

A Home for YOUR History

Capital Campaign For The Adams County Historical Society

As a high school student, I had the privilege of volunteering at ACHS. I spent many hours deep in the stacks of historic material organizing boxes of papers, photos, and artifacts. One day, after flipping through hundreds of business receipts, I came across something truly incredible - an original program from the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in 1863. To my great surprise, I had unearthed a rare artifact from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

It's stories like this that make the Adams County Historical Society such a special place. With over one million historic items in our care, discoveries are made almost every day. As Executive Director of ACHS, I want to open our doors to new audiences so that everyone can share in the inspiration and excitement that Adams County history offers.

- Andrew Dalton

A Memory Bank

Located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the Adams County Historical Society (ACHS) preserves and protects three centuries of remarkable community history. ACHS is Adams County's official Historical Society and County Archives -- the memory bank for one of America's most famous counties.

The Society's vision is to establish a new venue that will, for the first time, tell the complete story of Gettysburg and Adams County. Visitors will experience exciting events of national significance through the eyes and ears of area residents from all ages and backgrounds. Using rich human interest stories, we will tell over 300 years of area history from the perspectives of ordinary citizens who witnessed some of America's most extraordinary moments.

History of the Adams County Historical Society

In 1888, a group of area citizens formed the first Adams County Historical Society. Among them were well-known citizens like David Wills, who hosted President Lincoln at his home in November 1863, and congressman Edward McPherson, longtime Clerk of the United States House of Representatives. This group planted the seed for today's society, which was incorporated in 1940.

Originally located in the basement of the Adams County Courthouse, ACHS moved its headquarters to Schmucker Hall on the campus of the United Lutheran Seminary in 1955-56. The Society remained there until 2011, when the building was converted into a museum and ACHS moved to the smaller Edmund Wolf House at the southern edge of the Seminary campus.

Although the Wolf House was meant to be a temporary home for ACHS, it remains the Society's headquarters today. Due to limited space, there is not enough room at the Wolf House for the Society to fulfil its mission of preservation and education. Large portions of the collection formerly displayed at Schmucker Hall are stored offsite and remain inaccessible to the public.

Additionally, all of the Society's storage locations, including the Wolf House, lack vital fire safety mechanisms, security, and climate controls needed for the protection of irreplaceable historical items. Space limitations at the Wolf House also prevent us from creating exhibits, hosting large groups, and presenting on-site educational programs.

A New Home

Over the next two years, the Adams County Historical Society will build a facility that both secures the collection and provides an exciting educational venue for both the community and visitors to Gettysburg. This new building will contain the following core features:

1. **An Exhibit Gallery** that is artifact-driven, interactive, and rooted in powerful stories. Here are just some of the unique topics we'll address:
 - Dinosaur Footprints and Meteorites
 - Indian Raids and Kidnappings on the Pennsylvania Frontier.
 - Thaddeus Stevens - Law, Education and Abolition in early Gettysburg
 - Life in a Warzone - Adams County Civilians in 1863
 - America's first Tank Camp - Dwight D. Eisenhower and World War One
 - Orchards and Industry - Adams County as a Fruit Growing Powerhouse
 - Suffrage, Integration, and Immigration - the Fight for Justice in Adams County.

2. **An Events Center** featuring history programs for all ages and interest levels. Here are a few of the Society's planned offerings:
 - Lectures, book signings, and community programs
 - School visits (K-12 and undergraduate)
 - Genealogy and historic property research workshops
 - Walking tours of neighboring historic sites and the town of Gettysburg
 - Wedding/event venue overlooking the battlefield

3. **A Reading Room and Archives** that ensures the long-term safety and preservation of the Society's priceless holdings.
 - Climate-controlled storage space for the collection
 - Easy access to historic materials for visiting researchers
 - A library and reading room for researchers, visiting scholars, and Gettysburg enthusiasts.

The new facility will be built on property owned by ACHS in Cumberland Township at the northern edge of Gettysburg Borough. Formerly the site of the Adams County Prison, the 2.85-acre tract at 625 Biglerville Road is now a vacant lot bordering land of Transitions

Healthcare and the National Park Service. The planned two-story facility will be roughly 25,000 square feet with a climate-controlled storage barn.

The building will be within easy walking distance of downtown Gettysburg, two miles from the Gettysburg National Military Park Visitors Center, and only three miles from U.S. Route 15, making it accessible to both local residents and visitors. The targeted opening date for the facility is October 2022.

Funding for the Project

The estimated project cost is \$5,000,000. In 2020, a capital campaign was launched to secure the necessary funding primarily from individual donors and charitable foundations. In addition, ACHS anticipates receiving funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP).

Getting Involved

A new home for the Adams County Historical Society will not only ensure the preservation and protection of priceless historic treasures for generations to come, it will also allow ACHS to showcase Adams County's remarkable role in American history.

We can all find inspiration and purpose in the stories of those who came before us. It is the mission of ACHS to make sure these stories live on. We look forward to working with you on this important project.