



# Lancaster County Historical Commission

## Winter 2022-2023 Newsletter

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***The Historical Museum is now open!*** The museum is located on the first floor of the Historic Lancaster Court House.

### Schedule

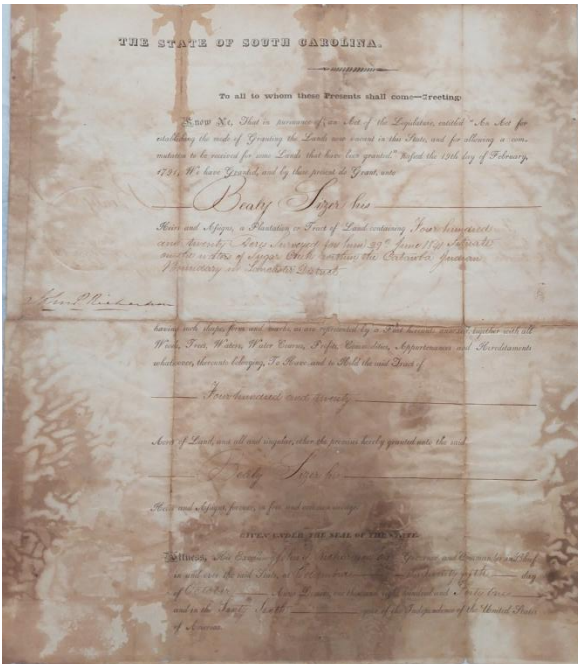
Monday & Wednesday (10 am – 2 pm)

Saturday (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month) **by appointment**

To make an appointment, contact Lancaster County at 803-285-1565 or the Historical Commission by email: [lan.historicalcommission@yahoo.com](mailto:lan.historicalcommission@yahoo.com).

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## ***1841 Land Grant - One of the museum's early acquisitions!***



This document is part of a larger story of the leasing and later the loss of the Catawba Indian homelands. After the signing of the Nation Ford Treaty in 1840, (the State agreed to purchase the land from the Catawba tribe with other considerations) many of the white settlers, who were leasing land from the Catawba tribe, rushed to have that land surveyed to acquire title. A copy of the land grant was then issued to the new landowner along with a survey plat, signed by the governor of South Carolina.

Bela Sizer – sometimes written Bealy Sizer - came from Middletown, Connecticut to Lancaster County in 1828. His brother, Anson Sizer, was a carpenter and worked on the construction of the Lancaster Courthouse. Anson died in September 1828 and Bela came to Lancaster to settle his brother's affairs. Bela remained in Lancaster County, married Anson's fiancé Mary Gillespie, and began farming on

land leased from the Catawba Tribe. Eventually Bela acquired over 500 acres of land. Most of his land was located near the junction of present-day Hwy 160 and Hwy 521, an area called Pleasant Valley, now named Indian Land.

For years the document had been encased in a frame between two plates of heavy glass - not the best way to preserve the document. In September 2022 the document was carefully removed and placed in an archival box with acid-free tissue paper. With the expertise of Commission member Ron Patton, we were able to have the Land Grant scanned and printed.

A transcription of the document follows:

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

To all to whom these Presents shall come – Greetings

Know Ye, That in pursuance of an Act of the Legislature, entitled "An Act for establishing the mode of Granting the Lands now vacant in this State, and for allowing a commutation to be received for some Lands that have been granted." Passed the 19th day of February, 1791, We have Granted, and by these presents do Grant, unto

*Bealy Sizer*

His Heirs and Assigns, a Plantation or Tract of Land containing Four hundred and twenty acres Surveyed for him 29th June 1841 Situate on the waters of Sugar Creek within the Catawba Indian Boundary in Lancaster District. having such shape, form and marks, as are represented by a plat hereunto annexed, together Wood, Trees, Water, Water Courses, Profits, Commodities, Appurtenances and Hereditaments whatsoever, thereunto belonging, To Have and to Hold the said Tract of

*Four hundred and twenty*

Acres of Land, and all and singular other the premises hereby granted unto the said

*Bealy Sizer*

Hi Heirs and Assigns , forever in free and common soccage.

GIVEN UNDER THE SEAL OF THE STATE

Witness, His Excellency, *John P. Richardson Esq.* Governor and Commander in Chief in and over the said State, at Columbia this Twenty Fifth of October Anno Domini, one thousand eight hundred and in the Sixty Sixth year of the Independence of the United States of America

The 420 acres was described as being located, "...on the waters of Big Sugar Creek in the Catawba Indian Boundary...".

Here is a link to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History for more information on State Plats for Land Grants 1784 – 1868.

<https://scdah.sc.gov/news/2021-06/state-plats-land-grants-1784-1868-now-available-online>

And for a bit more information on the Nation Ford Treaty go to -

<https://www.youryc.com/pettusstorynationfordtreaty>

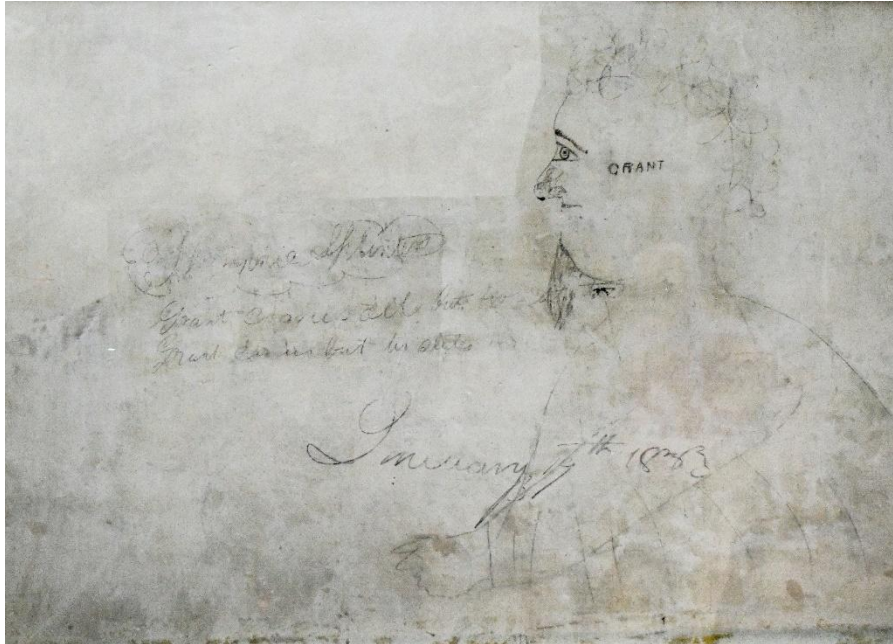
*Don't forget our "Children's Corner"*

Along with a time-line of Lancaster County, the children's corner has historic toys and an exhibit on the design and construction of the old courthouse which includes drawings, geometry, woodworking and other trades.

In the 1820's there were labor and supply issues just like today!

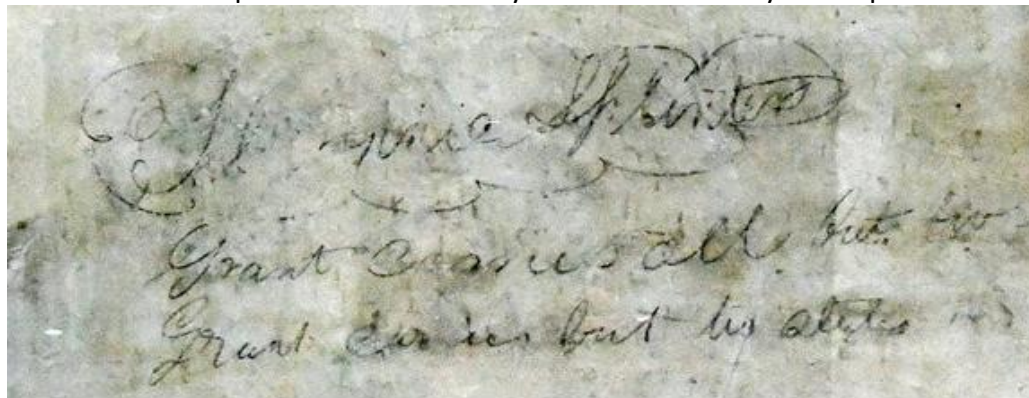
# THE MYSTERY OF THE 'GRANT' SKETCH ON THE OLD COURTHOUSE WALLS

The "Grant" sketch is located on the old courthouse wall in Room 1 of the Lancaster Historic Courthouse Museum. It has always been a mystery due to the inscription to the left of the portrait and the date below the sketch.



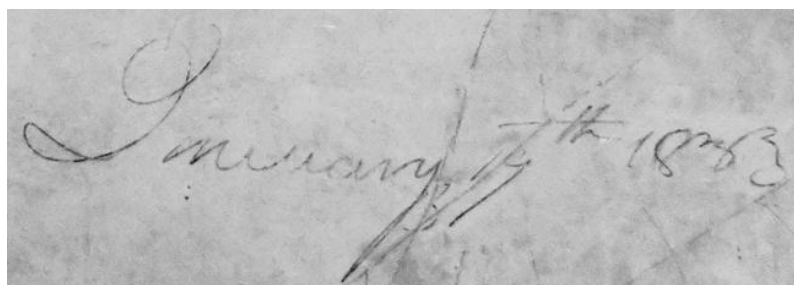
General Ulysses S. Grant

Looking at each line below: "The ???? Splinters" might mean the writer thought the 1868 election results "splintered" the country or that the country was "splintered" during reconstruction



of the south. .  
-How about U.S. Grant? "Grant carries all but five"? (Grant carried all but 2 southern and 3 northern states plus Oregon in the 1868 election, but the Oregon results

weren't known until weeks later). "Grant carries but two states"? (In fact, in 1868, Grant carried all but two southern states, Louisiana and Georgia. Mississippi and Virginia could not vote due to reconstruction). The two and five in the lines above are not really clear. Some think that the five is actually a two, and maybe the two in the last line is not really legible.



Nonetheless, this would indicate this message was written on the wall sometime after the 1868 election results were known. Grant also won in 1872, winning all but 3 southern and 3 northern states.

As far as the date January 19, 18??, museum guests have guessed 1828, 1833 or 1883. 1828 or 1833 seem unlikely, given the election dates above, but why 1883? One possibility is that Jan 19, 1883 was Confederate Memorial Day, and maybe had nothing to do with the "Grant" sketch above it. Like almost all the sketches and inscriptions on the walls of the old courthouse, this may remain unexplained.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1868>  
<https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1872>



*Exhibit on **Eli W. Asgill, Jr.** - Asgill (1933 – 1994) was a highly-decorated Army 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant and a parachutist in the Army's prestigious Golden Knights skydiving team. He served in the US Army for 22 years in the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions, including two tours of Viet Nam. The family has donated a baton that was passed between the Golden Knights in midair, and on loan is a model of one of the planes from which the team would have jumped.*

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## **Advisor Marcia Houston Chosen as Lancaster County Board Member of the Year for 2022**

Each year, Lancaster County awards a Board Member of the Year in recognition of outstanding volunteer service to the County. There are 21 Boards and Commissions! And in 2022, Marcia Houston, Advisor to the Lancaster County Historical Commission, was chosen.

Marcia has volunteered and worked in historic and environmental fields for more than 25 years, and for 15 years worked at a state historic site in Pennsylvania. She designed and presented programs in schools and libraries and at county and state historic sites. She brings her experience and expertise to benefit the Lancaster Historic Courthouse Museum. She regularly spends many hours every week supporting the museum, including staffing during public hours.

*County Council Chair Steve Harper presents the Board Member of the Year plaque to Marcia*



Perhaps Marcia's most significant accomplishment for the museum, the LCHC and for the County is that she oversaw and directed other LCHC members in the first comprehensive inventory of the museum collection. The inventory is very much needed for County insurance coverage, and to be accountable and responsible to the citizens of our County. This is a herculean task, and Marcia's historical and curatorial knowledge and proficiency, and her ability to motivate and train other Commission members has made it possible.

We hope that this award shows how much one person can make a difference by volunteering just a few days a month. Volunteering at the museum also provides a chance to learn more about our local history and meet others with the same interest and passion for preserving the past.

**Congratulations to Marcia!  
And deepest gratitude for her dedication to the Historic Courthouse Museum.**

## *New Guy on the Block* - DAN WEST

Hello! I'm the new guy on the Lancaster County Historical Commission. I was asked to write an article explaining why I became involved with the Commission and Museum, so here goes!

I became interested in history years ago when visiting Pearl Harbor and the sunken USS Arizona battleship before it was part of the beautiful structure in place today. Back then, it consisted of two large swimming rafts anchored over the ship where the monument now stands.

My father was a naval officer and had been transferred to Admiral McCain's staff. At the age of 10 or so, I was interested in the oil that was still leaking from the ship. (I last went out to the memorial about 7 years ago and the oil was still leaking, although it was much, much less.) On December 7th my dad was on the USS Portland, a light cruiser and was out of the Harbor looking for the Japanese fleet north of Oahu. My mom was on Diamond Head about 14 miles from Pearl with a .45 pistol, waiting for the Japanese to come in.



*Dan West clowns around with a feather duster in his hat during the cleaning of the museum after the latest plaster repairs*

Later, my grandfather was US Secretary of State Dean Acheson's #2 and helped write the San Francisco peace treaty signed by the US and Japan. He later became Ambassador to Japan.

I graduated with a degree in History from Whitman College in Washington and then went to work in Hawaii as an insurance agent. I built up a small agency operation and later sold the business, as I had two daughters I had to put through school. We moved to upstate New York where I became a Workers' Compensation expert for the NY State Auto Dealers and also worked in dealership safety for our compensation program. I followed one of my daughters to the Lancaster area and was later joined by my other daughter and her family which was expanding.

When I was asked to come into help out with the museum, I thought it was an opportunity to learn about the history of the area, as I really knew nothing. I have learned a lot but still have a long way to go and I am enjoying my time here. I would encourage you to consider how you can contribute to the museum - you can learn or do as much or as little as you wish.

# Join the Friends of The Museum – we need you!

*Do You Like History? Do You Have A Special Interest in the History of Lancaster County?*

If you answered yes, please join The Friends of The Lancaster County Historical Museum. The Friends, just like the Commission, is all-volunteer group with flexibility of scheduling and the opportunity to work in your area of interest.

### Areas of Support needed

- Research
- Computer Work
- Assist in Museum Tours
- Exhibits design
- Education/School Programs
- Museum Programs
- Collections Care
- Public Relations/Ambassador

**To volunteer, please contact the Commission at its email address, [lan.historicalcommission@yahoo.com](mailto:lan.historicalcommission@yahoo.com) or call Commission Secretary Ann Christie at 803-273-9909.**

#### **Mission:**

#### **The Lancaster County Historical Commission**

- To preserve and identify places and things of historical significance in Lancaster County,
- To collect and store historical artifacts in a secure and archival manner,
- To promote an appreciation of events, people, and places from the County's past,
- To provide educational programs, maintain and operate a Public Museum.



#### **Museum Hours**

Monday & Wednesday  
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM  
Saturday  
1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>  
By Appointment

#### **Contact Us**

[facebook.com/lan.historicalcommission](https://www.facebook.com/lan.historicalcommission)  
[lanhistoricalcommission@yahoo.com](mailto:lanhistoricalcommission@yahoo.com)