



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, November 21, 2019
5:30 PM**

Mission Statement: *The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.*

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Introduction of Guests**
- 4. Approval of the Minutes**
 - A. Minutes of October 10, 2019
- 5. Unfinished Business**
 - A. Hunter House Interpretive Plan-Final Draft Review
 - B. Heritage Zone Plan Update
- 6. New Business**
 - A. Meeting Schedule for 2020
 - B. Joint Event with Friends-Spring 2020
- 7. Communication and Reports**
 - A. Director Report
 - B. Member comments
 - C. Public comments
- 8. Next Regular Meeting: December 5, 5:00 PM**
- 9. Adjournment**

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, October 10, 2019
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Dan Haugen, Judith Keefer, Tina Krizanic, Marty Logue

Members Absent: Caitlin Rosso

Student Members Present: Meredith Weddell

Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

Guests: None

Ms. Krizanic called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of September 4, 2019**

MOTION: by Dixon, seconded by Keefer:

To approve the minutes of September 4, 2019.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

Unfinished Business

- A. Board members reviewed proposed museum approaches for the final component of the Hunter House Interpretive Plan: publication and review. The Museum Board agreed by consensus that progress in implementing the plan can be provided as part of regular Museum Board meeting discussion, with an annual verbal report to the Museum Board and a written review and report on a three-year cycle. This will permit the plan to be updated and/or amended on the same cycle as the Strategic Plan. The board suggested that a summary of the plan may be sufficient for publication on the museum's web site; Director Pielack will check with the city manager in that regard. The final draft incorporating all the components of the plan will be presented for final review by the Museum Board at its November meeting.

New Business

- A. The Museum Board discussed possible events that might be held in conjunction with the Friends as fundraiser opportunities or to promote the museum and its next exhibit, which will focus on the women of Birmingham as part of the larger

centennial of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. An additional objective is to help the Friends increase their membership. Several ideas were discussed, including a possible run/walk and an expanded cemetery tour or museum reception event. The upcoming Maple Road construction was also discussed as it may impact event planning. A final ribbon-cutting ceremony in August for the road may be an opportunity as well, as it could be arranged to take place at the Southfield-Maple intersection across the street. A strolling wine event that would perhaps celebrate women business owners was enthusiastically received. Its advantages include the chance to collaborate with downtown merchants, the general appeal of such an event, and the relatively easy planning and coordination it offers. Director Pielack will follow up with the Clerk's office and with the Birmingham Shopping District Executive Director to explore this possibility. The board would like to pursue a joint meeting with the Friends to discuss collaborative options, and agreed by consensus to propose a joint meeting for November 21.

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack updated the Director Report. Martha Baldwin's induction to the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame is a fund-raiser, and the ticket prices are relatively high. The Museum Board is hoping that representatives from our community will be able to be in attendance. The Michigan Museums conference was very productive, and Director Pielack asked if Mr. Haugen and Mr. Hughes (by virtue of their experience and background) could represent the board in a meeting with Leslie Mio of the Friends to review a possible app for the museum that the Friends may be able to fund. The app has features that make it very desirable for exploring historic sites and historic houses via patron smart phones without requiring extensive signage to make content available.

Ms. Krizanic expressed interest in revisiting the time capsule project with the general community, perhaps having a table at the Farmer's Market next year.

Ms. Logue reported a boost in revenue for the cemetery walk and a large number of participants.

Mr. Dixon shared an idea that the museum's next exhibit on women might be an opportunity to partner in some way with a local university women's studies program.

There were no public comments.

The next Regular Meeting is rescheduled from November 7 to November 21 at 5:30 PM to permit a joint meeting schedule with the Friends of the Birmingham Museum.

Ms. Krizanic adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.

HUNTER HOUSE INTERPRETIVE PLAN 2020-2023 (DRAFT)



APPROVED BY THE MUSEUM BOARD 11/21/2019

MUSEUM BOARD—Tina Krizanac (Chair), Russell Dixon, Dan Haugen, Patrick Hughes, Judith Keefer, Marty Logue & Caitlin Rosso

MUSEUM STAFF—Leslie Pielack (Director), Donna Casaceli, Caitlin Donnelly & Kyle Phillips

BIRMINGHAM
The MUSEUM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An interpretative plan is a foundational document that helps museums and historical institutions tell their stories, interpret their resources and achieve their overall missions. It functions as a guide for planning and targeting programming and community engagement activities by setting out specific objectives and desirable outcomes. By its nature, it is a flexible document that changes as conditions change.

The John West Hunter House has the remarkable status of being the oldest house in Oakland County, and one of only a handful of the oldest dwellings in the entire State of Michigan. It has been part of the Birmingham Museum site, owned and operated by the City of Birmingham, since 2001. Formerly, it was operated as a historic house museum by the Birmingham Historical Society, now known as the Friends of the Birmingham Museum.

New opportunities have arisen in recent years as technology and the museum field has evolved. In a recent report, the American Association of State and Local History found that visitation to small history museums has increased since 2013 by nearly 13%, with small organizations experiencing greater growth than large ones.¹ At the Birmingham Museum, we have seen an even greater increase during the period, with our visitation increasing from 2013 to 2018 by 59%, with exponential growth in virtual visitation and engagement during the period. This is attributable to our efforts to understand our audiences and adapting to changes in interest and communication preferences, and suggests that incorporating our experience into a specific interpretive plan is timely.

Dynamic and engaging methods of presenting Birmingham's history at the Hunter House are increasingly available. Updated approaches based on best practices are needed to effectively interpret the building and our story while creatively enhancing utilization of the collection. Thoughtful focus on interpretive objectives will help develop more meaningful events, programs, and exhibits that further the Birmingham Museum mission through its 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, making the Hunter House and its story more accessible to everyone. Specifically, our strategic plan calls for the Birmingham Museum to (Goal I, C):

Develop an interpretive plan for both buildings. Enhance utilization of the collection by engaging in impactful events, activities, programs and exhibits.

An effective interpretive plan for the Hunter House will help achieve the following:

- 1) Identify and clarify some of our site's main stories
- 2) Tell our stories more engagingly by helping audiences form connections to the Hunter House and its past
- 3) Identify opportunities for programming
- 4) Seek potential new audiences and reinforce existing ones
- 5) Demonstrate preparedness and planning to potential partners and funding sources

¹ AASLH, National Visitation Report, November, 2019, <https://learn.aaslh.org/national-visitation-report>.

PROCESS

The Hunter House Interpretive Plan was developed collaboratively between museum staff and the Museum Board to apply strategic plan objectives with staff experience and museum practices in mind. Each of several components was proposed by staff and reviewed by the Museum Board over several months in 2019 to create this document. Concepts from the larger field of museum work were also incorporated as applicable to Hunter House and museum resources and objectives, but visitor experience provided the most important source.



It is a key priority for the museum to respond to our expanding audience's interests, both in physical and virtual contexts. To that end, we have been attending to visitor preferences and interactive engagement patterns to gain a sense of what works best for content and format. We have found that artifacts, images, documents, displays, the site, and the building itself create the greatest interest when connected with themes of everyday life, food ways,

women and children's activities, and family stories. The Hunter House Interpretive Plan incorporates these varied sources in addition to social media to create the most effective presentation of the site and Birmingham's history.

PLAN COMPONENTS

Successful interpretive plans are composed of elements that identify audience needs, central themes, specific objectives and methods that will make the best use of available resources. These component parts of the Hunter House Interpretive Plan are clarified below.

I. INTERPRETIVE OBJECTIVES

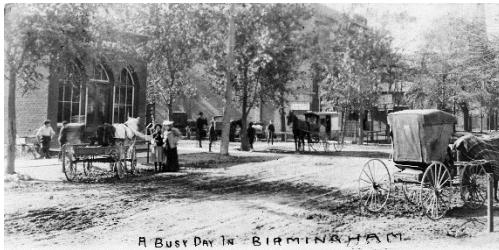
The Hunter House Interpretive Plan Objectives are designed to specify desired outcomes—what the museum wants to see as a result of effective interpretation. They integrate with the museum's overall strategic plan, are stated as general objectives to allow for adaptability, and are measurable. The plan objectives give direction and focus in interpretive activities.



1. Enhancement of visitor experience
 - a. Engagement opportunities
 - b. Educational experiences

2. Enhancement of collection and historical resources
 - a. Artifacts
 - b. Information
3. Increased community support
 - a. Manpower/volunteer resources
 - b. Financial donations
4. Civic engagement and partnerships

II. THEMATIC FOCUS



Thematic emphasis provides historic and cultural context that imparts meaning and defines the relationship of Birmingham's stories to the larger picture of American history. Many themes can be applied to historic sites and objects, but visitor experience is enhanced when conceptual ideas are prioritized into key focus areas that organize interpretive content into easy to understand

patterns. The themes and sub-themes with the greatest value for conveying Birmingham's place in the larger society are listed below in chronological, not preferential, order. They span the period before settlement up to recent history, affording numerous opportunities to tell stories from varying points of view.

1. Pioneer settlement of Oakland County
 - a. War of 1812
 - b. Early settlers and community
 - c. Early territorial environment
 - i. Saginaw Trail
 - ii. Rouge River/Landscape
 - iii. Native American occupation and relationships with settlers
 - d. Building technology of the period
 - e. Greenwood Cemetery and its founding
2. Civil War period in local life
3. Building of Birmingham
 - a. Agricultural
 - b. Commercial
 - c. Government/Civic
4. Early 19th to 20th century culture in everyday life
 - a. Foodways
 - b. Roles of men, women, and children
5. Preservation/conservation movement of the 1960s/1970s; how a community's needs change over time

III. CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

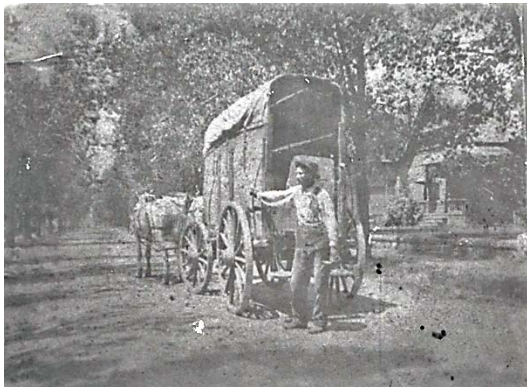
This component of the plan addresses the major physical objects and the primary stories associated with them to build a conceptual timeline for virtual and site visitors. It is the framework that will tie the physical space and museum artifacts to the themes that have been identified, bringing them down to earth and making them tangible for a better experience by visitors of all ages. The Hunter House Interpretive Plan primarily emphasize the historic and cultural resources in the Birmingham Museum collection, although borrowing objects from other institutions or utilizing public domain content may be used to support or strengthen items interpreted from the museum collection.



1. Building and Site
 - a. Interior
 - i. Heritage room for visual 'scrapbook timeline' and display case; other rooms interpreted functionally
 - ii. Wall exposure window
 - iii. Birmingham-related objects and artifacts whenever possible, with other furnishings as support for period interpretation
 - b. Exterior
 - i. Building/architectural history
 - ii. Site history, Allen Play House
2. Artifacts and Objects specific to historic people-displayed and directly interpreted by docents (minimal labels, use of literature and/or QR coding)
 - a. Hunter-sleigh bells, white pine slab
 - b. Hamilton-folding fork and knife
 - c. Swan desk (to replace existing secretary)
 - d. Raynale portrait
 - e. Randall portrait
 - f. Fouracre oil lamp
 - g. Clizbe Melodion
 - h. Period garments, household items, and furnishings from collection as needed to support thematic objectives
3. Collection photos/maps/architectural drawings/illustrations for virtual and physical literature and displays
 - a. Building
 - b. Site
 - c. People (see list below)

4. Other illustrations not in collection
 - a. First surveyor and original parcel maps and documents
 - b. Museum-generated illustrations and maps
 - c. Period illustrations
5. Priority stories/people
 - a. Hunter/Willits/Hamilton families (various)
 - b. Imri Fish, Ziba Swan and the Utter murders; the Fish family, Greenwood Cemetery
 - c. Ebenezer Raynale, early Birmingham, pioneer communities and roles
 - d. Henry Randall, the Civil War and post-war Birmingham, moving the Hunter House
 - e. The Fouracres-Alice, Albert, Edna; the Titanic, DUR, Spanish flu
 - f. Wallace Frost at Hunter House
 - g. Rosemary Barnhardt, Great Depression and rental period
 - h. Flacks and the preservation of the Hunter House

IV. STORY-BASED METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION



As the Birmingham Museum audience ranges widely in age, interest, and preferred experience format (e.g., virtual or physical experience), offering a variety of interpretive approaches will best meet their needs in telling our stories. These options can be adapted for availability of resources (such as personnel) as appropriate and as conditions allow. In some cases, interpretive content may be made available indirectly through literature or self-experiences, while in others it can be provided directly through personal interaction. Interpretive methods can also be utilized

on or off site, and presented virtually or in person. Story telling opportunities, technologies and resources are anticipated to change rapidly in the future, so methods of implementation need to remain flexible to be successful.

1. Direct Interpretation Opportunities
 - a. Exhibits and displays (on and off site)
 - i. Municipal Building, other city facilities
 - ii. other institutions or pop-ups (ex: YMCA, post office; Harry Allen Room/Idealab at Baldwin Library; storefronts with a 'traveling exhibit;' display during election; etc)
 - b. Guided and self-guided tours (on and off site)
 - i. Hunter House, Greenwood guided and self-guided tours
 - ii. Themed and ticketed specialty tours of the Hunter House

- c. Lectures and presentations, including conference/joint presentations as appropriate
 - d. Interactive programs and activities
 - e. Site events and participation at local community events as appropriate
 - f. Exterior signage (Hunter House porch) with site information such as QR code to online exhibits/maps/brochures (future apps) for afterhours visitors, to be coordinated with overall site
- 2. Print Publication Options
 - a. Handouts/brochures of details about Hunter House historic resources (ex: can be provided/recycled at end of tours)
 - b. Short booklets, printed/self-published
 - a. Print media (history magazines, etc.)
- 3. Virtual/Electronic Content Options
 - a. Brief video and/or audio presentations
 - b. Electronic articles and photos
 - c. Website
 - d. eNewsletters
 - e. Online local media/newspapers
 - f. Electronic exhibits (links, QR, apps, etc.)
- 4. Social Media/Interactive
 - g. Facebook
 - h. Instagram
 - i. Twitter and other social media platforms as appropriate

PLAN REVIEW

As a flexible plan document, the Hunter House Interpretive Plan will ideally change with changing conditions, new approaches, enlargement of the collection and new knowledge that becomes available about Birmingham's story and the larger culture.

As interpretation is an integral part of museum planning and operations, regular discussion of interpretive activities will be addressed on a monthly basis at public Museum Board meetings, with a verbal report by the Museum Director to the Museum Board on an annual basis. A written report and review of the Hunter House Interpretive Plan document will take place on a three year cycle in accordance with the review of the Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan. Through these mechanisms, the public may participate in discussions of the plan on both an informal and formal basis. In addition, input and feedback from visitors is welcome as part of ongoing operations at the museum.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

American Alliance of Museums, "Interpretive Planning," <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/education-and-interpretation-2/interpretive-planning/>

American Association for State and Local History, *National Visitation Report (November, 2019)*. <https://learn.aaslh.org/national-visitation-report>.

National Association for Interpretation, *Interpretation Standards: A Pathway Towards Excellence*, <https://interpretationstandards.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/standards-2018.pdf>

National Park Service, *Comprehensive Interpretive Planning*, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/hfc/upload/cip-guideline.pdf>



MUSEUM BOARD

556 WEST MAPLE, BIRMINGHAM, MI
248.530.1928

**MEETING SCHEDULE
2020**

**All Meetings Scheduled for 5:00 PM, first Thursday of the month,
unless otherwise noted.**

MONTH	DAY	MEETING	LOCATION
January	2	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
February	6	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
March	5	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
April	2	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
May	7	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
June	4	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
July	9*	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
August	6	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
September	3	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
October	1	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
November	5	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
December	3	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum

*July meeting scheduled for the second Thursday to avoid conflict with the 4th of July holidays.

DATE: November 21, 2019
TO: Museum Board
FROM: Leslie Pielack, Museum Director
SUBJECT: Director Report

Lecture Series—Updates on Levinson's and Peabody's presentations; donations and content for archives have been positive outcomes from several talks. The Jewish Historical Society is interested in the Levinson's lecture for early next year.

Winter Lectures at the Library--"**Wonder Women of Birmingham**" will be as follows:

- January 23: **Ruth Shain** presented by museum staff **Kyle Phillips**.
Ruth Shain was an incredibly hard-working woman who envisioned a better community for everyone, and her legacy still shows.
- February 27: **The Ladies Library Association** presented by museum staff **Caitlin Donnelly**.
How did Martha Baldwin and her colleagues found a library in the face of stiff opposition and other obstacles? The story may surprise you.

Video Series—the second of three '**What were they thinking: Food Edition**' is in process to launch the week before Thanksgiving. The theme is meat dishes from the pioneer period, and voters chose Jugged Hare, which was traditionally prepared in a crock in the fireplace. The staff filmed their taste test on 11/12 in the Hunter House, using the dining room fireplace as a backdrop and adding information about cooking methods during the settlement period of Birmingham. The edited video is set to air the week before Thanksgiving.

Eccentric Article on Video Series—Susan Bromley of the Eccentric was on site for the staff taste test of the Jugged Hare and is planning a feature article on the museum's "What Were They Thinking? Food Edition" series. She was very enthusiastic about the series, the concept, and the creativity of the approach.

Pond Seepage Survey—DPS has engaged HRC to do a detailed survey of existing conditions, provide a preliminary engineering assessment, and report on the pond seepage with recommendations for short- and long-term intervention. We expect to get their findings some time in December.

Collection—We have learned that some of the documents in our collection that came in not long ago include correspondence and notations of Birmingham pioneer **Hiram Daniels** and his wife, **Rhoda Bingham Daniels**. This was an unexpected surprise, and the find will be used in conjunction with the 2020 exhibit as well as early Birmingham interpretive content at the Hunter House.

2020 Exhibit—

- **"Beyond Suffrage: 200 Years of Empowering Birmingham Women"** (working title)
- Bentley Historical Library/University of Michigan RE: Birmingham women's pipeline to U-M, 1890-1920
- Middle School Volunteer (Erika) Exhibit, Class of 1896 Prophecy
- Women's groups in and around Birmingham as potential partners/sponsors and local history:
 - Birmingham Women's Club (TCH)
 - American Association of University Women
 - League of Women Voters
 - Women business owners in Birmingham
- The stories of many of the women in Birmingham are being researched by staff for the exhibit, and will fall into
 - Settlement period
 - Civil War to 1920

- 1920 to post WWII
- WWII to present

Touring/Wifi App—We are looking into ways of introducing technology to accomplish interpretive goals at the Hunter House with input from Museum Board members Dan Haugen and Pat Hughes. More to come, probably early in the year.

Hunter House Winter RFP—We are planning to concentrate on the complete preservation and restoration work of the Hunter House to be undertaken in the spring and summer next year. The scope of work has been specified by our architect, Jackie Hoist in final bid drawings, in conjunction with our window restoration specialist and the historic paint analysis. The total project includes 1) drainage improvements below grade to move water away from the building more effectively, as it has been contributing to the deterioration of the building, and 2) exterior repairs and restoration of the historic siding and detail, including the outcome of our historic paint analysis. A separate RFP for each type of work will be developed, since they involve different construction methods and background. The RFPs will be posted in January, with expected bid award in March for late April/early May construction. (The drainage work will be done first.) We anticipate the entire building will be preserved and protected as a whole by the end of the construction season 2020. I will share the project and plans with the HDC in December to keep them informed about our preservation progress.

AASLH Visitation Trends Report—Small historical organization museums up by 12.7% nationally in past five years; Birmingham Museum increased by 58.8%. This refers to on site visitation. Our virtual audience is increasing at a rapid pace, suggesting an effective social media approach. In addition, our outreach and lecture series has brought new interest and 'street cred' to the museum's programs. Children's programs have also seen an increase, and we have high school and middle school students showing increased interest in volunteering with us.

CREEM Research for U-V Doctoral Student—A student at the University of Virginia in the history department will be visiting to conduct research on CREEM for a major project. She will be using the Charlie Auringer Reading Room over the holidays as her base and will share the outcome of her project with us when it is complete.

Museum Collaboration with Birmingham Shopping District's *Birmingham Magazine* for December 2019--
The museum worked with the publisher of *Birmingham Magazine* to develop a timeline with historic photos to give the background of Birmingham's retail history. This collaboration was initiated by the Birmingham Shopping District and resulted in a very attractive and informative timeline.

BIRMINGHAM DATELINE

BY ERIN MARIE MILLER

PHOTOS COURTESY BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM



What is now Birmingham is settled by the Elijah Willits, John Hamilton and John West Hunter families in 1818 and adopts the name of Birmingham in 1838.



An interurban rail line is introduced in Birmingham, making it accessible to out-of-town visitors and allowing products to be exported to other markets nearby.



Although business slows during the Great Depression, smart leadership prevents Birmingham from falling into debt, and the city finds its way to the surface after the difficult era.



CREEM magazine moves its editorial offices to Birmingham in 1973 and publishes now-iconic American rock journalism from the city. Today, the Birmingham Museum owns the largest archive of CREEM publicly available.

The Birmingham Shopping District features hundreds of businesses and has become a premier destination for shopping, dining and nightlife in Metro Detroit.

Early
1800s

Late
1800s

1890s

1920s

1930s -
1940s

1950s -
1960s

1970s -
1980s

1990s

Today



In the 1860s and after, as the economy improves across the nation following the Civil War, Birmingham's merchant economy begins to grow.



As the Detroit automobile industry rapidly takes off and Woodward Avenue is widened into a boulevard linking Detroit to Pontiac, Birmingham begins to find its character as restaurants and an early American cinema open downtown.



Jacobson's department store opens a location in Birmingham in 1950, filling a niche for luxury shopping, and is soon followed by other high-end retailers.



The Birmingham Shopping District is created to promote downtown Birmingham as a shopping, dining and business hub in Oakland County.