

2021



AACHM 2021
**Annual
Report**

AACHM

African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

Table of Contents

Message from Joyce M. Hunter (President/CEO)	3
Message from Debby Covington (Board Chair)	4
Mission/Values/Vision	5
2021 Year in Review	6
Our History	8
2021 Programs, Events and Activities	
Justice Indeed Panel	10
Washtenaw Jewish News	10
Black Lives Matter Mural	10
Journey to Freedom	10
AACHM in the Community	11
A Touchdown for Equality	12
The Promise of Parkridge	12
Living Oral History - Phase 8	13
Why I'm Excited for the Opening	14
Holding Space Fundraiser	15
Opening Day	16
2021 Kwanzaa	18
Grants, Membership and Recognition	19
Museum and Event Sponsors	20
Partners	21
Finances at-a-Glance	22
AACHM Board, Emeritus Board, Advisory Board	23

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.” - Mahatma Gandhi

The museum continues to be a small group with primarily all volunteers. We continue to carry out our mission by collecting the stories of African Americans in Washtenaw County and sharing these stories with the greater community. We made history by becoming a museum in 1996 and opening an African American Cultural & Historical Museum in Washtenaw County to the public in 2021.



Joyce M. Hunter

President/CEO

Moving forward we need to move from an all-volunteer organization to hiring staff and/or consultants for special projects. While we will continue working with volunteers, we need to set up guidelines for a volunteer program with specific goals/objectives and training for the volunteers.

We also need to continue looking at ways to ensure the museum's financial security by writing more grants, growing our endowment, and increasing our annual fundraising activities.

Young people are our future so we must create youth programs, engage high school and college students, and recruit young adults.

Being a “Museum Without Walls” has been a way to carry out a variety of programs by partnering and collaborating with a number different organizations. We will continue with the wonderful partners we have had over the years, and we now are collaborating with the following projects and/or organizations.

- **Racially Restrictive Covenant Project [U of M]** research deeds that prohibit people of certain races from buying or occupying a home in Ann Arbor.
- **Washtenaw Black Collaborative Project [U of M]** research the history of racial segregation in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti areas during the 20th Century.
- **DSIP (Development Summer Internship Program [U of M])** created to increase diversity among the development community,

Thanks for your continued support of AACHM over these many years.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.” - Harriet Tubman

It gives me great joy to pen this welcome message to mark this historic moment in Washtenaw County, Michigan. In 1993, twenty-three visionary individuals committed to document, collect, preserve and share African American history in Washtenaw County, Michigan. For 28 years we operated without a building. Undeterred, the founders coined the phrase, “A Museum Without Walls.”

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the AACHM founding members, subsequent board members, our supporters, and the generous benefaction of The Mosaic Foundation (of R. and P. Heydon), on October 24, 2021, we celebrated the journey from a museum without walls to a brick-and-mortar museum. Special thanks to Robert and Beverly Elliott, Ann Arbor natives and longtime supporters of the AACHM and attorney Nakisha Chaney (board member) for their tireless work to secure our opening.



Debby Covington

Board Chair

On November 1, 2021, we launched our inaugural online fundraising campaign, “Holding Space for African American History” with the goal of raising \$50,000 by January 1st. We used the Kwanzaa principles to establish fundraising teams. Thanks to our supporters, we are pleased to announce that we exceeded our goal. We will now increase our programs, tours, activities and exhibit space. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

We look forward to your continued partnership as we garner the strength, patience and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.

MISSION VALUES VISION

Mission: to research, collect, preserve and exhibit cultural and historical materials about the life and work of African Americans in Washtenaw County.



VISION

The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County will be a **visible, vibrant** presence in the community.

-  Collect
-  Preserve
-  Share



Authentic

It is our desire to present an authentic experience with trained, dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers and staff.



Accountable

Acknowledging our community roots, and strong volunteer base we strive to be relevant, accurate and professional in our work, our exhibits, our programming and to engage our members in meaningful ways.



Inclusive

We believe in being a community asset for all residents of Washtenaw County and beyond with a lens for equality, justice and inclusivity.

VALUES

The AACHM was established in 1993 by 23 founding members dedicated to the preservation of Black history in Washtenaw County. *More about our history on page 8.*

YEAR IN REVIEW

Another Year of COVID – Another Year of Action

2021 was an event-filled year for AACHM. We filled our calendar with bus and walking tours, presentations, Kwanzaa celebration activities, and exhibits serving hundreds in our community.

In October 2021, the doors on 1528 Pontiac Trail opened with an exhibit entitled **AACHM @1528: Where Art Meets History** featuring six local artists. “AACHM@1528: Where Art Meets History” was a visual collaboration inspired by identity, history, legacy, resilience, and hope. The exhibit celebrated six black artists with Washtenaw County roots (more on [page 16](#)).

Expanding Our Reach

To overcome the challenges of COVID restrictions and with a desire to reach a broader audience of patrons and supporters, the AACHM has expanded its use of social media. Our reach has extended to many beyond our community and allows those connected with our success but living elsewhere to participate and view AACHM activities from their homes on their own schedule and share with friends and family. In addition to our 2021 membership roster, we have reached hundreds more through our social media platforms.



New in 2021

Our first online fundraiser, “**Holding Space for African American History**,” was live from November 1, 2021 through January 1, 2022. We exceeded our goal of \$50,000 and engaged more than 330 donors. During our 24-hour Giving Tuesday period, we raised almost \$8,000 alone. Thank you to all who so generously supported this effort.

Holding
Space for
African-American History



< SCAN WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE
TO VIEW THE FUNDRAISING PAGE ONLINE!

**Look for other QR codes throughout
this report!**

Our annual report is distributed both digitally and in print. For our print readers, we included QR codes so you can easily access webpages with more detailed information.

To use: simply open your smartphone camera, point it at the QR code, and click the link that appears on your screen.



To enhance transparency for funders and supporters, the AACHM has reached the **Gold Seal Transparency level by GuideStar**. After viewing our profile on GuideStar donors and funders can contribute to our organization with confidence.

Building on Previous Success

The 2021 **Kwanzaa Celebration** was again held virtually with nearly 50 joining via ZOOM each evening and more than 170 more attending via other social media platforms. Kwanzaa guests and presenters joined live throughout the state and country including from Florida, Texas, and Georgia. The weeklong event was recorded and has been posted on the AACHM website.

Thirteen **“Journey to Freedom: Underground Railroad Bus Tours”** were conducted by bus or as walking tours this year, including one by the Ann Arbor High School class of 1976 as part of their 45th class reunion. Tours have been expanded to include local historic gravesites.



In addition to our various online exhibits (included in this report), AACHM representatives were featured speakers and presenters at several local events this past year. In November 2021, the 8th phase of the **Living Oral Histories Project** was launched in conjunction with Ann Arbor District Library. Ten oral histories have been added to our collection in this project.

Looking Forward to 2022

An exhibit honoring the work of the esteemed local artist, the late Jon Onye Lockard opened at the museum on January 23, 2022 and closes May 1, 2022. The exhibit, **Sankofa**, is a retrospective of the life work of this prolific and gifted artist. “Within Our Gates,” a silent film by famed filmmaker Oscar Micheaux will be screened at the Michigan Theater in the spring. The AACHM remains responsive to COVID public health protocol and restrictions, and the website and social media will have updates surrounding 2022 events and exhibits.



OUR HISTORY

On February 6, 1993, Dr. Margaret Burroughs, a co-founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, was the guest speaker at the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Delta Psi Omega Chapter Founders Day. She challenged everyone in the room to document and preserve the history of the African American community of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and surrounding areas. From that challenge the African American Cultural & Historical Museum was born. Dr. Charles Wright, founder of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit visited Ann Arbor and helped with initial planning. In 1996 AACHM received 501(c) (3) status and rented its first office space at the New Center on Main Street. In 1997, The Mosaic Foundation extended a \$10,000 challenge grant to the museum for strategic planning and development.



FOUNDING MEMBERS

The AACHM was established by 23 founding members in 1993 to document, collect, preserve and share African American History in Washtenaw County.

*Passed On

JOANNE HALL*

JOYCE M. HUNTER

EARL W. JACKSON

LOLA M. JONES

NJOKI KAMUYU

LETITIA BYRD*

BAMIDELE DEMERSON

GLORIA J. EDWARDS

WILLIE M. EDWARDS*

CHERYL ERVIN

MARTHA GRAHAM*





A Museum without Walls

BEVERLY MYERS

ZERILDA PALMER

LINELL RANSOM*

PATRICIA KING

BEVERLY TYLER

VIVIAN LYTE

SHIRLEY A. VAUGHN*

DOROTHY A. MACK*

SHERYL L. WHITE

SHAWN R. MARTIN*

SHIRLEY D. MARTIN

FRANCI MOORMAN



The AACHM was a key partner in extensive research on nineteenth-century antislavery activism and African American community life with the University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship Program in 1999. The research was the foundation for the AACHM’s “Journey to Freedom: an Underground Railroad Guided Bus Tour of Washtenaw County.”

“Journey to Freedom” was accepted as an official member in the US Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program in 2004. The research also produced an exhibit called Midnight Journey that tells the story of the Underground Railroad in Michigan. It was recently on display at Grand Valley State University for the annual Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Conference.

In 2005, the AACHM administrative offices were moved from New Center to the David R. Byrd Center, a Pittsfield Township farmhouse built in 1830 and restored by African American architect David Byrd and his wife Letitia Byrd.

The Museum Gets Its Walls

2021 saw the opening of the museum’s first physical space at 1528 Pontiac Trail in Ann Arbor. The opening event was attended by over 125 people and featured presentations from six artists with Washtenaw County roots, and over 250 visitors have attended the museum since the opening.

2021 PROGRAMS, EVENTS, *AND* ACTIVITIES



JUSTICE INDEED PANEL

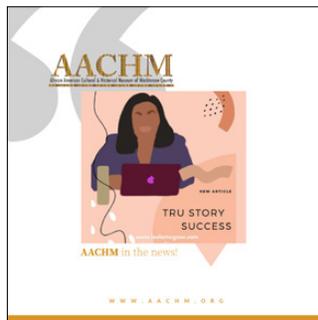
Joyce Hunter was a panelist for a virtual discussion on the history and legacy of segregation in Washtenaw County - and how to repair the damage done.

The project was a collaboration with the [Ann Arbor District Library](#).



“WASHTENAW JEWISH NEWS” FEATURE

The Washtenaw Jewish News commissioned a three-part series of articles about the AACHM’s history and the artists featured in our opening exhibit. Leslie McGraw (Tru Story Success) wrote the articles, which are available at washtenawjewishnews.org.



BLACK LIVES MATTER MURALS

In partnership with AACHM, the Ann Arbor District Library held an arts exhibit of murals by eight local artists inspired by Black Lives Matter. The mural exhibit opened on July 23, 2021. For more information, visit aadl.org.



JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

The AACHM’s most popular events each year are the “Journey to Freedom: Underground Railroad Bus Tours.” Thirteen tours were conducted by bus or as walking tours serving over 220 patrons. One tour was taken by the Ann Arbor High School class of 1976 as part of their 45th class reunion. Tours included local historic gravesites.

AACHM IN THE COMMUNITY

AACHM representatives were featured speakers and presenters at several local events this past year including:

- **Presentation for U of M Black Employees**
- **“Champions for Change” presentation**
- **“Justice in Deed” with Ann Arbor District Library**
- **Black Lives Matter U of M presentation**
- **NAACP Juneteenth presentation**
- **Bethel AME Church 164th Anniversary**
- **Presentation for U of M School of Medicine**
- **Presentation for State of Michigan Unemployment Agency**



ONLINE EXHIBITS

AACHM celebrates two local history-makers in our 2021/2022 online exhibits. Meet George Jewett and Hilyard Robinson.

“A Touchdown for Equality” *by Rashid Faisal, Ed.D.*

In 1890, George Jewett became a student at the University of Michigan and changed history, becoming the school’s first African-American football player and varsity letterman. Through two enormously successful seasons, Jewett led with courage, resilience, and tenacity--both on the field and in the classroom. Visit our website for [the detailed exhibit!](#)

View Exhibit



“The Promise of Parkridge” *by Marlys Deen*

Hilyard Robert Robinson was a renowned architect who designed for Ypsilanti Homes in the first half of the twentieth century. He designed many buildings, housing projects, and homes nationwide, and his designs induced the Roosevelt Administration to pass the National Housing Act. Some of Robinson’s designs are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in 2017, the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office recognized Parkridge Homes in Ypsilanti as a significant part of local history. Three historic markers stand at the site today.

[View the exhibit on our website.](#)



LIVING ORAL HISTORY - PHASE VIII



November 2021

In November of 2021, the Living Oral Histories Project ([Premiere I Phase VIII](#)) was launched. Ten oral histories were added to our collection in this phase.

This year's honorees are Lois Allen-Richardson, Diana McKnight-Morton, Patricia Horne-McGee, Laurita Thomas, Sharon Gillespie, Alma Wheeler Smith, Mary Wheeler McDade, Nancy Wheeler, James Turner and Dolores Turner.

The Living Oral History program is a partnership between the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor District Library. The collection promotes AACHM's mission to gather and share the stories, images, artifacts and documents that preserve the history of African Americans in Washtenaw County.

The full [Living Oral History Project Exhibit](#) includes materials from AADL's Community Collections about six major topics important to African American communities in Washtenaw County: Community Centers, Education, Housing, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Faith.

[View the Phase VIII collection here.](#)



Alma Wheeler Smith



Dolores Turner



Diana McKnight-Morton



Mary Wheeler McDade



Laurita Thomas



Lois Allen-Richardson



James Turner



Nancy Wheeler



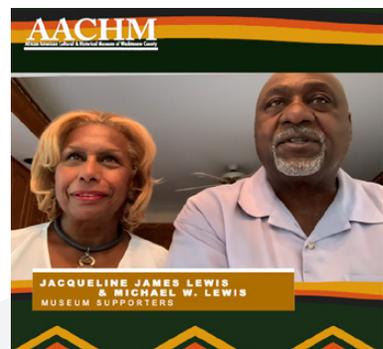
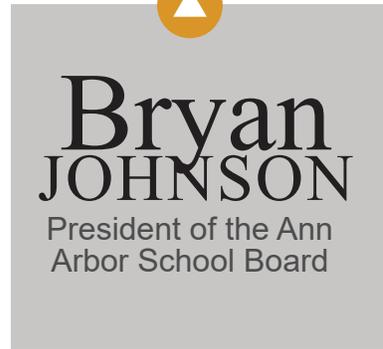
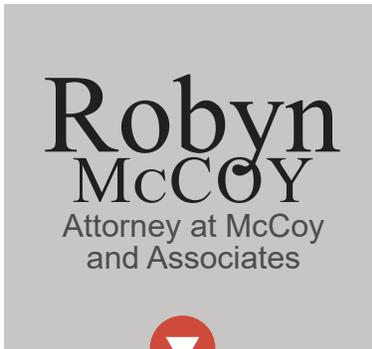
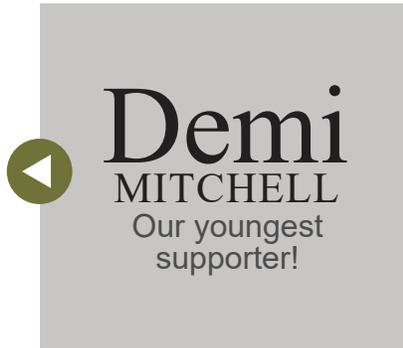
Sharon Gillespie



Patricia Horne-McGee

“WHY I’M EXCITED FOR THE OPENING OF THE AACHM”

In anticipation of the opening exhibit at 1528 Pontiac Trail (more on page 16), the AACHM reached out to our community to ask: **why are YOU excited to see the AACHM open a physical space?** The response was overwhelming, and we designed a social media campaign highlighting as many of the responses as we could. Below are links and quotes from some of our valued patrons.



[VIEW ENTIRE PLAYLIST >](#)



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HOLDING SPACE

2021 FALL FUNDRAISER



In an effort to expand fundraising capabilities, the AACHM established an online portal to accept donations and allow for members and connections to share. We saw over **190 new donors** during this campaign, and raised **over \$50,000**.

We'd like to extend a sincere thank you to all who participated, but want to specifically highlight one donation:

Donald Wurster and Joan Gibson graciously contributed **\$10,000** to our *Holding Space* fundraiser.

Joan is the daughter of Lola Jones, an AACHM founding member, and her generous donation will ensure that her mother's legacy will live on through service to our community.

We are so thankful for all of your support.



< VIEW CAMPAIGN
PROMO VIDEO

VIEW FUNDRAISER
ON GIVEBUTTER >



OPENING DAY



The “Museum Without Walls” Opens Physical Doors at 1528 Pontiac Trail

On October 24, the doors of the AACHM’s first brick-and-mortar site opened with an exhibit entitled [AACHM @1528: Where Art Meets History](#). The inaugural exhibit was a visual collaboration inspired by identity, history, legacy, resilience, and hope. We celebrated six renowned black artists with Washtenaw County roots: Earl Jackson, Wanetta Jones, Dr. James Lee, Karen Simpson, Gregory Sipp and Wasentha Young. Scanning QR codes throughout the museum with smartphones revealed historical photos, videos and stories expanding on the exhibit.

More than 125 experienced opening day in person. The exhibit continued through January 2, 2022, and close to 200 have visited the museum since its opening.



Visitors don masks and wait in line during their chosen time slot.



Mosaic artist Wasentha Young discusses her piece with a visitor.



< For more details about the exhibit

WHERE ART MEETS HISTORY



Patrons enjoy the exhibit at the grand opening.



THE ALBERT POLHEMUS HOUSE

The museum is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 noon to 4 p.m., and by appointment.

THE HISTORIC ALBERT POLHEMUS HOUSE

1528 Pontiac Trail is located less than a mile northwest of the Broadway Historic District that contains over 100 historic homes dating back to 1838. The museum is surrounded by more than eight Underground Railroad sites that are on the Underground Railroad (UGRR) tour, including three on Pontiac Trail itself.

The museum is housed in a mid-19th century brick residence originally built by Albert Polhemus as his home in the 400 block of East Washington street in downtown Ann Arbor. The house was moved from that location to 1528 Pontiac Trail in 2006. The Mosaic Foundation of R. & P. Heydon acquired the structure nearly a decade and a half ago, to rehabilitate it for the AACHM to tell the stories of the history and culture of African Americans in Washtenaw County and also for the foundation's own offices.

Read more [about the house on our website.](#)

KWANZAA CELEBRATION

Dec. 26, 2021 - Jan. 1, 2022



With COVID still a concern, the AACHM again took the annual Kwanzaa celebration online to ZOOM. The seven principles were honored on their respective days, and the topics were as follows:

Dec. 26 - Umoja (Unity)

"The Key Ingredient For Our Return To Greatness" featuring historian Jamon Jordan

Dec. 27 - Kugichagulia (Self-Determination)

"Taking the Torch From Our Ancestors To Find New Ways To Improve Our Community" featuring Dr. Calvin Harvel

Dec. 28 - Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility)

"Black Washtenaw- A Look into Yesterday's African American Community As A Blue Print for Tomorrow" featuring Pat Horne-McGee and friends

Dec. 29 - Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)

The Virtual Kwanzaa Market Place "Connecting With Black Businesses In Our Own Backyard"

Dec. 30 - Nia (Purpose)

The Think Tank - "A Conversation With Black School Educators On How They Use Black Magic To Give Purpose To Their Students And Excite Them About Learning"

Dec. 31 - Kuumba (Creativity)

"Witnessing Black Creative Expression in Dance, Music, Scripts, and Art"

Jan. 1 - Imani (Faith)

"Let The Circle Be Unbroken- The Elders Council - Speaking Wisdom And Success In Our Youth"

A website dedicated solely to the annual Kwanzaa event was created as a space to promote and share the ZOOM link, as well as provide easy access to the recorded sessions.



**CLICK HERE
TO VIEW THE SITE!**

Kuumba

was a night for our community to demonstrate their creativity. We had:



and more! [Watch the recording here.](#)

GRANTS, MEMBERSHIP AND RECOGNITION

Grants received by AACHM include the following:



NEW RECOGNITION IN 2021: GUIDESTAR GOLD SEAL

In 2021, the AACHM earned its first Gold Seal of Transparency from GuideStar. Fewer than 5% of nonprofits registered with GuideStar are recognized with a Gold Seal.

To earn this recognition, we published qualitative, quantitative and financial accounting with GuideStar. Current and potential donors can give with more confidence now that they have access to accurate and in-depth knowledge about our financials and processes.

As of this publication, AACHM also received Gold Status for 2022, as well.

[View Our Profile](#)



REVIVING BLACK WALL STREET

AACHM received \$1,500 from Fifth Third Bank in sponsorship of a panel discussion titled "Reviving Black Wall Street."



AAEF

AACHM received \$1,200 from the African American Endowment Fund (AAEF) of the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) for UGRR transportation.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Our preliminary analysis of membership and donor statistics shows **190 new donors** since October 31, 2021, for a total donor base of approximately 330.

In 2021 many board members made financial contributions to AACHM. In addition, board members contributed their time, expertise and talents as docents, planners, exhibit and project developers, grant writers, and fund developers.

MUSEUM AND EVENT SPONSORS

The massive community benefits that the AACHM provides Washtenaw County and the surrounding areas would not be possible without the generous support of our many sponsors.



Genealogy Level

- Bob & Beverly Elliott Family Charity
- Pearls and Ivy Foundation of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Rogel Cancer Center, Michigan Medicine
- University of Michigan Credit Union



Museum Level

Organizations/Businesses

- Comcast Heartland Regional
- Construction Laborers' Local Union 499
- Destination Ann Arbor
- JB&B, LLC - James Wesley
- Nannies + Sitters + Tutors



THANK YOU

to our numerous sponsors,
supporters and patrons!

Museum Level

Individuals

- Bette Thompson
- Christina and Teesha Montague
- Jacqueline & Michael Lewis
- Jerome Rush
- Joyce M. Hunter
- Judith Cawhorn and Larry Hunter



PARTNERS



Ann Arbor
District Library
Ypsilanti
District Library



University
Musical Society



Kerrytown
Concert House



Michigan
Theatre

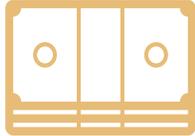


NEW
Center



The Byrd
Center

FINANCES AT-A-GLANCE



2021 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

as of December 31, 2021

AACHM posted a 2021 gross profit of \$63,034.25 compared with 2020 gross profit of \$25,486.55.

AACHM maintains total assets of \$412,601.58 as of December 2021 compared with assets of \$373,208 as of December 31, 2020 and maintains an endowment of \$91,426.68.

2021 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Total Assets	412,601.58
Endowment	91,426.68

GROSS PROFIT 2021

\$63,034.25
Revenue, assets, liabilities, equity, etc.

+147%
from 2020



AACHM BOARD OF DIRECTORS ►



BOARD MEMBERS

AACHM BOARD OF DIRECTORS (PHOTO ON PAGE 22)



Patricia Berry (Chair of Membership Committee); **Nakisha N. Chaney** (Board Vice-Chair); **Ellen Copeland Brown** (Recording Secretary); **Debby Covington** (Board Chair); **Marlys T. Deen** (Past Chair, Co-Chair of Exhibits & Collections Committee); **Gloria J. Edwards**; **Cheryl Ervin** (Co-Chair of Marketing Committee); **Joyce M. Hunter** (President/CEO, Chair of Development Committee, and Chair of Facilities Committee); **Patricia King** (Treasurer); **Deborah Meadows** (Underground Railroad Tour Docent, Chair of the Programs Committee); **Joetta Mial** (Co-Chair of the Marketing Committee); **Rossi Ray-Taylor** (Chair of the Site Search Subcommittee); **Anthony Stewart**; **Bette Thompson**; **Kenyatta Tucker** (Kwanzaa Coordinator); **Beverly Tyler** (Assistant Treasurer); **Beverly Willis** (Corresponding Secretary, Co-Chair: Exhibits & Collections)

SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE

Carol Mull



DOCENT



Reta Golidy

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

Lola Jones
Zerilda Palmer



2021-2022 ADVISORY BOARD



Karmen Brown, Judith Cawhorn, Tricia A. Edwards, Beverly Elliott, James Frenza, Carine Hails, Amy Harris, Scott McFadden, Mia Milton, Teesha Montague, Carol Senneff, Grace M. Shackman, Matthew Siegfried, Deborah VandenBroek, Donica Varner

Thank you to all who have so generously donated their funds, time and talents to AACHM's success. It is with our deepest appreciation that we look forward to continued growth and support in the coming year.



To stay up-to-date, and to become a member, connect with us here!



www.aachm.org



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aachmuseum@att.net



AACHM 2021 Annual Report

Prepared for AACHM by Command-Z, LLC

