




**HISTORIC LOCUST GROVE ANNUAL REPORT 2024**







**We preserve and interpret the historic landscape and buildings of Locust Grove, the final home of Louisville's founder George Rogers Clark, and tell the stories of all the individuals who lived and worked here, both free and enslaved, cultivating a deeper understanding of the present through a richer understanding of the past.**

*Historic Locust Grove  
Mission Statement 2024*

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## LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

It has been quite a year at Locust Grove! The pavilion has been a great success bringing the community to celebrate and explore. We have been hosting weddings, concerts, plays, and community events. We welcomed a new Artist in Residence, dozens of new American citizens at our Independence Day Celebration, and hundreds of visitors through the buildings and grounds. We also hosted three book sales, the Antiques Market, and the Gardeners' Fair. Keep updated with our calendar on the new website and make sure to visit with your family and friends. The more the merrier!

We have completely replaced the HVAC system in the main house and are planning to repair and replace a number of roofs on the outbuildings.

More trees have been donated and planted throughout the grounds, bringing us more visual and floral variety. We have continued to maintain the wood trails as well as the pollinator trails. This maintenance has been particularly important allowing everyone to experience the changing seasons from the woods to the farm. If you have not yet, come over and walk the trails in the snow. It is a great way to collect your thoughts and experience the quiet a blanket of snow can bring to such a busy place.

Your gifts to our Annual Appeal and Capital Campaign support our staff and volunteers and allow us to continue planning for both near-term and long-term successes. Your generosity is the foundation of our success. If you have not already, please join us as a volunteer. We have a space for everyone and a need for everyone's talent and passion.

Thank you for supporting this wonderful community resource, making it a place where we learn, reflect, grow, and celebrate. We could not do this without you.

Sincerely,

Joseph C. Pierson  
Board Chairman  
Historic Locust Grove, Inc.

### HISTORIC LOCUST GROVE STAFF

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Harlan Dawkins, *Caretaker and Marketing Coordinator*  
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Jennifer Jansen, *Guest Services Director and Rental Coordinator*  
Alba Jennings, *Weekend Manager*  
Lydia Lewis, *Development Coordinator (in FY25)*  
Geoffrey McMahon, *Buildings and Grounds Supervisor (in FY24)*  
Raina Melvin, *Program Director*  
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Debbie Scott, *Business Manager*  
Sarah Sutherland, *Gardener*  
Kaitlyn Tisdale, *Director of Interpretation*  
Kate Widdowson, *Development Coordinator (in FY24)*

### New Website

Effective digital communication is a keystone for creating awareness of the site's significance, resources, and programs in the mind of the public. Over the course of the year staff members, especially Raina Melvin and Harlan Dawkins, worked with Landslide Creative on a total rehaul of our website, from the underlying structure to the content, images, navigation, and design. The new page debuted in the spring, and we are pleased to find it more appealing, informative, and flexible. New material will continue to be added as we expand our research and programming. The website won a 2024 Web Excellence Award for Museum Website Design.



## LETTER FROM THE CEO: *Two Decades of Locust Grove* — Carol Ely, Ph.D.

This year is my twentieth year as Director/CEO of Locust Grove – and it’s my last, as I step down to allow for new leadership, and to take my own life in new directions.

We’ve accomplished a lot in that time. We’ve built this site into the premier historic house and museum in the region, offering educational and immersive programs to hundreds of thousands of visitors.



We’ve preserved the 1790s historic house to high standards. In the past twenty years William Croghan’s house has been thoroughly structurally reinforced, re-roofed, had a few chimneys rebuilt, and in the past year received an entire new heating, cooling, and ventilation system. In 2010 the interior was completely re-restored to a better understanding of the original finishes, with revised room uses and furnishings to better tell the stories of the people who inhabited and worked in these spaces.

During these twenty years, we’ve expanded the Visitors Center complex twice. In 2008 we opened the new exhibit gallery wing, providing background knowledge for understanding the significance of this site. The wing also included new office and collections storage space. Then in 2022 we completed and opened our beautiful new event pavilion and the associated caterer’s kitchen at the north end of the building and opened our research library at the south end in the renovated c. 1800 cabin. We have funding and plans for a long-needed update to the auditorium, coming in the next year or two.





And we've found newer uses for the site's reconstructed outbuildings, with the small shed now interpreting a farm distillery open periodically for demonstrations, another log structure presenting the re-created dwelling of an enslaved family and named in honor of Louisa Brown, and new exhibits in the dairy and washhouse.

On the grounds, we've added new signs (with more to come this year) and converted a large grassy field into pollinator meadow rippling with grasses, wildflowers, home to bees, butterflies, and birds. The 30 acres of woods were cleared of invasive plants over several years, and now teem with all manner of insects, birds, native plants, and animals including even minks and foxes.

Twenty years ago, we had a primitive website, no Facebook or Instagram, and no YouTube channel – and look at all we've built since then! Our latest website went live last spring.

But the most significant change of all has been in the history that we present. We aim for "total history" rather than a narrow focus and we provide context and sources for all that we interpret. This means presenting what we know of the lives of all the people who lived and worked here, free and enslaved. The stories of the hundred or more enslaved individuals with connections to this place are coming into clearer and clearer focus through documentary research, archaeology, and recently, personal family knowledge from descendants. We now understand this as a community in a new way.



## LETTER FROM THE CEO — *continued*

We present this history through our tours, exhibits such as Louisa's House and garden, and through programs like *Unfolding the Story* tours led by actors in the roles of enslaved individuals. In the past decade we've hosted black culinary artists-in-residence Michael Twitty (who dug a hole on the grounds and pit-roasted a lamb) and Jerome Bias, who cooked and served a feast to the descendants of Locust Grove's enslaved community who gathered with other guests in our pavilion. We hosted the Slave Dwelling Project for a camp-fire discussion and an overnight stay, and then helped to found the Louisville Coalition for the History of Enslavement based on the enthusiasm and partnership we found at that event.

Our understanding of the significance and personalities of General George Rogers Clark and the Clark and Croghan families has deepened and broadened based on our research and the work of others, and we included many generations of the family story, and put them more clearly in the context of the history of the neighborhood, the region, and the country. Our staff's research has tracked this peripatetic family from here to the German Coast of Louisiana, to Paris' Père Lachaise Cemetery, to Pittsburgh's Point, to Lafayette Square in Washington, and to San Francisco's hills where descendants remain today.

We innovated programs, including the Eighteenth Century Market Fair military and civilian re-enactment, which started a long run in my first year here, to the eerie annual *Frankenstein* reading by Kentucky Shakespeare, to the beloved Jane Austen Festival which was hosted here for many years, to our Hemp Festival, which surprised the community by re-introducing this traditional Kentucky crop that soon became a key part of the regional economy.



### MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

#### ***Independence Day***

On July 4th, 2023 our Independence Day celebration hosted about 500 guests, free of charge, thanks to sponsors at Independence Bank and Delta Dental. The day included tours of the historic house, first person interpreter portrayals, public readings of the Declaration of Independence and excerpts from Frederick Douglass' speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July" and more.

#### ***Cultural Pass***

The Cultural Pass activities were compressed into one day this year, with about 250 kids and adults participating in a variety of free activities around the grounds, on one of the hottest days of the year. Sponsored by the Fund for the Arts.



We welcomed Lewis and Clark back from the Pacific in our 2006 re-creation of their 1806 return home, and we sang along with the characters in *Hamilton* through a year-long series of programs about Lafayette, Washington, Jefferson, Burr, and of course, Alexander Hamilton.

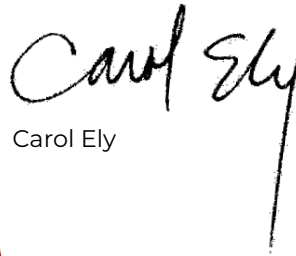
We survived the pandemic of 2020. Together.

One of my favorite programs through all this change has been the Book Sale, because it has helped to support our budget while bringing many people here who would not otherwise know about our site, and it makes them happy. In the sale's first year, 2005, we grossed \$4,158 and surprised ourselves by that success. Last year, 2023, we grossed \$97,726 - thanks to our book donors, our volunteers, our staff, and the book-loving public.

When I came to Locust Grove, we had no annual fundraising drive. Last year, thanks to you, our donors, we raised \$179,059 to support our programs and our operating budget. Over the last two decades we've also raised at least \$7 million in capital funds to preserve the historic buildings and landscape and to construct modern facilities for today's audiences.

You may have noticed that I keep writing "we" did all this. All this happened not because of me, but because of us. This all happened because of our dedicated Board, our innovative staff, our wonderful volunteers, our generous donors, and a receptive and enthusiastic public that is curious about and supportive of history.

My deepest thanks to all of you.



Carol Ely



## MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

### **Book Sales**

Big Book Sales in August and March, and a smaller sale in December, sold record numbers of used, new, and remainder books to appreciate buyers. The August Sale alone grossed more than \$38,000 for our programs. Thanks to our book donors, volunteers, and book buyers for their continued support.

### **Antiques Markets**

The June Antiques Market had a rainy start but clear finish, and was the first run by the new promotor, Eric Lausch, working with Rod Lich who has run the sales for many years. The September Market hosted more than 800 shoppers on a warm sunny day.

## PRESERVING THE HISTORIC HOUSE



Some of the work of preserving historic buildings isn't structural – it's environmental. The optimal balance of air circulation, warming and cooling, is essential for the long-term survival of historic buildings like the Croghan house. The “envelope” of the walls and roof have to remain intact enough to prevent moisture from coming in, but permeable enough to allow moisture out. The house must be able to “breathe.”

Originally, the Croghans used their many fireplaces to warm the house in winter, and used the natural ventilation of open windows in the summer. The house was built for that. Later residents used wood or coal stoves, and when the house became a historic site in the 1960s, a furnace was added for heating. The only humidity control used was the temporary addition of open bowls of water in the driest months to counteract the heated air. In the late 1990s a geothermal system was installed in the basement, with air conditioning. We were then able to monitor conditions and usually control the temperature, but humidity control was elusive – too dry in winter, too humid in summer. And ideally, the house itself needed different humidity levels than did the furniture and other collections items.



### MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

#### ***Frankenstein***

Now an October tradition at Locust Grove, this adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was performed in the outdoor pavilion by Kentucky Shakespeare to a sold-out house of 135 guests.

#### ***Market Fair***

This year's event was the last of the annual Market Fairs, a Locust Grove tradition since 2004. Declining numbers of Revolutionary War re-enactors, vendors, and entertainers made this beloved program unsustainable. This final event attracted about 900 visitors and participants on Saturday, however severe weather meant that Sunday's program was unfortunately cancelled.



This year, after long study by engineers with Kerr Gruelich and architects from JRA and Metro Parks, we replaced the **heating, ventilation, and cooling systems (HVAC)** in the historic house.

But before the work could be done, the collection items in the house had to be protected. Kaitlyn Tisdale, whose role as Director of Interpretation includes managing the collection, and Buildings and Grounds Manager Geoffrey McMahon created a plan, with the help of advisors and other staffers. Since there would be only limited heating in the building while the work was done, it was important to protect the collection from sudden temperature changes. A few of the most fragile pieces were removed to the Visitors Center building. Small objects were wrapped securely, and boxed up for the duration. Larger furniture was moved to the center of each room and well shrouded in donated sheets and plastic coverings to shield from dust.

While retaining the existing geothermal system, the ducts and vents were replaced and rerouted, and the attic condenser units were completely replaced by safer and more efficient units. Nearly all the work was completed on schedule, and the house reopened for tours in March as planned. The remaining task is the installation of louvers for ventilation in the doors of several of the closets that house blower units, work that has to be done by hand to high preservation standards.

We are grateful to the Louisville Metro Council for their financial support for this project, and to the project's engineers, architects, and contractors, who took meticulous care of this precious landmark.



## MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

### ***Chamber Music Series***

The Chamber Music series included concerts in the setting of the historic house's great parlor, and an outdoor concert in the pavilion. This year's series featured *The Keith Collins Consort*, *The Virtuous Viola D'Amore*, and *The Three Bassets*.

### ***Unfolding Tours***

The *Unfolding the Story* program ran from spring to fall on selected Saturdays, and featured actors in the roles of members of Locust Grove's enslaved community. This program and other Museum Theatre programs have had a great impact on those who have experienced them, and it will return in the future on a revised schedule.



## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: *Jerome Bias Artist-in-Residence at Locust Grove*

In June 2024, Historic Locust Grove hosted a transformative week-long residency with Jerome Bias, an acclaimed furniture maker, hearth chef, and cultural heritage practitioner. Planned by our Director of Interpretation Kaitlyn Tisdale and entitled “A Celebration of Food, Family, & Furniture,” this series of events offered immersive, hands-on experiences that illuminated the lives of enslaved African Americans and fostered a deeper understanding of their contributions to Locust Grove’s history.

The residency began with the “A Taste of History” hearth cooking workshop, where, under Jerome’s guidance, attendees learned traditional culinary techniques and prepared a period meal over an open hearth. The sold-out workshop provided an opportunity for participants to connect directly with history through food, and the communal luncheon afterward allowed Jerome to share insights about his journey and the role of culinary traditions in healing and heritage.



### MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

#### ***Winter on the Farm***

With our team of costumed interpreters and demonstrators in the festively-decorated house and kitchen, sweet baked goods on offer, children’s crafts, music in the pavilion, and a book sale in the auditorium, about 800 guests enjoyed the seasonal atmosphere at Locust Grove.

#### ***Gardeners’ Fair/Tea in the Gardens***

The popular Mothers’ Day Tea, this year in the gardens, was a significant part of the Gardeners’ Fair success in attracting more than 2000 visitors to shop from vendors of garden-related products and to learn more about growing flowers, herbs, and vegetables in Kentucky.



Throughout the week, Jerome's programming included a woodworking workshop titled "Chisel & Plane," which introduced attendees to 18th and 19th-century Southern carpentry methods. In his lecture, "Thomas Day: Free Black Cabinetmaker," Jerome explored the life of pioneering cabinetmaker Thomas Day, his work, and his enduring influence. A special highlight was the Descendants' Dinner, where Locust Grove welcomed descendants of the men and women who had been enslaved here. This evening was an occasion of honor and reflection, with a traditional meal prepared by Jerome and Locust Grove staff and volunteers. The setting allowed descendants and guests to connect over a shared legacy.



Jerome's final day featured a powerful tour entitled "Layered Lenses," shifting the historical perspective from Locust Grove's Croghan family to the experiences of the enslaved community. This sold-out tour captivated attendees, many of whom were Locust Grove volunteers eager to deepen their understanding of the site's history.

In total, the week's events drew in over 150 attendees, providing numerous opportunities for community engagement, connection with descendants, and a deepened awareness of Locust Grove's mission to preserve and share the full history of the site.

With support from sponsors, grants, and community partnerships, the event achieved both its educational and financial goals, generating interest in Locust Grove's ongoing programming with support from private donors, the Coalition on the History of Enslavement, and the National Genealogical Society. The emotional and positive response from attendees and especially the members of the descendant community underscored the impact of Bias' residency at Locust Grove.



## MAJOR PROGRAMS - July 2023 to June 2024

### ***Music under the Pavilion/Concert Series***

This new program uses the beautiful setting of the event pavilion to present a varied season of musical performances, this year including *Keltricity* and the *Jerry Tolson Quartet* to kick off the summer.

### ***Afternoon Lecture Series***

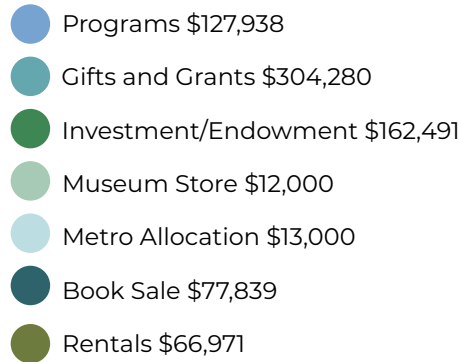
This year's Wednesday afternoon lecture series theme was about Locust Grove through time, presenting speakers about this land from prehistory to the 21st century. Ten lectures explored the geology, indigenous use of the land, the settler era, the Croghans through the generations, the Waters family at the site, restoration, and the current era as a museum.



## YEAR IN REVIEW – FINANCIALS

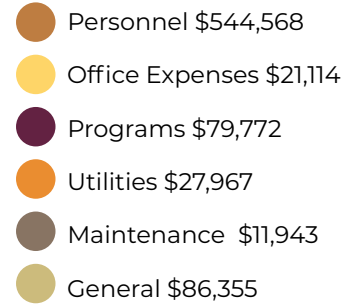
Note: Income is rebounding but investment in new staff and programs led to a small operating deficit, which was replaced by surpluses from previous years.

### INCOME



**Total: \$764,469**

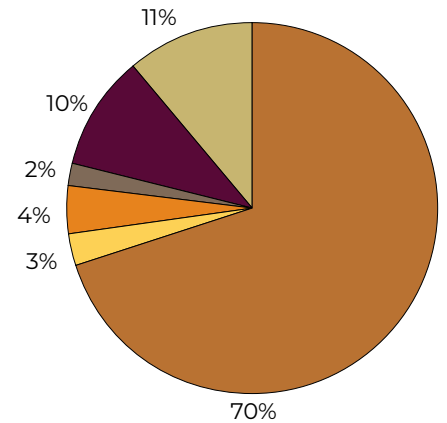
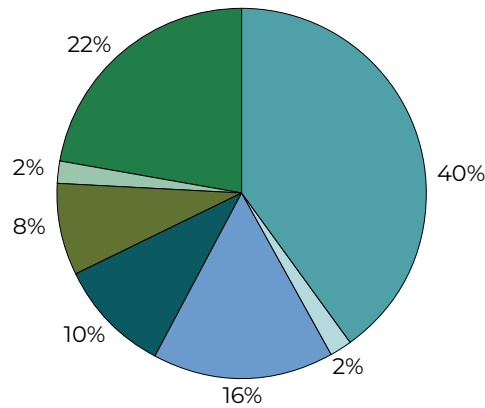
### EXPENSES



**Total: \$771,719**

### PARTNERSHIPS

- Looking for Lilith Theatre Company
- Kentucky Shakespeare
- Filson Historical Society
- Rootbound Farm
- Coalition on the History of Enslavement
- The Unknown Project
- Studio Hustle Yoga
- Jane Austen Society
- Friends of Lafayette
- Shelby County Historical Society



## LOCUST GROVE BY THE NUMBERS - 2023-24

Attendance: **14,035**

Cultural Pass Attendees: **256**

Festival Events: **6**

Lectures: **10**

Student Visits: **1,571**

Volunteer Hours: **4,613**

Number of volunteers: **91**

Concerts: **6**

Field Trips: **15**

Approximate Books Sold: **36,475**

Yoga Classes: **4**

Theatre Performances: **3**

Panel Discussions: **2**

Workshops: **4**

## ANNUAL FUND AND FRIENDS SOCIETIES 2023 - 2024

### *George Rogers Clark Society \$5,000+*

Mrs. John C. Diebold	Mary M. Kohler	Milly Ann & John Stewart	The M. Stewart Schmidt Fund
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Jeanette Johnson	George Plager	Louisville Metro	

### *Lucy & William Croghan Society \$2,500+*

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### *Clark Family Society \$1,000+*

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