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# PORTRAIT OF 2025

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[COASTALGEORGIAHISTORY.ORG](http://COASTALGEORGIAHISTORY.ORG)



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear members,

It's a tradition to take stock of the year as it closes, and that's certainly true for us at Coastal Georgia Historical Society. As an organization dedicated to preserving and sharing our region's history, it's no wonder we believe in the importance of examining our past to learn from it. And 2025 has lots to teach us.

First, the strength of our organizational foundation. From collections and preservation to finances and management, the foundations of CGHS have been carefully and intentionally laid by our predecessors, especially Sherri Jones and Mimi Rogers. With this strong base established, we now get to focus on building upward, and in so doing strive toward our founders' ambitious goal for CGHS to be recognized as one of the best historical societies in existence.

Second, the support of our community. In 2025, we were excited to share our vision more widely through programs and printed materials. Your enthusiastic responses—as shown by an increase in membership—emboldens our commitment to deepening our roots as a community museum while embracing our role as the region's center for historical education and research.

Third, the power of our work. I had the pleasure of spending much of 2025 listening to our members, staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, community partners, and museum visitors. I learned a great deal from those conversations, and the overarching takeaway was simple: what CGHS does is important. People believe that history matters, not only to better understanding what came before but to better comprehending our world today and envisioning a better future. We will embrace the power of history and engage even more people in the interactive, connective process of exploring the past.

As we move into 2026, we will take these lessons with us as we strengthen and expand our work. We will continue to provide top-notch cultural programs and museums that annually reach tens of thousands while also making Coastal Georgia history more tangible, representative, and participatory. History is not just something you passively read; it's something you actively do. So, let's engage students and adults, tourists and residents, scholars and the wider public in investigating and experiencing the richness of Coastal Georgia history. With your support, I can't wait to bring more people into the exciting process of doing history together.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Whitney Nell Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Whitney Nell Stewart, PhD

# YEAR AT A GLANCE

## VOLUNTEERS

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6,427

Total number of  
volunteer hours

16

volunteers worked  
over 100 hours

5

volunteers worked  
over 200 hours

## MUSEUM VISITATION

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67,500

Single Ticket Admission

165 = 1,150

Adult Groups

Guests

51 = 1,841

School Group  
Tours

Guests

## MEMBERSHIP

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884

Members

## EVENTS

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7,787

Attendees at lectures, special tours,  
and children's programs

216

Keepers of the Light

5,000

Estimated attendees at Little Light Music

# FINANCIAL REPORT *(Unaudited)*

## Operations

Revenues .....	\$	1,887,218
Transfer from General Support Fund .....	\$	100,000
Expenses ( <i>Excluding Depreciation of \$427,250</i> ) .....	\$	1,934,679
Net Income from Operations .....	\$	52,539

## General Support Fund

Beginning of Year Balance .....	\$	1,089,081.96
Transfer to Operating Account .....	\$	100,000
End of Year Balance* .....	\$	1,134,590.79

## St. Simons Lighthouse Museum Preservation Fund

Beginning of Year Balance .....	\$	1,188,908.73
Donations during 2025 .....	\$	42,925.04
End of Year Balance* .....	\$	1,281,235.86

## World War II Home Front Museum Preservation Fund

Beginning of Year Balance .....	\$	1,196,611.57
Donations during 2025 .....	\$	30,084.47
End of Year Balance* .....	\$	1,348,662.30

## Ellen H. "Mimi" Rogers Endowment Fund

Beginning of Year Balance .....	\$	0
Donations during 2025 .....	\$	441,042.35
End of Year Balance* .....	\$	441,042.35

\*Includes investment income and expenses for 2025.

# ARCHAEOLOGY LABORATORY

This was the Lab's first year with a full-time archaeologist, Dr. Aaron Ellrich. Dr. Ellrich and the Lab's volunteers hosted visitors, facilitated academic and agency partnerships, and processed new and existing collections. Research activities included excavations, site monitoring, report preparation, and professional presentations, while outreach efforts cultivated new relationships and strengthened established ones.

- *The Lab hosted more than fifty visitors and reached approximately 1,000 people through site cleanups and public outreach, including St. Catherine's Island Beach Sweep, Elizafield Sugar Mill maintenance, Oglethorpe Point Elementary School Georgia History Day, Ft. Frederica African American History Festival, St. Simons Land Trust Family Day, and site tours for Cassina Garden Club members and Georgia Southern University students.*



- *The work of the Lab provided more than 1,400 volunteer hours from nine dedicated volunteers.*

- *Dr. Ellrich launched a new blog on the CGHS website and published a peer-reviewed article in Southeastern Archaeology.*

## PROGRAMMING

The Coastal Georgia Historical Society values our status as a community museum. We are proud to partner with local organizations, collaborate with historical and educational institutions, and serve as a resource for curious community members and visitors. We honor our role as stewards of the St. Simons Lighthouse Museum and World War II Home Front Museum and prioritize the preservation of our archaeological and archival collections. As always, we strive to provide high-quality programs to the widest audience possible, including school children and our members.

■ Attendees at lectures, special tours, and children's programs: **7,787**

■ **In-school programming** reached students at Oglethorpe Point Elementary School's annual Georgia History Day in February and high schoolers at Glynn Academy during September's Chautauqua Lecture Series. More than 1,000 students and families visited Glynn County Schools' STEAMFest on March 22, engaging with CGHS's booth on codebreaking activities and the World War II Home Front Museum.

■ In commemoration of **Black History Month** and the **100th anniversary of the Historic Harrington School**, CGHS hosted "Memories of Harrington" on February 13. This panel celebrated the completion of a new exhibit on the history of the Harrington neighborhood. 138 people registered for the program, which featured a dialogue between Harrington community member panelists and host Justus Davis, followed by a lively question and answer session.

■ For the fourth year in a row, the Society welcomed Glynn County teachers to both of our museums as part of the "**History Happens Here**" workshop. The K-12 teachers toured both the World War II Home Front Museum and the St. Simons Lighthouse Museum on May 3 and discussed the inclusion of concepts, artifacts, and experiences from both sites into their lesson plans.



■ The **Little Light Music Concert Series** attracted an estimated 5,000 concertgoers and generated around \$49,500 for CGHS. We are thankful to our generous sponsors: Ameris Bank; Brown-Rose Wealth Management at Morgan Stanley; Coastal Greenery; Elegant Island Living; Moore Stephens Tiller; Peach State Staging; SeaPak; and Taylor Odachowski Schmidt and Crossland LLC.

■ The 2025 **Chautauqua Lecture Series**, titled "Just Passing Through: Famous Faces in the Golden Isles," explored early-twentieth-century Coastal Georgia through the eyes of four of its most well-known visitors. In 2025, CGHS offered a new option: attendees could either purchase tickets for the entire series or for individual programs. 192 members and guests registered for the series, and 54 participants

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## PROGRAMMING *(Continued)*

bought tickets to individual lectures. The 2025 Chautauqua Series was generously sponsored by Gilbert, Harrell, Sumerford & Martin, P.C.; Lokey Asset Management of Raymond James; and Rich Products Corporation.

■ The **Brunswick Lecture Series**, held at the College of Coastal Georgia's Stembler Theatre, attracted 119 registrations for the full series and 25 registrations for individual lectures. This year's topics covered a wider geographical area, and the year's series was titled "Brunswick and Beyond" to reflect the expansion.



## COLLECTIONS

A selection of items donated this year:

### Archives – A. W. Jones Heritage Center

- *First edition of Frances Anne Kemble's Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation, 1838 – 1839.*  
—Donor: Edwin E. Mackethan III
- *Twelve U.S. World War II-era posters.*  
—Donor: C.J. Drake on behalf of Brunswick Cellulose
- *Christening gowns of Svendsen children. Addition to existing Carl O. Svendsen, Jr. Collection.*  
—Donor: Carl O. Svendsen III

### Archaeology – Coast Guard Station

- **Held in trust:** *Archaeological artifacts collected during excavations and site surveys completed in the 1970s by University of Florida personnel. Artifacts originate from over twenty sites, many located around Cannon's Point. Objects spanning more than 4,000 years of St. Simons Island history (including Native American pottery, tableware and glassware, metal, bone, and shell tools, buttons, and animal bones) number in the tens of thousands, essentially doubling CGHS's archaeology collection.*  
—Donor (in-trust agreement): Bill Jones III

### Research Library

- *Approximately 45 books from Frederica Academy's upper school library. Topics include general Georgia history, the American Revolution, American Civil War, Reconstruction, Georgia government, ecological history, and architecture.*  
—Donor: Steven Jobe



## PRESERVATION PROJECTS

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In 2023, the Society and its supporters established a dedicated Preservation Fund which will ensure that resources are permanently available to complete essential work on our historic buildings. Thanks to the members and donors who supported this fund, the Lighthouse, Keeper's Dwelling, and Coast Guard Station will continue to stand as unique landmarks of Coastal Georgia that connect thousands of people to our area's rich history each year.

We are also thankful for the specialized craftsmen and companies who completed the work to the exacting standards required: Shawn Sandow, Southern Lights Unlimited, LLC; Cathy Ammons, Ammons Awnings & Handrails; Parker Wood, Coastal Coverage Paint & Design Inc.; Razorback, LLC; Jay Saunders, Pease Construction; Jon Collett, Custom Tree Works; Alan Smith, Island Air; Austin Historical, LLC.

Below are a few examples of the projects completed in 2025:

■ In March, Razorback, LLC and Coastal Coverage Painting & Design Inc. completed several **exterior maintenance projects at the Lighthouse and Keeper's Dwelling**. The Lighthouse's observation deck and handrail were sanded, repaired, and painted by Razorback, who also cleaned, repaired, and painted the tower's exterior masonry. Coastal Coverage painted the Dwelling's windows, shutters, soffits, and corbels, as well as its porch and benches.

■ In October, the **American flag halyard**, or rope hoisting mechanism, broke on the World War II Home Front Museum's flagpole. With help from Glynn County Fire Rescue, the Glynn County Police Department, and the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, this element of the museum's historic 60-foot flagpole was quickly repaired.



## MEMBERSHIP

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We are fortunate to have a strong and loyal group of members.

Our membership is vital to our success in delivering our mission and ensuring sustainable growth while we pursue ambitious goals for our community. Keepers of the Light alone contribute 20% of our operating budget each year. Our Keepers of the Light have provided leadership and support since 2008, which sustained the organization during challenging times and allowed us to complete bold initiatives.

■ Total Number of Members in 2025: 884, including 216 Keepers of the Light.

■ 106 Members, or 12% of total Membership, joined in 2025.

■ 8% of our Membership has supported the Society for 20 or more years.

To view the full list of members, please visit [www.coastalgeorgiahistory.org](http://www.coastalgeorgiahistory.org) to access the complete 2025 Annual Report.

*The Coastal Georgia Historical Society deeply values the contributions of our members, our volunteers, and our visitors. We thank you for your support throughout 2025, and we look forward to another great year exploring the past together.*

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This portrait represents just a selection of our accomplishments in 2025. To view the full Annual Report, visit [www.coastalgeorgiahistory.org](http://www.coastalgeorgiahistory.org).



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**HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**



American  
Alliance of  
Museums

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