

Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum: Calling Upon the Past to Shape the Future

Abstract:

The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum is a nationally respected institution. With more than 2 million items in its collection, it is a beloved entity in the Panhandle-Plains region, as well as an unequalled resource for West Texas A&M University. However, it is plagued by lack of space for its collection and lack of funding for staff and services. It occupies an outdated facility on the WTAMU campus and operates with a small, dedicated staff.

To survive and then thrive, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum must increase its attendance, become recognized as a valued and powerful initiator of community development for the Panhandle-Plains region and initiate an aggressive impact philanthropy program. To increase attendance the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum must establish a major presence in Amarillo. To become a community development resource, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum must pair with West Texas A&M University in the creation of a Quality of Life Extension Center serving the Panhandle-Plains region. To achieve the two aforementioned goals, the museum must shift into a development program built on impact philanthropy, which focuses on results.

Contributors: Carol Lovelady, PPHM Director

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History:

The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society (PPHS), the precursor to the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum (PPHM), began in 1921, with the impetus of Dr. Hattie M. Anderson. Upon arriving in Canyon in 1920, the young history professor from Missouri quickly became aware she had moved to a part of Texas considered a *frontier*. Not only were many of the region's settlers still alive, many were still actively involved in ranching, farming and business.

"As a trained historian, Anderson was well aware of her responsibility to collect and preserve, in writing, their memoirs, reminiscences, and stories."ⁱ With the enthusiastic approval of L. G. Allen, dean of the college, and Dr. J. A. Hill, president of the college and former head of the history department, Dr. Anderson gathered a group of faculty and students and presented her idea to collect oral histories. On Feb. 5, 1921, the first

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meeting of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society was held and officers were elected. Dues were \$2.50 per year or \$25 for a lifetime membership.

As charter members of the PPHS began interviewing pioneers, word spread of a plan to record the region's history. Artifacts, letters, documents and books began arriving at the college. Within two years, the Society was flourishing. In 1924, at the third PPHS annual meeting, the organization's purpose was defined: to collect and preserve historical materials relating to animal, plant and human life, both past and present, in the Panhandle and Plains of Texas and to the greater Southwest.

As collecting and preserving began, the need for storage space and funding became apparent. Anderson turned to the Texas Legislature for assistance, using the examples of the Missouri and Minnesota legislatures that had recently provided funding to their respective state historical societies.

In presenting her cause, Anderson drew upon historian Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," which credited the "western frontier "with shaping American democracy and American character from colonial days until 1890."ⁱⁱ "Because the frontier has disappeared, every attempt is being made throughout the United States to preserve an account of the experiences, the characteristics and the ideals of these worthy ancestors," Anderson said. "It is a sacred duty of ours to collect the record of life here and hand this on to the children of the future..."ⁱⁱⁱ Though the amount is unknown, funding was provided."^{iv}

As donations of items, including "a bear foot, one leg of a billiard table used in an old saloon, an Indian skull, three arrows taken from the last Indian killed in the Panhandle, and a mount twin-head calf"^v - plus written records - piled up in the only building at the young college. The solution was for the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society to have its own building. At the 1926 annual meeting, a resolution was passed for a building to be erected "at the earliest possible date."^{vi}

While artifacts accumulated, the Society's reputation spread. In 1927, the Capitol Freehold Land Investment Company, Limited, contacted the Society requesting a recommendation of someone to write the XIT Ranch history. This company, in exchange for three million acres in the Panhandle, had built the capitol for the State of Texas. The request brought recognition to the Society, as well as the largest and most valuable collection of ranch records ever to be assembled in one place.^{vii} More than three thousand pounds of documents relating to the operations of the largest fenced ranch ever created became part of the PPHS Collection.

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Finally, in April 1930, it was decided to proceed with a building campaign. Cost of the proposed facility was \$50,000. Adequate funding appeared attainable. Construction would begin in the fall 1930. However, the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929, the Great Depression, a devastating drought in the Great Plains and the Dust Bowl aligned to thwart the Society's building plans.

But strong wills among Society members prevailed. A decision was made to again approach the Legislature requesting funding for a building on the West Texas State Teachers College campus. A request for \$25,000, to be matched by the Society, was submitted. Governor Ross Sterling authorized funding for only one building that year – the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society Museum.

By the time the request was approved, the Society had \$17,000 in pledges and payments. But raising the needed \$8,000 proved difficult in a stricken economy. As the deadline neared, the Ex-Students Association gave the Society \$6,469.70 that had been raised to build a cooperative home for college girls. The Association gift, plus those of last minute donors, totaled \$25,000. The money was rushed to Austin and construction began. On April 14, 1933, the twelfth annual meeting of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, the museum opened. It had been built at a cost of \$52,455.

A perusal of Panhandle-Plains Historical Society's history from 1941 to present shows serious commitment to collecting and preserving the region's history, growing participation in community events, a continued tie to the university from whence it sprang and an ever-present need for funding and space.

Highlights of 77 Years:

- A 15-month campaign to enlarge the museum began in 1940 and resulted in 271,682 bricks, \$12,086.48 in cash and 100 tons of sand and gravel.
- O.T. Nicholson of Shamrock donated his collection of 323 guns after years of courting by PPHS members.
- James D. Hamlin gifted his extensive collection of fine and decorative arts in 1942, making the museum a major force among Texas public art collections.
- In 1949, Senators Grady Hazelwood and James Taylor, with Representative Blake Taylor of Amarillo, engineered a plan for annual state funding for the museum. This resulted in significant additions to the staff.
- Harold Bugbee, curator of art, and Boone McClure, the first full-time director, built relationships with artists and donors in Texas and New Mexico that made the museum's historic New Mexico and Texas art collections nationally known.

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- Archaeologist Jack Hughes added thousands of fossils from more than 200 locations, bringing worldwide recognition to PPHM.
- Comanche Chief Quanah Parker's war bonnet and lance were given by one of the chief's wives, Topay, in 1960.
- The Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, a historical journal published annually by the Society beginning in 1928, continued to focus on the history of the region.
- In 1966, the museum accepted the estate of Texas artist Frank Reaugh, and a Dallas chapter of PPHS was organized with approximately 75 members.
- At the 1966 annual meeting, ground was broken for a four-story addition costing \$585,966. Funding was provided by the state, a Higher Education Facilities Grant and 330 contributors. The addition doubled the size of the museum.
- The third addition provided space for Pioneer Town, archives and a library.
- In 1973, WTSU offered the museum the university's former library building. Funding to connect the two facilities was vetoed by Governor Dolph Briscoe.
- The T-Anchor Ranch headquarters was moved to the museum grounds in 1975.
- From 1975-80, the 1874 Adobe Walls trading post site was excavated.
- In 1980 an endowment fund was established at First National Bank of Amarillo with the goal of lessening the museum's reliance on state funding.
- Mrs. Don Harrington and the Harrington Foundation gave more than \$13,000,000 between 1975 and 1992, including \$3,250,000 for the construction of the Don D. Harrington Petroleum Wing.
- Attendance peaked at 156,987 in 1986, with the opening of the Harrington Petroleum Wing and the celebration of the Texas centennial.
- For 1983-85, PPHM received a record appropriation of \$662,568 and \$475,346.
- In 1987, Governor Bill Clements vetoed the appropriation of \$458,740 for the second half of the biennium. Society leaders launched a \$250,000 campaign. More than 600 individuals, schools, businesses and foundations gave \$322,530.
- Unpredictable state funding, led Society members to incorporate the museum's funding request with the university. A Memorandum of Cooperation stipulated the State owned the museum buildings and the Society owned the artifacts.
- By 1994 space was again an issue. A Denver firm created a space utilization plan with 13 projects and an estimated cost in excess of \$5,000,000.
- A two-year grant of \$112,000 from the Institute of Museum Services provided equipment to computerize the collection in 1995-96. Mrs. Don Harrington provided money for entering data on the estimated 1,500,000 objects.
- In 1996, Amarillo Non-Profit Service Center created a PPHM Development Plan.
- In 1997, the first development director was hired.
- In June 1998, the museum began charging admission.

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- In September 1999, inventory was completed of all artifacts on exhibit, art and history in storage, all clothing, accessioned archeology items, photos and maps.
- In 1999, more than 16,000 students toured PPHM, over 4,500 participated in Week of the Young Child and more than 400 teachers attended training.
- Mrs. Don Harrington's \$4 million bequest in 1999 provided \$3 million for Petroleum Wing maintenance and \$1 million for general operating expenses.
- A \$6.1 million capital campaign for renovations was announced in August 1999. The State would provide \$3 million in tuition revenue bonds. The remaining \$3.1 million was to be raised by the Society.
- In August 2001, the first remodeling of the original 1933 building was completed.
- In 2003 budget cutbacks caused the elimination of four staff positions.
- The first Pioneer Spirit Award was given to Mrs. Betty Bivins Lovell in 2003.
- During 2005-2007, 2,340 items were accessioned, including an engraved sterling silver teapot, part of a set presented to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Goodnight by the employees of the "Palodura Ranch" in 1887.
- In 2008, a hybrid shield, the oldest known Spanish Comanche artifact, was accessioned and the museum celebrated its 75th anniversary.
- In 2010, the museum featured the 100th Anniversary of the WTAMU.
- During the 2011-13, the Education Department served 44,500 students in a variety of ways – from museum tours to interactive videoconferencing programs.
- A renovated Pioneer Town opened in 2012.
- The Panhandle Petroleum Story opened in April 2016, following a \$2.5 million renovation funded primarily by donors in the petroleum industry.

PPHM Present Condition:

- Size of collection: 2 million-plus items
- Size of staff: 18
- Budget: \$2.2 million
- State support: 13%
- WTAMU support: 25%
- Member support and other: 62%
- Attendance: 55,000+ annually
- Membership: 473
- Assets: \$11,111,232 (as of 8.31.17)
- Building:
 - Size: 285,000 square feet
 - Condition: Outdated and inadequate

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- Positives:
 - Relationship with WTAMU
 - Financial and in-kind support
 - Campus life
 - Student and faculty participation in the museum
 - Prestige
 - Center for the Study of the American West
 - Accreditation by American Alliance of Museums
 - Source of pride for the Amarillo/Canyon community
 - Annual Economic Impact of \$6 million for Canyon
 - Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence
 - 12 miles from Palo Duro Canyon, which attracts 300,000 visitors annually
 - Ticketing partnership with TEXAS musical drama
 - Growing tourism markets in Amarillo and Canyon

- Challenges:
 - Landlocked on the WTAMU campus
 - Inadequate parking
 - Assumption by donors of funding provided by WTAMU and State of Texas
 - 20 miles from Amarillo

- Most attended events:
 - Christmas Open House – 6,000 / 3 hrs Friday night, 4 hours Saturday; no fee
 - Night at PPHM – 1,250 / 3 hours; \$10 for adults; \$5 ages 4-12

- Pressing needs:
 - Space to store and display the collection
 - Funding for additional staff and equipment
 - Increased attendance

Proposed Solution:

The purpose of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum - to collect and preserve the record of life in the Panhandle-Plains region - is as viable in 2017 as it was in 1921. However, for the museum to be viable in 2035, it must maintain its role of collecting and preserving history, yet expand its reach to become a community-service provider and a change agent for the Panhandle-Plains region.

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The current mission statement of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum was adopted in January 2017 and reads: "The mission of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum is to use its collection to build relationships." That mission will remain the same. However, a vision statement will be added. The vision of the museum is: "To improve the quality of life in the Panhandle-Plains region through community building and innovative planning."

In much the same way, the Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center at Amarillo provides "quality, relevant 'real-learning for real life' for the people and communities of the Panhandle,"^{viii} the WTAMU Quality of Life Center at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum can also serve the people and communities of the Panhandle.

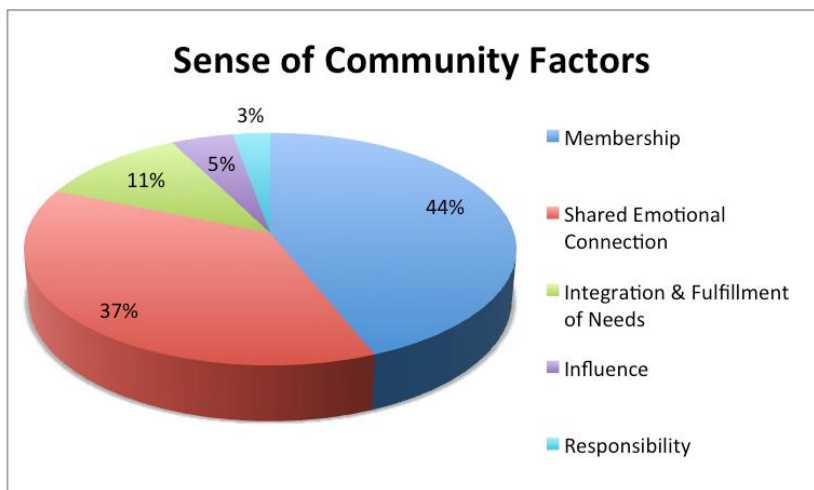
To achieve the vision of community building, I propose renovating and repurposing two buildings – the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon and the Santa Fe Depot in Amarillo. These buildings will become the locations in which residents gather to build a sense of community and devise solutions to problems facing the Panhandle-Plains region. Essentially, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon and the Amarillo location of PPHM- the Santa Fe Depot- will become community centers at which members are physically and emotionally nourished and the future of our region is intentionally cultivated. Additionally, the PPHM collection will be exhibited and stored at both locations.

Programming focused upon meeting the needs of the aging Amarillo and Canyon population will be provided by PPHM and WTAMU. The fulfillment of needs and the shared emotional connection will create a sense of community – something missing in a world where everyone is urged to conduct business and handle problems online.

The human need for a sense of community has been studied extensively by psychologists David W. McMillan and David W. Chavis. According to McMillan, "Sense of community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan, 1976)."^{ix}

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Table 1 quantifies the factors needed to create a sense of community. Working in tandem, PPHM and WTAMU can provide those factors.



America is aging. A report released by the Texas Demographic Center in 2016 predicts the aging of the Baby Boom generation will yield an elder population of 5.9 million, or 19.4 percent of the state's total population in 2030.^x A 2012 study conducted by the United States government forecasts by 2030 the population of the world will be both older and much more focused on city life.^{xi} By 2040, the population of the US will have almost as many people over age 65 as under age 18.^{xii} This aging of the population presents new opportunities for the museum and the university, as they respond to the challenges facing our region

A 2015 White House Conference on Aging focused on healthy aging in the next ten years, identifying two themes. Theme 1: There must be a culture of change in Americans' attitudes towards the aging population, recognizing older adults as a resource that supports the greater good of society and can be used to help solve society's problems. Theme 2: Age-friendly communities, that are inclusive and culturally responsive to the needs of diverse groups within the aging community, must be supported.^{xiii}

Already the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon is a model for multi-generational community gathering. The two events at the museum which annually draw the largest crowds are the Christmas Open House and Night at the Museum. Both attract multi-generational audiences and frequently heard comments reference years of attendance and pleasure in sharing the event with the next generation. This role as a community servant needs to be embraced and expanded.

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Susan Perlstein, founder of Elders Share the Arts and the National Center for Creative Aging, was recognized in 1998 by President Clinton for outstanding innovative programming that builds communities and grassroots organizations by sharing arts and culture across generations. Perlstein's dedication to recognizing older people as the keepers of our culture led to a core of artists called the Pearls of Wisdom, beloved by children across New York City. Perlstein's vision eventually resulted in the creation of living history festivals held in every borough of New York City, with a major event in Central Park. Today Perlstein is an internationally recognized founder and leader of the creative aging movement. This type of service is a natural role for the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and West Texas A&M University.

In 2007, the American Alliance for Museums established the Center for the Future of Museums to help museums take a longer view and encourage creativity and risk taking in the search for strategies and tactics to serve future audiences. The November/December issue of *Museum* magazine takes readers into the museum world of 2040. The ideas in the 2040 magazine, mirror the vision of PPHM and WTAMU. They include museums:

- expanding beyond their walls to share space, objects and programs – from hospitals, to schools, to churches – to serve the community;
- participating in mental health programs involving objects, stories and dialogue to reduce stress, anxiety and feelings of isolation and, in turn, decrease the frequency of hospitalization for mental illness;
- offering micro-credentials to low and middle-income people seeking affordable alternatives to college, while providing alternatives to online education options;
- forming corporate partnerships and joining forces with for-profit entities;
- focusing on the effect museums have on their community's equity, education and economics and in turn making the museum relevant to the public, to policy makers and to funders.^{xiv}

To reach these new levels of community involvement, the museum must pursue "impact philanthropy." For the most part, PPHM has relied on "impulse philanthropy," which is primarily driven by the recognition a donor receives and tax incentives. Gifts made through impulse philanthropy are often focused on the donor's interests, as in the renovation of the Panhandle Petroleum Story. Looking at the listing of campaigns conducted and gifts received, it seems PPHM has relied heavily on project-based donations since the first building fund drive in 1930.

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Impact Philanthropy, according to Nicola Crosta, executive vice-president of EPIC Foundation, is characterized by a deliberate focus on impact, extensive research by the donor and the establishment of a relationship between the donor and the recipient that includes multi-year, unrestricted support.

Table 2 compares Impact and Impulse Philanthropy.^{xv}

	IMPACT Philanthropy	IMPULSE Philanthropy
Primary Objective	Social impact.	Feel good, recognition, brand enhancement.
Funding Allocation	Professional due diligence drives allocation of resources to high-impact NGOs.	No strategy nor formal criteria in choosing the causes and organizations to support.
Funding Modality	Unrestricted, multi-year grants.	Project funding, one-off grants.
Impact Monitoring	Monitoring supports collaboration w/grantee. Use of external evaluations, RCTs. Aims at long-term, systemic impact.	Monitoring = "good news machine". No external evaluations. Expects short-term, 'immediate' impact.
Communications	Focus on NGOs/beneficiaries. Evidence-based, ethical.	Focus on donor. Not necessarily evidence-based (use of data) nor ethical (use of images).
Donor Engagement	Thoughtful, impact-driven, long-term. Focused, useful pro bono support.	Superficial, short-term engagement. Un-impactful 'voluntourism'/staff engagement.

In summary, Crosta concludes, "[I]f impact-driven giving becomes the norm, Impact Philanthropy will emerge as a key, stable force for civic engagement, social innovation and development."

Summary:

Today, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum is teetering on an unstable financial base and facing a questionable future. For 96 years the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum and the university have shared the campus and come together primarily through a dedication to and interest in history. But the time has come for the relationship between the museum and the university to become broader and stronger. PPHM's primary value lies in its collection, a nationally respected reputation and the loyalty of the Amarillo/Canyon community. More than 2 million items housed at the PPHM speak to how the residents of the Panhandle-Plains region have adapted to the geography and developed a work-oriented culture. WTAMU's lifeblood is its students and faculty. In this institution, committed to understanding the needs of rural communities, the students and faculty work together as problem-solvers and innovators. The pairing of PPHM and WTAMU will create a think tank focused on the Panhandle-Plains with one-of-a-kind research resources. The melding of PPHM and WTAMU is a winning combination for the people of the Panhandle-Plains.

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Endnotes

- i The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society: The Formative Years, 1921-1940 by Duane F. Guy, emeritus department head and Professor of History at West Texas A&M University
- ii Frederick Jackson Turner The Significance of the Frontier in American History 1893, read at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago, 12 July 1893, during the World Columbian Exposition.
- iii Anderson to Senator W.R. Bledsoe, 18 April 1923, Sheffy Papers.
- iv The Panhandle-Plains Historical Society: The Formative Years, 1921-1940 by Duane F. Guy, emeritus department head and Professor of History at West Texas A&M University
- v Ibid.
- vi Ibid.
- vii Ibid.
- viii Texas A&M Agrilife Research and Extension Center at Amarillo website
- ix The Psychology of Communities – 4 Factors that Create a “Sense of Community” by David Spinks, 19 November, 2013
- X http://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/publications/2016/2016_06_07_Aging.pdf
- xi 4 Megatrends That Could Change the World by 2030, by Chris Weller, Business Insider, 16 August 2017
- xii <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums/museum-2040>
- xiii Report from The Summit on Creativity and Aging in America in collaboration with the 2015 White House Conference on Aging, 18 May 2015.
- xiv <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums/museum-2040>
- xv https://medium.com/@Nico_Crost/impact-philanthropy-vs-impulse-philanthropy