



CFAHS & Museum Strategic Plan

May 21, 2025

Mission Statement

"The Cannon Falls Area Historical Society and museum represents the preservation, study and sharing of our heritage, informing young and old alike, that history lives in us all."

Vision Statement

The Cannon Falls Area Historical Society was founded in 1979 with an objective of discovery, collection, preservation and dissemination of knowledge about the history of the Cannon Falls community and its connection to the region, the state, the nation and the world.

Our Why

The Cannon Falls Area Historical Society, CFAHS, and museum chronicles the history of the local community and region. CFAHS is a steward of the properties, artifacts, records and stories that highlight the historical events of our community and their connections to the region, nation and world. We are proud of the work of past stewards and historians in preserving a unique space to share our history in the 1888 fire hall and in communicating the stories that make Cannon Falls unique and yet common to many Midwestern communities, especially those settled along the rivers. We recognize the influence of geology in shaping our landscape and the settlements of the Indigenous populations near the Mississippi River and its watersheds. Those patterns led new immigrants to settle the region to make a life and home, while taking advantage of the Cannon Rivers water for power and farming. We showcase our connection to all of the milltowns in the region. We highlight the impact of two fires in reshaping the town and the building in which we are housed. We are proud of our role in conquering the scourge of tuberculosis at Mineral Springs Sanatorium and the work and artifacts presented by local doctors. We present artifacts showing the work of local business owners, the evolution of our schools from country schools to a school district as well as the recreation and entertainment that kept our community thriving. We showcase our collections in the unique museum space and mindfully preserve the artifacts acquired. We welcome new additions to our collection of stories and artifacts adding to the historical record of the one and only Cannon Falls.

Values Statement

The values guiding the work of the Cannon Falls Area Historical Society and Museum includes:

Stewardship	manage, supervise the organization as well as the artifacts and properties in our care and direct future operations to meet short and long range goals
Preservation	the act of preserving, conserving and upholding the organization, stories, artifacts and properties entrusted to our care
Education	the process of teaching and learning about local history
Communication	the exchange of ideas to inform the public of our history with in person events and experiences and through a variety of media

Cooperation	the process of working in collaboration with community members, local, regional and state organizations to preserve and share local history including the work of local historians
Inclusion	the receptive and welcoming attitude toward new viewpoints and perspectives on historical events
Inspiration	to compel or motivate new or continued interest in the work of the CFAHS and museum and promote participation in the historical process

Program and Tactics

CFAHS and museum offers free admission to the public and showcases and shares the community's heritage through displays of photos, textiles, business memorabilia, artifacts and multimedia. Research materials like the old Cannon Falls Beacon newspapers, Goodhue County plat maps, city and church cemetery records, journals, yearbooks and family genealogies are also available. The CFAHS board meets monthly to coordinate the work of its director and the museum. We are in partnership with the city of Cannon Falls who provides annual support through a \$5000 stipend and additional support for building operations and guidance on. We support the work of local historians, organizations and community partners to assist in research relevant to local history and telling the story of Cannon Falls. We welcome collaborative opportunities to partner with groups, organizations and at seasonal events to promote or enhance historical storytelling of as well as using digital media to record, transcribe, and share the stories of our community and region.

An annual review and planning meeting at the end of museum season will be held last weekend of October or first weekend of November. Members and the general public are welcome to attend. A summary of the work of CFAHS is offered along with an overview of current work of the museum and its director. This work includes but is not limited to:

Management of the museum and coordinate staffing	The museum season begins the first weekend of April and concludes the last weekend of October from 1-5pm on Fridays, 10 to 2 on Saturdays along with Memorial Day, 4th of July and Deck the Falls Saturday in November. The director manages staffing on those days and coordinates with Board members and other volunteers the general maintenance and upkeep of the properties.
Coordination of Events and Management of Grants	The director or other board members can coordinate group events, tours and presentations of local history. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce, the library, other regional museums, the local and county fair or any regional events as well as with students and teachers at Cannon Falls Area Schools. The most common grant activities that has led to the publication of books on local regional history with most being funded by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy. The historical mural projects were also
Strategic Communications of Local History	CFAHS and the museum have published a variety of books about local history. The Director has also published articles in the local newspaper as well as the students at Cannon Falls High School/Middle School have published historically

	themed articles. The museum website and social media sites contain videos about Cannon Falls History. The CFAHS' Facebook page highlights some of the resources mentioned and can be used to promote events and welcome visitors to the museum.
Engagement of Members and Community	CFAHS is hoping to grow its membership and financial support for the museum through volunteer hours, participation in special events or through fundraising efforts to support the restoration or repair of the museum building.
Management of Financial Assets	<p>The maintenance and seasonal upkeep of the museum building along with the administrative building (the white house) is an important task and the Board recognizes the important partnership with the City of Cannon Falls in the upkeep, cleaning, maintenance and repair of both buildings. Major projects and repairs requiring significant investment of time and capital must be mutually agreed upon by the CFAHS and the city.</p> <p>The Board and CFAHS will explore grant opportunities to support building and research projects as well as opportunities to establish an endowment for future operations, repairs, updating of exhibits and restoration projects.</p>

Goals:

The goals listed below are categorized as 1 year, 3 year and 5+ year

Time

<input type="checkbox"/> Create a strategic plan to reviewed and updated annually <input type="checkbox"/> Set goals for Director - new or existing <input type="checkbox"/> Create a cooperative management agreement with the City of Cannon Falls defining the relationship and expectations for facilities management and maintenance by each entity <input type="checkbox"/> Museum building repairs - roof, windows and ceiling tiles repair <input type="checkbox"/> Building assessment for future museum repairs including tuckpointing, carpet and ceiling tile replacement/repair <input type="checkbox"/> Assess necessity and feasibility of electrical updates to meet code <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate removal of trees with CF public works <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative building (white house) maintenance and assess any needs <input type="checkbox"/> Identify core exhibits, where and when to display and overall utilization of current museum space <input type="checkbox"/> Set up genealogy station in museum <input type="checkbox"/> Hire content creators to finish or create new historic content for social media pages, website and YouTube. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue and seek out new opportunities for authors to acquire grants to tell local history. <input type="checkbox"/> Explore interest in special events with City and Chamber around the Semiquincentennial, 250th anniversary of our Nation signing the Declaration of Independence 4th of July weekend, 2026	2025
<input type="checkbox"/> Create a fundraising plan for urgent and important projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Execute a fundraiser - potential opportunity is Semiquincentennial	2026-2028

<p>Celebration of 250th anniversary of our Nation's Independence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create and strategically manage an endowment for short and long term projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Allocate funds raised for urgent projects especially tuckpointing <input type="checkbox"/> Create a timetable for improving the interior of the museum - ceiling tile replacement, new rugs or carpet replacement, new paint - and execute some of those improvements if fiscally prudent. <input type="checkbox"/> Create committees for facilities management, communication and education, financial management, events and community connections. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase collaboration with the schools in telling local and history <input type="checkbox"/> Update exhibits with the help of local historians or students in particular the addition of stand alone infographics or posters in the exhibit hall. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase social media presence and content. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and implement a plan for the potential acquisition of historic buildings as part of CFAHS assets. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out greater collaboration between local historical societies within the Mill Towns region and Cannon River and Zumbro River watershed. <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate and execute if feasible additional hours and days for the museum to be open to the public. <input type="checkbox"/> Explore the feasibility of paying off the administrative building (the white house) once capital and aesthetic improvements of the exterior and interior of CFAHS buildings are met or selling it. 	<p>2026-2028 continued</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Complete improvement projects of the interior of museum building with new carpet, rugs, replacement of tiles and paint <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate and execute if feasible the updates necessary to make the museum ADA compliant or accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Manage and allocate new funds toward community events and maintenance and improvement projects for the building <input type="checkbox"/> Make Cannon Falls History visible in other community locales - signage on downtown sidewalks, in businesses, exhibits at Fairgrounds, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete a feasibility assessment of the use and value of the administrative building and determine its future as a CFAHS asset. 	<p>2029+</p>

We, the undersigned as current board members of Cannon Falls Area Historical Society and museum, declare our commitment to meeting the intentions of those who established the society in 1979 and to meeting the goals as outlined in this strategic plan which will be reviewed and updated annually.

Signed _____

Date _____

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

SWOT Analysis Results as of Spring 2025

Attached below is an overview of what board members in Spring of 2025 felt were the strengths of the organization, our weaknesses, opportunities

Strengths - What do we do well? What separates us from other local museums?
What are our most beneficial resources (physical/tangibles, materials, skills, knowledge, technologies? What are our assets - property, capital, knowledge and intellectual?

- ★ Strong board members who are engaged, involved and committed to organization.
- ★ Two buildings- a unique building for the museum located along Mill Street and administrative office and garage to meet storage needs.
- ★ Large inventory of artifacts and assortment of assets with community focused exhibits and a variety of resources- artifacts, research, books
- ★ Local, regional, state, national thread connecting our stories to broader community
- ★ Community interest in museum, work of CFAHS and good relations with the city, local school and businesses
- ★ Many with deep personal/family ties to area and wealth of knowledge, memories and physical artifacts to go with it
- ★ Our aging population that has knowledge of the area to bring to light history of the area
- ★ New city administrator with knowledge and experience of partnering with nonprofits
- ★ City partnership that supports acquisition of historic sites
- ★ Urgent repair of windows can be paid for

Weaknesses - What do we lack? What do other local museums do better than us? What limitations do we have in resources? What assets - property, capital, knowledge and intellectual - are missing or needed?

- ☐ Old building in need of urgent and ongoing repairs to stone building and old windows, outdated infrastructure, electrical and not ADA compliant
- ☐ Fixed space which limited meeting space - no room for small or large group events
- ☐ Not stable or steady income and in debt to the city for the remaining cost of the administrative house. Inconsistent revenue stream.
- ☐ Knowledge of past practices and protocols of Directors
- ☐ Communication with CFAHS membership and the public, potential visitors and tourist
- ☐ Exhibit signage and information to educate visitors including a need to learn about artifacts so Board members and volunteers can educate and explain
- ☐ Low community visibility and lack of exposure for tourism
- ☐ Limited physical space to display collection Limited exhibit space Need rotating displays (turnover of displays is slow). No process for rotating displays
- ☐ Clear understanding of partnership with city and management, maintenance and repair obligations of each organization - who takes care of what, when
- ☐ Supporting committees (organizational structure) to support maintenance of programs (operations) and physical inventories
- ☐ Need a new director

<p>❖ Opportunities - Who is our "competition"? Who are we not reaching? What are the emerging needs for those seeking out our product/service? In what ways can we add to or seek out new ways to tell others about CFAHS and museum?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Expand social media presence and use of digital media like podcast, videos ❖ Need a better digital presence and advertising of ❖ Always the youth {skill, knowledge} ❖ New exhibits - Geological history, archaeology, {modern history/events} and pop-culture tie-in ❖ More exposure to public (news, fliers, tours) ❖ Events and using Eventbrite ❖ Make it known and more accessible for research purposes. ❖ Contact and connect with other museums in the area ❖ Task force{experts}in other areas like geology or how things evolved {in this area} ❖ Getting older adults more involved would be good. ❖ Engagement of more community members ❖ Closer partnership with school, students organizations and class involvement- 3rd Grade and their parents; history students; FFA/Ag and Fair; seniors in high school ❖ Collaboration with others organizations - Chamber, library, churches ❖ Finding other ways to experience Cannon Falls history besides being in the museum ❖ Acquiring new artifacts ❖ Entering into new agreement with other historical building "owners" ❖ Hiring a good fit for Director ❖ Grow our membership ❖ Expand our footprint ❖ Launch additional programs and events that encourage awareness, engagement and support ❖ Analyze best hours needed {to be open} 	<p>Threats - Do we have any competitors or another organization who may interfere with meeting our goals? What are potential obstacles? What are the negative messages we may hear?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enough funding and consistent funding ➤ City relationships and potential changes in support from the city ➤ Clearly defining City vs. CFAHS roles and responsibility ➤ Diminishing grant opportunities ➤ Entropy - {lack of order?, decline} ➤ Not collecting stories from people whose memory fades or they die with their story untold ➤ Maintaining an old building ➤ Too small of a museum; sometimes overlooked so need to make locals more aware of us ➤ Lack of interest by the community ➤ Museum hours and doors being open to public is limited ➤ Inability to expand membership and support resources ➤ Inability to hire a Director and keep a Director ➤ Windows and roof of museum in immediate need of repair
---	---