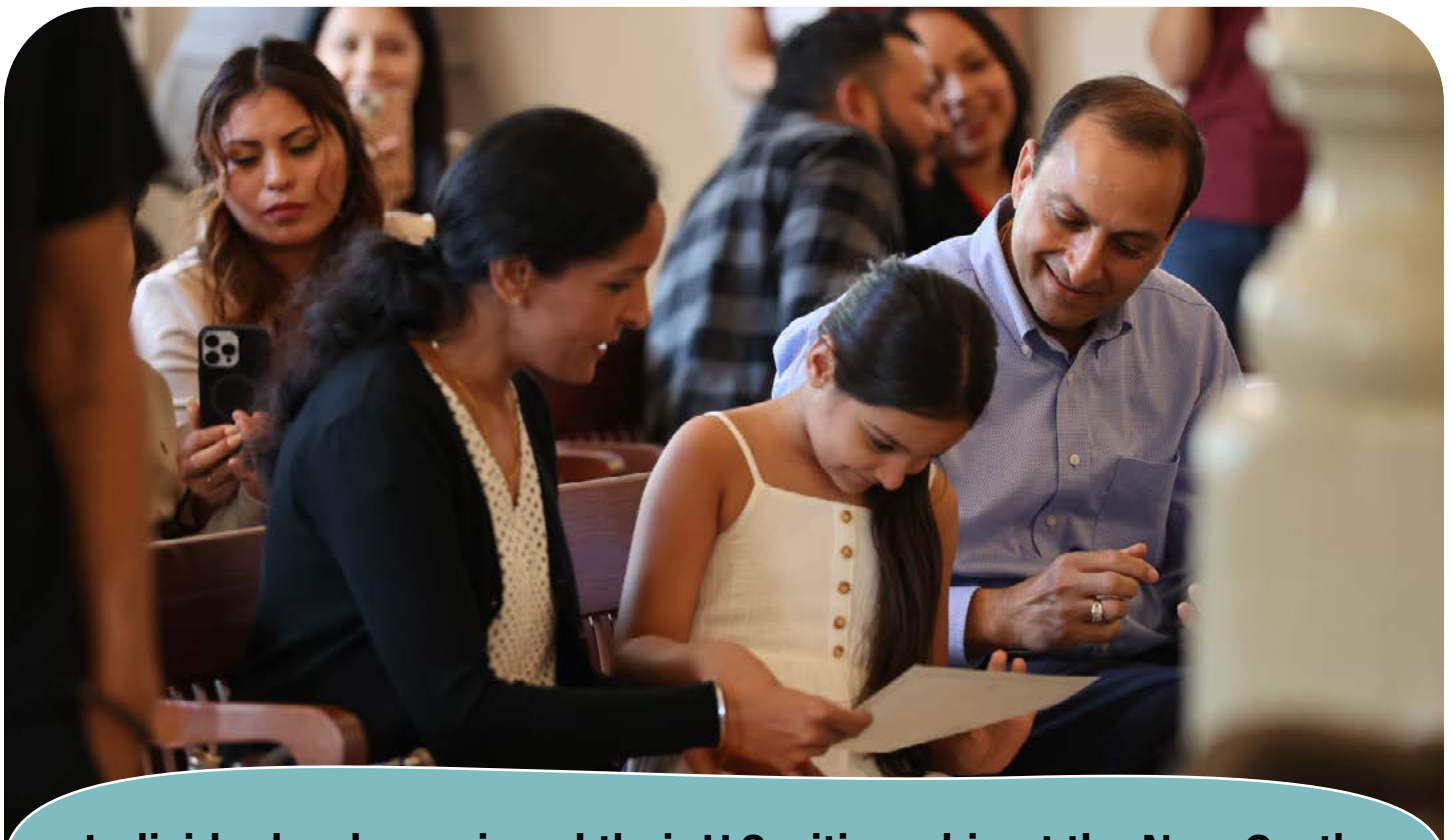
John Dickinson Visitor Center Groundbreaking Ceremony

On November 18, HCA held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the construction of John Dickinson Plantation's new visitor center. The ceremony was attended by Governor John Carney, Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long, Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock, Senator Eric Buckson, House Majority Leader Kerri Evelyn Harris, representatives from the Friends of John Dickinson Mansion and Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice (SDARJ).



Naturalization Ceremony Hosted at the New Castle Court House Museum

On Nov. 7, HCA hosted its second naturalization ceremony at the New Castle Court House Museum. The Honorable Jennifer Hall presided over the proceedings, which marked the first time a woman has presided over the New Castle Court House's courtroom since it was built in 1732.



Individuals who received their U.S. citizenship at the New Castle Court House Museum naturalization ceremony.



John Dickinson Plantation Partners with Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice (SDARJ)

John Dickinson Plantation officially began a partnership with the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice (SDARJ) in February, due to a 3-year grant program under the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, Addressing the Silences. An article about the partnership was featured in Black Voices magazine, and a town hall in conjunction with SDARJ was held in Lewes in September.

DEAI Speaker Series for HCA Staff

The speaker series, held for staff throughout 2024, included highlights on diversity in Latin American history, African drumming, Asian American history and current activism, and Nanticoke culture and corn husk doll-making, all thanks to the generous contributions of Delaware community members willing to share their unique experiences, abilities and talents.





Slave Dwelling Project Conference

Staff from John Dickinson Plantation and the New Castle Court House Museum presented material about the interpretation of underrepresented and oppressed communities in history at the Slave Dwelling Project Conference in October.

HCA staff presented updates on local efforts to give voice to silenced histories, described through presentations titled “Ending Erasure: Uncovering the Legacy of Slavery in Central Delaware” and “A Lawful Business: The Legality of Slavery and the Interpretation of a Place of Law.” Through those presentations, staff were able to share the stories of never-before-told Delawareans whose right to freedom was stolen through slavery and indentured servitude at famous places like John Dickinson Plantation. They also shared information about how slavery was enshrined in Delaware’s inequitable laws and how to interpret this hard history at a former capitol building that is now a museum.

Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums Annual Conference

HCA staff partnered with members of the Friends of Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site to present at the annual Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums Conference about engagement with the public through music. They focused on an ongoing project with local musicians to compose music based on research of the site, in particular the stories of enslaved and indentured servants who lived and worked on the Cooch’s Bridge property throughout the centuries. Various events presenting the jazz pieces were held throughout 2024, celebrating the lesser-told and well-known stories of people who helped shape the land’s history.

Archaeology Symposium

On April 27, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) hosted the annual Delmarva Archaeology and History Symposium at the Smyrna Fire Hall in partnership with the Archaeological Society of Delaware. The day-long event featured fascinating presentations from across the Peninsula, from fire service history tales and hazardous materials safety tips to unique ways of approaching community-driven history collection, as seen in a project recently undertaken in nearby Kent County, Maryland. Presenters included staff and colleagues from HCA, the Archaeology Society of Delaware, Delaware Fire School, Washington College, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and independent and retired archaeologists and historians.

STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS

Engagement and Outreach

Total Attendance to Museums and Historic Sites

- John Dickinson Plantation: 15,574
- Johnson Victrola Museum: 2,315
- New Castle Court House Museum: 12,528
- Old State House: 7,064
- Zwaanendael Museum: 15,278
- Cooch's Bridge Historic Site: 408

Buena Vista Conference Center

- 155 event rentals
- 4,887 total visitors

Visibility and Awareness

- Hosted over sixty programs and events
- Partnered with Friends of Cooch's Bridge Historic Site and Friends of John Dickinson Mansion
- 466,009 unique website views
- 362,300 Facebook page visits across 8 platforms
- 13,655 Instagram impressions across 6 platforms
- 45 newsletter articles written across 12 monthly editions

Stewardship

Cultural and Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) Update

- Over 35,000 documents added to the CHRIS online map in 2024

State Historic Collection

- 5,095 object records updated
- 4,668 objects inventoried

Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

- \$2.27 million credits awarded
- 27 applications for new projects reviewed

Project Review (Federal Fiscal Year)

- Around 400 new projects (regulatory and technical assistance) received for review
- Negotiated 8 new agreements to address effects on historic properties

Newly Curated Archaeological Collections

- 8 accessions received
 - Includes one federal collection which is owned by the National Park Service and came from the New Castle Sheriff's House, next to the New Castle Court House.
- 20 boxes of artifacts processed
- 2 new listings to the National Register of Historic Places
- 3 Archaeological surveys undertaken

Preservation Maintenance

- 30 HCA hosted events assisted by maintenance team staff
- 1,100 project requests completed

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion (DEAI)

Strategic Plan Committee Work

- Visitor Accessibility Survey
- Glossary of Terms with over 100 terms started and is an ongoing project for staff
- DEAI activity series for staff
- John Dickinson Plantation partnership with SDARJ
- Staff presentations at the Slave Dwelling Project Conference
- Staff attendance at the Dedication of Freedom Monument Park

Strengthening Staff

Business and Human Resources

- 21 new employees hired during fiscal and calendar year 2024
 - FY24 – 9 employees
 - CY24 – 12 employees
- 229 purchase requests processed in FY24

Employee Awards

- 2 HCA employees were recognized by the Delaware Department of State for their efforts in 2024
 - Desiree May awarded with Employee of the Year 2023 in January of 2024
 - George Pardee awarded the Employee of the Quarter award in 2024

State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC)

- \$1,300 raised
- 3 local charities benefited
 - PAWS for People
 - La Esperanza
 - Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition
- 6 employee events planned by and for HCA staff
- Staff presentations at the Mid-Atlantic Museum Association Conference
- Staff attendance at symposiums and conferences related to historic preservation, horticulture, museum operations and education and interpretation.
- Volunteer program saw over 4,000 hours donated in 2024, equal to about \$146,700 of skilled labor.

LOOKING AHEAD

HCA's future is both bright and busy. Our 2024 work will continue into 2025, and beyond. Staff is focused on the division's strategic plan goals and related successes. Work to preserve Delaware's rich and diverse history is exciting, enlightening and full of opportunities.

Two major capital projects are on the horizon for 2025.

- With the planning and groundbreaking for the new visitor center in 2024 at the John Dickinson Plantation, we will see a new building emerge in a former field in 2025. We will see the creation of a new exhibition and new programming and educational opportunities as the facility opens in 2026.
- A strong HCA team used 2024 to plan for the rehabilitation and upgrades to the Homestead portion of Cooch's Bridge Historic Site. The Rehabilitation of Cooch's Bridge Historic Site Project is being supported in part by an \$800,000 Semiquincentennial grant from the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. This work, slated to be completed in time for the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Cooch's Bridge in 2027, will add a small parking lot, improved entrance, new utilities, public restrooms, and rehabilitate the interior and exterior of the Cooch House.

Opportunities and change have been reflected in 2024, and HCA looks for to continued success with our partners, communities, and sister state agencies as we continue to preserve and share Delaware's powerful, complex and challenging history.



MISSION & VISION

Mission Statement

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs serves Delaware residents and visitors by identifying, preserving, and interpreting Delaware history. Our activities foster strong communities, engaged citizens, economic vitality, and a deeper understanding of Delaware's role in world history. We do this in public trust for current and future generations.

Vision

Our audiences are actively engaged in learning (in many ways) and understand how Delaware history is meaningful to their lives. Our audiences are actively exploring a diversity of historical and cultural perspectives to inform and influence decisions about the future. Our audiences feel welcomed, valued, and encouraged to question and explore. The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is a trustworthy, ethical, and reliable partner with organizations, agencies, and individuals with whom we have common goals. All division staff and volunteers will consistently make use of each other's knowledge and skills, building professional relationships across teams.

Core Values

Communication

We are committed to an open, proactive, and thoughtful exchange of information and ideas that promotes trust and understanding in our internal and external relationships.

Professionalism

We are committed to conducting ourselves in a professional manner to co-workers, partners, and the public in order to be recognized as a reputable and reliable resource.

Creativity

We are committed to supporting innovative thinking and nurturing a creative environment. Our passion for history inspires us to risk-taking new approaches.

Knowledge

We are committed to the growth and professional development of staff and volunteers in order to ensure that all of our activities are strongly grounded in scholarly research, current and reliable best practices, and relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

Discourse and Dialog

We are committed to open debate and discourse on subjects relevant to the past, present, and future of Delaware.

Community Involvement

We are committed to actively listening to, and communicating, collaborating, and partnering with, the community in the development of our programs and services.

Stewardship

We are committed to the responsible management of the division's assets, seeking to exceed best practices.

Cooperation

We are committed to developing and maintaining trust and respect amongst coworkers, partners, and our audiences to provide a positive and collaborative atmosphere to achieve common goals.

RACE AND EQUITY STATEMENT

We strive to practice inclusive history. History is not a series of clean, happy stories. It is a combination of uncomfortable truths, differing views, and difficult narratives. At the John Dickinson Plantation in Dover, for example, we tell the story of the enslaved, indentured, and free Black men, women, and children who worked, and died on the plantation. We welcome the difficult conversations that come from interpreting the land of a founding father who wrote of freedom and liberty for all while holding human beings in bondage.

We struggle with how to tell Delaware's more troubling history. We are stewards of Delaware's history. This history includes stories of pain, courage, and defeat. We will not shrink from the pain of our shared history.

We are listening. We want people to be heard and to know that we are listening. Your voices will give shape to how we collect, interpret, preserve, and present history to the public.

We need your help. We can't do this on our own. We want to be an active participant in the force for change in our communities.

We are here. We will be undeterred in bringing forth diversity in our stories and we want all voices to be heard. We strive to be a safe place for difficult conversations and uncomfortable truths.

We promise to preserve and share Delaware history, commit to expanding the parameters of that history, and preserve the history of this movement for current and future generations.



**DELAWARE HISTORICAL
& CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

Saving Delaware History

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs is an agency of the State of Delaware. The division enhances Delaware's quality of life by preserving the state's unique historical heritage, fostering community stability and economic vitality and providing educational programs and assistance to the public on Delaware history. The division's diverse array of services includes operation of six museums, administration of the State Historic Preservation Office, conservation of the State's archaeological and historic-objects collections, operation of a conference center and management of historic properties across the state. Primary funding for division programs and services is provided by annual appropriations from the Delaware General Assembly and grants from the National Park Service, a federal agency. However, the contents and opinions expressed in the division's programs and services do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Delaware Department of State or the National Park Service.

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