

**A General Interpretive Plan
for The Sautee Nacoochee Community Association's
New Center for History and Interpretation**



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Sautee Nacoochee Community Association
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Introduction to the General Interpretive Plan

The Sautee Nacoochee Community Association (SNCA) is planning a new center for history and interpretation on the Association's main campus. The new center will feature museum exhibits interpreting the history of the area utilizing the current and future museum collections of SNCA. The following general interpretive plan incorporates information gathered from several secondary sources on the history of the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys and two site visits to SNCA. Additional information was provided by members of the History Museum Committee, The African American Heritage Team, and the Environmental Committee.

The plan focuses on how the stories to be told in the museum should be identified and what methods might be used to interpret them. The plan is the basis for continuing development of a final storyline that will detail the exhibit components: the order of the subjects, the communication objectives for each, the specific stories to be told, and the objects and the interpretive techniques to use in telling them. The process will require more research, brainstorming, planning and review, repeated several times. But in the end, it will lead to the most compelling messages presented in the most effective ways based upon the resources available.

The report also includes some comments about the building for the new museum, how it can serve not only the purpose of the museum but the purpose of SNCA and enhance all its programs.

This general interpretive plan is but one step in a more comprehensive process that will move the vision for a new history museum toward becoming a reality.

(Note--Throughout the plan the words history museum, museum, and center are used to refer to the facility. Its actual name will be determined in the planning process.)

Executive Summary of the General Interpretive Plan

The History Museum of the Sautee Nacoochee Community Association has become an integral part of the Association. It currently occupies approximately 1000 square feet in the restored schoolhouse. The museum preserves the material culture of the Valleys, and these collections record the interaction of people with the land and with each other over time.

A new and larger facility is being planned that will greatly enhance the museum's ability to meet the storage and preservation needs of current and future collections, develop engaging exhibits and programs, and reach larger, more diverse audiences.

A summary of the general interpretive plan for the center appears below. The plan itself then follows.

1 Identify The “Big Idea” and Key Stories for the Museum

The new center's exhibits, like the current ones, will use and organize artifacts into a meaningful story about the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys. The process of developing this story begins with looking at the history of the Valleys and determining what is distinctive about them. That research will lead to “The Big Idea” that holds the exhibit together and that visitors should understand when they leave. At this point in the process, general research and comments provided by members of the organization suggest that the “Big Idea” will be grounded in the land itself. The story of the Valleys is how the land has impacted visitors and inhabitants, how it has shaped their relationships with one another, and how visitors and inhabitants have impacted the land. The Valleys' economic, social, and environmental history shares similarities and differences with the history of the surrounding area, northeast Georgia, and the state as a whole. This interpretive approach, especially by its inclusion of environmental history, will make the new museum not only a window into the Valleys' past but a tool for understanding the present, and a resource for planning the future.

2 Research and Develop the “Big Idea”

How this “Big Idea” or a different one is developed will depend upon more careful research into and consideration of the history of the Valleys and surrounding areas. Chris Brooks, current director of the Folk Pottery Museum, is well suited for the position of curator for the new museum. With his background in history, museum work, and experience at SNCA, he would be able to guide the research using other staff, contract workers, or volunteers. The research should be broad-based, consider multiple perspectives, and pursue the truth even if it includes conflicting views. An initial step in this research is to develop a bibliography of sources for the research that includes works already consulted and new sources, including oral histories.

3 Research the Collections

Artifacts and their interpretation distinguish museums from other organizations and learning experiences. Research into the collections goes hand in hand with traditional historical research in developing exhibits. It is necessary to determine what the collections hold and what artifacts should be collected to best tell the story of the Valleys. This assessment will also lead to a stronger, more refined policy for the collecting that will impact plans for acquisitions, deaccessions, and exhibition and storage space.

4 Research the Audience

In order for exhibits and interpretive techniques to engage and connect with visitors, they must be developed with an understanding of who the visitors will be. To determine that, research should continue on who has been visiting, who can and will be targeted as future visitors, and how can the museum attract these new visitors. Surveys of existing visitors should be conducted to learn more about them and their preferences. Teachers and school officials must be consulted to determine the likelihood and extent of school field trips to the museum or the use of outreach programs. Focus group studies should be conducted to learn more about potential visitors. Perhaps, these could be done in conjunction with other local organizations that would benefit from the same information.

5 Consider and Evaluate Possible Interpretive Techniques

History museums use artifacts and exhibits to provide visitors with information, but their purpose goes well beyond that. The exhibits should pique the visitors' curiosity, foster continued learning, and encourage critical thinking skills to be used in the museum and in life outside it. To do so, the exhibits must fire the visitors' minds and their imaginations using the best-suited interpretive methods. Selecting these methods must take into account the subjects, the collections, the audiences, and also initial costs, maintenance, and staffing requirements. Throughout the development process, planners should keep the various interpretive techniques in mind while researching the history and the artifacts to identify potential exhibit elements. Planners should look at the interpretive methods being used by other museums and historic sites for ideas, and they should involve a museum education specialist for insights on matching activities and interpretive techniques with intended audiences.

6 Promote Internal Synergies

Planning for the new museum must take into account the resources and needs of SNCA overall. Redundancies should be avoided and synergies sought. The new facility could become a central building on the campus and serve as a gateway to the rest of the property. It could provide new space for the museum exhibits, but also other activities of SNCA. The museum might continue to utilize existing spaces on the campus for storage or special programs. New exhibits in the museum and museum programs should be developed

keeping in mind the overall mission of SNCA and all its activities. They should complement one another, especially those of the Folk Pottery Museum and the Nature Center.

7 Promote Community Collaborations

In order to make the new exhibits at SNCA the most successful, it will be essential to consider what other museums, historic sites and tourism organizations in the area and the region are doing or planning so that SNCA's exhibits will be distinctive. SNCA should continue to work with the local chamber of commerce and the Georgia Department of Tourism. It should visit or meet with other historic sites, nature centers, arts organizations, and tourism groups to share plans, avoid duplicating services, and consider ways to collaborate. SNCA should also continue to look for other partners with common interests in the community including schools, other non-profit groups, and businesses.

8 Encourage Continuing Education for Staff and Volunteers

Just as SNCA promotes continuing education for its members and the larger community, it should encourage ongoing education for its staff and volunteers. Participation by representatives of SNCA in the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries (GAMG) would be of great benefit. GAMG and other organizations like the American Association for State and Local History(AASLH) and the American Association of Museums (AAM) offer information and additional resources on best practice in collecting, preserving, and interpreting historical collections.

The GAMG annual meeting will be held January 20-23, 2009 in Marietta, Georgia. Early bird registration ends January 9th. More information on GAMG and the conference can be found at www.gamg.org. AASLH and AAM hold annual meetings, but they also provide diverse and excellent publications and on-line courses that SNCA should take advantage of, especially as planning for the new museum moves forward.

The General Interpretive Plan

Section 1 Why A New History Museum

Overview of Current SNCA Programs and Facilities

The Sautee Nacoochee Community Association was founded in the 1970s by forward-looking community members who joined together to protect their beautiful and historic Nacoochee Valley, and soon after, the Sautee Valley. In 1986 the members voted to purchase the Nacoochee School Building to develop it into an arts and community center. The programs and facilities have grown ever since.

Today, the Association's web site describes the non-profit organization as "dedicated to nurturing creativity and to preserving and protecting the natural and historical resources of the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys and surrounding area." SNCA maintains Sautee Nacoochee Center, a thriving cultural and community center housed in a restored rural schoolhouse which encompasses a theatre, art gallery, art studio, dance studio, environmental studies room, History Museum and conference facilities. The Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia was built and connected to the main building in 2006. Also located on the main campus, stretching along highway 255, are a separate historic gymnasium that serves as a theatre and multi-purpose building and a barbeque shed and community hall that are used by the Association or community members. SNCA also owns a separate 3-acre nature preserve site donated to the Association in 1989. It sits on the rim of the Nacoochee Valley along Highway 17. In 2005 SNCA relocated a rare slave cabin from the Valleys to the nature preserve site for future interpretation.

The Association continues to play an active role in local as well as regional environmental and historic preservation, and its extensive arts programming has earned it national acclaim. SNCA's "community" now includes not only local residents but over 800 members from Maine to California.

Overview of the Existing History Museum

SNCA's current History Museum occupies approximately 1000 square feet in the restored schoolhouse. The permanent museum exhibit offers a chronological history of the Valleys and nearby areas from earliest human habitation to the 1920s. Among the subjects addressed are: American Indians, early European exploration and settlement, removal of the Cherokee Indians, farming, early trades and manufacture, gold mining, asbestos mining, railroading, lumbering and the development of nearby Helen. A small exhibit on the woodcarver of Nacoochee has been added recently. The exhibits focus on the tools used by inhabitants of the Valleys in agriculture and industry.

In addition to the main gallery a small adjoining room offers space for exhibits that change two or three times yearly. These exhibits draw upon items from the museum's extensive collections in storage or historical materials available in the community and highlight different aspects of life in the Valleys.

A small sales area near the museum exit makes available several publications, maps, and other local history items to extend the visitor experience to home.

The permanent museum incorporates standing panels and enclosed, lockable cases for displaying smaller artifacts. Open platforms or the floor are used for exhibiting larger items. Several hands-on models and small dioramas are also exhibited. A small hands-on model of a stamping mill can be used to demonstrate this element of the mining process. A striking diorama of logging is included. A model of a Shay locomotive is animated by sound and motion. Photographs, maps, and labels help interpret the artifacts. The labels are in narrative form and follow a customary tiered system with main, secondary, and i.d. text.

The standing panels, cases, and platforms define a specific path for visitors to follow in viewing the exhibits. Lighting is provided by a track system and incandescent lamps. Natural light entering through a bank of exterior windows is controlled with Venetian blinds. A second set of glazings framed inside the bank of windows adds to the climate control and security.

The exhibits have been designed to be self-guided. Docents, however, are often available to conduct tours. These docents are part of an extraordinary volunteer effort that makes the museum possible with only very limited assistance from staff and outside consultants. The relatively recent hiring of Chris Brooks as director of the Folk Pottery Museum adds in-house museum expertise on which to draw.

The museum volunteers have assembled the extensive collections that include not only museum artifacts but archival and library materials. A well developed collections policy (a copy is included in the appendix) is in place. Volunteers are utilizing PastPerfect software for accessioning and cataloging. They are also implementing a physical numbering system on the artifacts as expected under professional standards in the field. Members of the Museum Committee recently relocated the vast majority of the collections to space in the lower level of the Folk Pottery Museum and have plans for rehousing the items and enhancing their overall storage.

Benefits of a New History Museum

A new and larger facility designed for the history museum will greatly enhance its ability to meet the storage and preservation needs of current and future collections, develop engaging exhibits and programs, and reach larger, more diverse audiences.

The History Museum has become an integral part of the Sautee Nacoochee Community Association. The collections and their interpretation contribute significantly to the

Association's mission. The museum preserves the material culture of the Valleys, and these collections record the interaction of people with the land and with each other over time.

A new and larger facility designed for the history museum will greatly enhance its ability to meet the storage and preservation needs of current and future collections, develop engaging exhibits and programs, and reach larger, more diverse audiences.

The History Museum Strategic Plan for 2008 (a copy is included in the appendix) incorporates these goals and lists specific objectives, many of which will be advanced by a new facility. New exhibits and related interpretive programs will be the key component of the facility.

Section 2 Developing New Exhibits and Related Interpretive Programs

Identifying the Key Stories

The land itself is at the center of the story of the Valleys. It is important that the new exhibits give visitors, especially those who are not familiar with the Valleys, an ability to “see” the physical features of the area then understand their direct impact on humans and their interaction with one another. It is also important that the impact of humans on the land is interpreted. The economic, social, and environmental history of the area must be explored and presented in the new exhibits.

The new museum exhibits, like the current ones, will use and organize artifacts into a meaningful story about the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys. The process of developing this story begins with looking at the history of the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys and what is distinctive about them compared to the surrounding area, the northeast region of the state and Georgia as a whole.

Many individuals have researched and written about this history. Several secondary sources have been used in developing this interpretive plan. Staff and volunteers have provided additional information about the area. From these sources, it seems clear that the land itself is at the center of the story of the Valleys. It is important that the new exhibits give visitors, especially those who are not familiar with the Valleys, an ability to “see” the physical features of the area then understand their direct impact on humans and their interaction with one another. It is also important that the impact of humans on the land is interpreted. The economic, social, and environmental history of the area must be explored and presented in the new exhibits. Themes and topics outlined below need to be evaluated, prioritized, added to and developed as the interpretive planning process continues.

A Short History of the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys in Northeast Georgia

This short history draws on the works cited below. Full bibliographic information on these sources and others is included in the appendix to this report.

Ann Banke, Chart listing major topics of Sautee-Nacoochee Valley’s History over time, 2008.

Caroline Crittenden, Several articles and narratives for proposals, 2006-2008.

John Inscoc, “Appalachian Otherness, Real and Perceived,” *The New Georgia Guide*, 1996.

Thomas N. Lumsden, M.D., *Nacoochee Valley: Its Times and Its Places*, 1989.

Ray Rensi and David H. Williams, *Gold Fever: America’s First Gold Rush*, 1988.

Darlene Roth & Associates Inc., *Background History and Architectural Survey for Proposed White/Habersham County Transmission Line for Oglethorpe Power Company*, 1985.

Allen Stovall in association with EI Design Associates, *The Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys: A Preservation Study*. 1982.

The Land

The Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys in White County sit in the transition area between the upper piedmont and Blue Ridge mountains of Northeast Georgia. The two Valleys connect to form a “V” that is distinctive and affords a remarkable vista of the pastoral bottomlands meeting the rugged, forested upland areas and mountainsides. The area’s scenic beauty has continually attracted people to it. The area’s remoteness and ruggedness have deterred development.

Traveling Through

Thomas N. Lumsden, M.D., writes that “the Nacoochee Valley has served as a route for trade, travel, exploration and migration for centuries.” The Valley’s flat floor was an intersection for two major routes of early travel used first by American Indians then by the European explorers and others who followed. The Unicoi Turnpike’s opening in 1817 and increased the traffic. Many have passed through the Valleys and left evidence or accounts of their journeys.

Settling Down

Human habitation in the Valleys dates to 12,000 years ago. The fertile lands with abundant water and wildlife made it attractive for short term and increasingly more permanent settlement. Between 900 A.D. and 1500 A.D. Mississippian Indians established a village in the Nacoochee Valley along the Chattahoochee River. From here, using water and land routes, they traded over long distances.

Early Incursions

The Cherokee Indians inhabited the state’s highlands area for centuries prior to the arrival of white settlers in the 1700s. The number of settlers increased following a treaty made by the U.S. government with the Cherokee Nation in 1819. From this land cession came Habersham County (from which White County was formed in 1857). The land was distributed by lottery in 1820 and settlers soon arrived to claim their places. English and Scots-Irish settlers from the Carolina and Virginia constituted the majority. While Habersham County is an old county, its development has been very recent. The antebellum history of the area is very different from that of the more well developed Piedmont and Coastal areas.

Agriculture and Early Industry

The early economy was based on a combination of cash and subsistence farming with corn as the principal crop. A few large landholders established “plantations” in the flat valley lands and used slaves to work the fields and related industries. The scenic Chattahoochee provided power for small-scale industries but did not support larger ones or commerce. Mills, blacksmith shops, and other small manufacturers satisfied the basic needs of frontier life. The absence of a cotton culture but the presence of “plantations”

with slaves made the Valleys distinct from other areas of northeast Georgia and of the rest of the state.

“The Great Intrusion”

In the late 1820s, the discovery of gold in the area turned the flow of settlers into a flood. Men arrived daily to mine the riches until they had extracted all that they could and turned to the promise of the California gold fields. During the gold rush locals continued farming but also prospected. They labored themselves or, if they had them, sent their slaves from the fields to the mines. As whites rushed into Cherokee lands just west of Habersham County, the Cherokees resisted what even then was referred to as the “Great Intrusion.” Actions and inactions of state and the federal government culminated in the forced removal of Indians along the Trail of Tears in 1838-39.

Slavery and the Civil War

With most residents pursuing subsistence farming, slavery was less significant to the general economy and lifestyle of the Valleys and northeast Georgia than in other areas of the state. Inscoe notes that, “In 1860 slaves made up only 2-3 percent of the population in the state’s northernmost counties and between 10 and 15 percent of the foothill populace. Across the region, less than 10 percent of white households owned slaves.” In White County in 1860 slaves numbered 263 and whites 3,315. Slaves thus accounted for just shy of 8 percent of the population. Eleven free blacks were also counted.

As the Civil War approached, support for the Union ran strong. When war finally came, states rights and a fear of free blacks roaming the countryside fueled support for the Confederacy. Many from the county who enlisted fought, but did so outside the Valleys. No significant battles took place in the area. Local manufacturers modified their factories to turn out pikes and rifles to arm Confederate soldiers. At the War’s end, freed slaves with greater autonomy entered new labor arrangements and formed new communities, including Bean Creek.

Economic Patterns

The region’s economy after the war was little changed from before. “Remote” still characterized the place. The large landholders continued to farm the floodplains, and subsistence farmers worked the remaining cultivable land. In the 1880s and 1890s the rural and scenic beauty attracted tourists, just as it had in the 1830s. In that previous era the town of Clarkesville, especially, had mined the tourist business as others mined the hillsides for gold. This new wave of tourists could now travel by rail as near as Clarkesville. From there they could tour the area, including Nacoochee Valley and Yonah Mountain, by coach. Roth writes that at the same time the Valleys also “experienced a particularly significant residential building ‘boom’ in which the Valleys became studded with high-style Victorian homes, many of which still stand today.”

New extractive industries came to the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Asbestos was mined intermittently over the period. The arrival of the railroad on the west side of the Valleys in the early teens made large-scale timbering possible. The Gainesville and Northwestern Railroad ran northward to the Byrd-Matthews Lumber Company and the newly established town of Helen. The railroad carried mill products away until the late 1920s when the last of the virgin stands was gone.

National Interests

During the Great Depression the population of White County actually increased as some people returned to the land for a living. The federal government played a significant role in creating jobs with the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration. In 1936 the National Forest Reservation Commission purchased land in north Georgia for the creation of the Chattahoochee National Forest. World War II offered young men a way out of the Valleys, and many took it.

Change and Continuity

WWII veterans returning to the Sautee Nacoochee Valleys arrived with new vision and cash in their pockets. Investments in poultry production extended agriculture's role in the local economy of the region.

New roads have made travel to the mountains easier and faster but the lack of interstate highways and large airports still limits access compared to most other scenic areas in the state. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Helen recast itself as an alpine village to attract tourists. It and a growing number of additional attractions have sparked more tourism in the area. As retirees from Atlanta and other urban centers seek out more tranquil and less expensive environments, they have become the newest wave of outsiders attracted to the rural and scenic beauty of the Sautee and Nacoochee Valleys.

Preservation

The organization of the Sautee and Nacoochee Community Association in the 1970s came about as development threatened the rural qualities and scenic beauty of the Valleys. The work of SNCA must be given credit for protecting the historic and natural assets of the area. It shares similarities to antecedents such as that of The Tallulah Falls Conservation Association that battled against the damming of Tallulah Falls in the early 1900s or the federal government's creation of the Chattahoochee National Forest in the 1930s.

In her report Roth stated that, "It is clear that the Nacoochee Valley and its architectural resources are the last best representative of north Georgia mountain culture as it appears in the entire study area." The difference between the current state of the Valleys and the town of Helen, highlights varied development paths taken within the region. Stovall in his study commented on the similarity between the earlier extractive industries and the more recent influx of tourists and new residents attracted by the rural or scenic beauty of the area. Just as the gold and timber ran out, there is the possibility that the rural character will also "run out" as increasing numbers of people threaten the very thing that they seek. Preservation within managed growth will be the continuing challenge for the area.

Organizing the Ideas

The goal of defining the story and deciding how to present it must be to make the new interpretive center a not only a window into the Valleys' past but a tool for understanding the present, and a resource for planning the future.

This brief history offers a general overall chronological history of the Valleys and identifies some of the key economic, social, and environmental factors that distinguish them from other communities nearby and further away. It is not intended to suggest that the exhibits follow the same chronological approach. They might, but they might not, instead using similarities and contrasts, actions and consequences, or a series of questions to organize and present the themes and subjects. The themes and topics mentioned above need to be evaluated, prioritized, added to and developed as the interpretive planning process continues. The goal of defining the story and deciding how to present it must be to make the new interpretive center a not only a window into the Valleys' past but a tool for understanding the present, and a resource for planning the future.

Moving Forward with the General Interpretive Plan

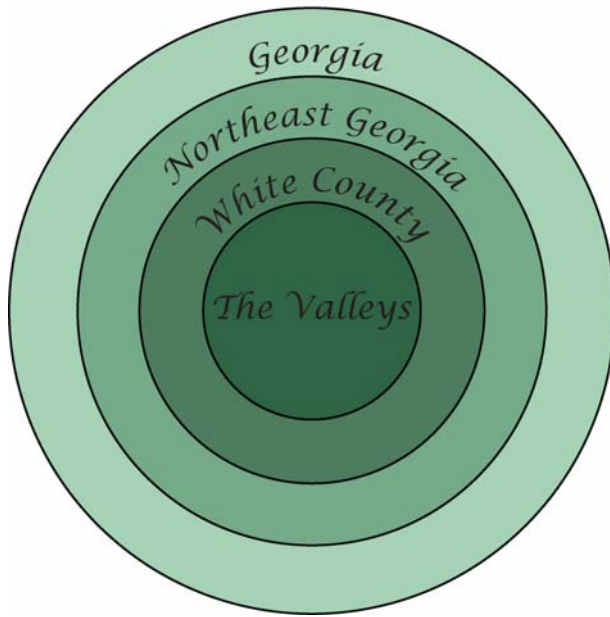
Deciding on the “Big Idea” and how the exhibits will be developed and implemented will require sound scholarship in traditional sources and the collections themselves. It will involve identifying the audiences for the new exhibits and appropriate interpretive techniques. The planning must consider the existing programs of SNCA and go outside the organization to look at what others are doing to preserve and interpret the history of the Valleys and the surrounding areas. Only with careful research and sound planning can the new museum exhibits connect, educate, intrigue, and inspire visitors and ensure their relevance and success. Further discussion of these topics follows.

1 Researching the History and the Story

When people can “find themselves” in the exhibits, they are more likely to visit. The new center must be a welcoming place for community members and visitors as a whole.

Continuing research for the new museum exhibits should include the economic, political, and environmental history of the Valleys. It should be focused on answering numerous questions, including:

- What is most distinctive about the history of the Valleys?
- What is most distinctive about the history of the surrounding area?
- What is most distinctive about the history of Northeast Georgia from other regions in the state? (The answers become more significant as we look at what other organizations are interpreting.)



What themes and subjects should be considered?
Which ones become the most significant, which less significant?

Does the research reveal multiple perspectives on the history?

What is the relationship between these themes and subjects? In what order should they be presented to the visitors? Will it be chronological, thematic, or a combination? Can a repetitive element, different questions, different statements, juxtaposition of artifacts introduce different themes or sections? Do they need to be encountered one before another? Are some “optional” and should they be presented physically as such? Will the route be structured or unstructured?

Should there be one all-encompassing long-term or “permanent” exhibit? Should there be several looking at different themes or subjects? What themes or subjects might be set aside for or covered more extensively in temporary exhibits?

What is the “big idea” that holds the exhibit(s) together and that visitors should understand when they leave? What other objectives are there for the exhibits?

Research should begin by looking at research already conducted for SNCA. What research has been organized and completed for the current History Museum, changing exhibits, the slave cabin, other programs, and the Folk Pottery Museum? Where does it lead the new research? Are there sources that should be reviewed again? What additional sources should be explored? What personal stories, anecdotes, and quotes should be set aside for possible use in the exhibits? Personal experiences make powerful connections between people in the past and people today. What other materials encountered in the research might be useful for their display?

The research should be broad-based and pursue the truth. New information will lead to new considerations, new questions and new interpretations. This will include sensitive issues from the forced removal of the Indians or slavery to today's race relations and land zoning. Conflicting views or interests must be recognized. When people can "find themselves" in the exhibits, they are more likely to visit. The new center must be a welcoming place for community members and visitors as a whole.

Chris Brooks, current director of the Folk Pottery Museum, is well suited for the position of curator for the new museum. With his background in history, museum work, and experience at SNCA, he would be able to guide the research using other staff, contract workers, or volunteers. The research efforts should include local historians and outside scholars who can provide multiple perspectives, distill patterns, and cull out less significant ideas. A core of researchers should be identified and a scholarly advisory panel organized to work with Chris under his direction.

2 Researching the Collections

Artifacts and their interpretation distinguish museums from other organizations and learning experiences. Researching the collections goes hand in hand with traditional research in developing exhibits.

Artifacts and their interpretation distinguish museums from other organizations and learning experiences. Researching the collections goes hand in hand with traditional research in developing exhibits. Again, a set of questions directs the investigation.

What artifacts are in the current collections, including materials in storage that may not yet have been catalogued?

What other artifacts have already been identified in the community for use in past or future exhibits?

How are the artifacts related to the stories being considered for the exhibit?
(Additional research may be required to determine this.)

What are the seemingly most significant artifacts?

What additional artifacts are needed or desirable for the exhibits? Does research suggest possible sources for acquiring these artifacts?

What collecting efforts might be employed to gather needed artifacts?
Is the process for making decisions about loans or acquisitions thoroughly covered by the collections policy?

In researching and assessing the artifacts it is helpful to remember the multiple ways in which artifacts can be considered or interpreted. Some visitors will be interested in them for their style and beauty alone. Artifacts associated with famous individuals or events

take on added significance. But representative artifacts can also connect with people in many different ways based upon their interpretation. For example, the following questions might be asked of a water cannon used in gold mining. Who designed and manufactured it, what equipment did it replace, who purchased it, who used it and what was involved, what did he accomplish, what replaced the water canon, and what has been the impact of its use through today?

Another example of multiple interpretations for one artifact concerns the slave cabin that is currently at the Nature Preserve site and awaiting its move to outside the new history museum. The cabin can tell of building techniques using local materials. It can help tell the story of slavery in the Nacoochee Valley, not only the slaves' relationships to their masters, but of their own family structure and autonomous lives separate from the white families. The cabin can also speak, as the SNCA newsletter discussed, of the "common bonds and threads that run through the lives of black and white Valley families. Similar tools and utensils, crafts and skills, agricultural and industrial technology, and animal husbandry techniques were common to all, regardless of class or race, during the mid-1800s." Interpretation of the cabin over a broader time frame can address the changing roles and relationships between whites and blacks before and after Emancipation, from the cabin's original construction to its later uses and recent restoration.

In considering the use of artifacts in exhibits, it is also helpful to consider how, grouped with other artifacts, they can tell different stories. Similarities or differences can be demonstrated, processes or changes can be shown, and consequences made more evident. A gold sample and vial of mercury paired with a water bucket from the Bean Creek community can introduce a multi-faceted story about gold mining in the 19th century and its lingering impact on lives in the 21st.

Historical research and the artifact research moving forward together will produce an intellectual framework for the exhibits that can also be used in refining the museum's collections policy. The museum can not collect everything "related to the history of the Santee and Nacoochee Valleys and surrounding areas" and a delineation of ideas, concepts, themes, or stories for the exhibits can help refine what will be collected. The center may choose to only collect representative items that will be used in the exhibits. In-depth collections for research or programming may be beyond the interests and resources of the museum. For example, the current collections hold very few pieces of furniture or household items. Beyond those that might be collected for the slave cabin and its interpretation, should others be collected, how many, representing what, and why or why not. Research and planning for the new exhibits will help answer those questions.

The research on artifacts for the new exhibits should begin with the current museum exhibit and the database of records in PastPerfect. The slave cabin and other artifacts associated with it are significant for the future exhibits. Lists, or group descriptions first, and then catalogue worksheets on individual artifacts should be organized according to the themes and subjects being considered. As historical research suggests other artifacts to collect, lists or catalogue worksheets should be completed for these potential acquisitions as well. This information may be stored in computer files, or old fashioned three-ring binders. As the process moves forward, catalogue worksheets on the artifacts can move from one theme or

subject to another as their “relationship” or interpretation changes. They can also move to the “culled” files. At the end of the exhibit process the number of artifacts considered and eliminated typically far exceeds the number actually used in the exhibits.

Historical research and the artifact research moving forward together will produce an intellectual framework for the exhibits that can also be used in refining the museum’s collections policy.

3 Researching the Audience

In order for exhibits and interpretive techniques to engage and connect with visitors, they must be planned with the visitors in mind. So who will be the visitors to this new museum and what will interest them and hold their attention?

Who currently visits SNCA, the History Museum and the Folk Pottery Museum? How many of them are school children, families, young adults, seniors? What percentages are African-American or Hispanic? Are these visitors from the local area or tourists visiting the area? Did they come from elsewhere in Georgia or the southeast? Did they come from elsewhere in the U.S. or foreign countries?

Who are the intended audiences for the new museum? Is the museum’s priority to serve the community and the residents or tourists, or both?

The Sautee Nacoochee Community Association has a current annual visitation of approximately 12,000. This includes the Folk Pottery Museum which counted 7,000 visitors last year. Adults, many of them seniors, make up the large majority of these numbers. Very few families and very few school groups visit the Folk Pottery Museum or current History Museum.

The figures given above reflect smaller numbers than standard formulas would suggest. Tourism officials estimate that approximately two million visitors travel to Helen each year and that based upon its proximity and offerings, SNCA should see approximately 1% or 20,000 of those visitors. This has not occurred and is mentioned only as a cautionary note when planning for visitation which can impact financial, staffing, space, and program planning in different ways. Other methods should be used to better project and plan for visitors. Meeting with tourism officials, school representatives, and other groups will be important to help determine the probability of attracting different types of visitors to the center.

The History Museum Committee members have expressed an interest in reaching a broad audience for the new museum, from local school children to families from across the nation who may be vacationing in the area. This broad audience is fairly typical of museums and suggests broad-based interpretive techniques should be incorporated in the new exhibits. The current History Museum and the Folk Pottery Museum provide an opportunity to collect useful information. Surveys could collect demographic information on the visitors and ask why they decided to visit the museum. What topics did they find most interesting or

would they like to know more about. Are there subjects they found boring, why? Was it the subject or the exhibit method? What other types of interpretive techniques (of those listed on the survey) would they like to see in the exhibit? What types of interpretive techniques would their children prefer? How much time would they be willing to spend in new exhibits with their children?, etc.

For school groups and scout groups, it is important that the exhibits meet curriculum or badge requirements. Developing the exhibits or programs with the involvement of teachers and scout leaders or other local service and community leaders will increase the likelihood of their continuous support of the museum and repeated visitation. An article on the new orientation center at Mt. Vernon appeared in the September/October 2007 issue of *Museum News*. Executive Director James C. Rees commented that their toughest audience is an eighth-grade boy, and if they can get his interest, they'll do well with most other visitors. Perhaps, a focus group of local 8th grade boys involved throughout the planning process would prove beneficial.

African-American and Hispanic visitors represent potentially large, new audiences for most museums. Individuals and families from these groups should be included in any surveys or focus groups. In addition to the general museum exhibits, the surveys might ask about special programs. African-American genealogy is growing significantly. Information on these families in the Valleys could be of great interest to a new audience. Darlene Roth, in a conversation about this interpretive plan, also suggested that information about miners in the area during the 1830s and 1840s could find a potentially large audience of interested descendants as well. The exhibits could refer these audiences to the research collections and research room or library that should be a part of the new museum.

4 Considering the Interpretive Techniques

*“A mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited.”—Plato
The exhibits should pique the visitors’ curiosity, foster continued learning,
and encourage critical thinking skills to be used in the museum and in life
outside it.*

Plato is credited with the statement, “A mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited.” History museums use artifacts and exhibits to provide visitors with information, but their purpose goes well beyond that. The exhibits should pique the visitors’ curiosity, foster continued learning, and encourage critical thinking skills to be used in the museum and in life outside it.

To do so, the exhibits must fire the visitors’ minds and their imaginations. They must do so using the best-suited interpretive methods taking into account the subjects, the collections, the audiences, and also initial costs, maintenance, and staffing requirements.

A laundry list with some additional notes or considerations follows. Keeping these possibilities in mind will be useful during the development process and selecting the appropriate techniques will become focused as the planning process moves ahead.

Artifacts (including original books, maps, documents, letters, etc.). Visible storage refers to simply setting collections out for visitors, usually in rows organized often by date or style. For many years that was the dominant style of museum exhibits. It may still have its place in a small way for adding depth to a presentation, but more effective interpretive methods call for the artifacts to be grouped in more meaningful arrangements that reflect similarities, contrasts, conflicts or developments. Context and additional interpretation is provided by everything else from label text to dramatic performances.

Still images can set a context for, complement or explain the artifacts.

Questions that ask the visitor what they see, hear, feel, suppose happened or can conclude encourage visitor engagement.

Narrative text, including first hand accounts, quotes, stories, and multiple perspectives can provide information and provocation.

Audio can also be used to present narrative material including first hand accounts or dialogue. The output equipment can include speakers, hand-sets, kiosks or portable systems with digital players and headphones. Cell phone tours (used especially, but not always, for outdoor tours) allow visitors to supply the needed equipment themselves.

Dioramas can give visitors an understanding of objects, places, or systems that may be too large to recreate in other 3 dimensional ways.

Models, static or moving, or interactive can help explain multi-part objects and how they work.

Demonstrations about how things work or how things are done can engage a visitor. Allowing them to try their hand at a skill, from quilting to operating hi-tech mining equipment (via simulators) gives them a much better sense of what is involved. Supplying skilled demonstrators or trainers on a continuous basis can strain resources. It is important that exhibits be designed to be engaging even when no personnel are available.

Touch is an important way of understanding, and hands-on activities, from basic to high tech, allow for this. The activities might be as simple as feeling the weight of a (simulated) gold bar or as complex as playing an interactive video game about searching for the best place to locate a mining operation. Initial costs and maintenance must be carefully weighed against the overall impact of having more complex and electronic activities.

Allowing visitors to literally **take away something** (in addition to purchases from the museum shop) can extend their visit and their learning. A reproduction of a pass for traveling in Cherokee country, for example could help carry home the early relationship between the U.S. and the Cherokee nation.

Introductory a-v programs are useful in giving visitors a “heads-up” about the big ideas of the exhibit. They can be action packed or awe-inspiring with dramatic effects.

Videos throughout the exhibits can introduce new subjects or add depth to the interpretation. At the end they can provide a dramatic conclusion. Videos may present original, historic footage or material created for the exhibit—which may incorporate historical footage. They can be shown on kiosk or in mini-theatre spaces.

Recreated environments. These provide a sense of space and place. They may also offer an area for first person interpretation or self-directed activities.

Dramatic lighting is a tool that is often overlooked, yet it can communicate many things. Lighting helps direct and focus the visitors' eyes, so that their comprehension is abetted by literally "shedding light upon the subject." Variations in light, amounts, color, etc. can be used to meet both the conservation needs of the artifacts and the affective objectives of the curator and designer.

Cut-outs, mannequins, plaster-cast full figures, anamorphic figures can suggest the “people” element of the stories.

Dramatic performances within the exhibits can add impact to the interpretation. While it may not be possible to have actors on hand regularly, their recordings can be. And the actual actors can be hired for special events.

Full-scale dramatic presentations, short ones can be developed to be performed in the galleries and heighten the experience for visitors. The scripts for these performances should be based on actual events documented with research.

Living history is probably the most labor intensive interpretive method, requiring high-end training and lots of support, but it can be incredibly effective at immersing the visitor in the past and creating memorable experiences. It might be appropriate for the slave cabin, especially, where the actual artifact anchors the setting or environment. Some living history programs place the visitor in the “action.” At Astor’s Beechwood Mansion in Providence, Rhode Island <http://www.astorsbeechwood.com> they offer two different living history programs. In the Victorian Servants Tour visitors become applicants for a position on Mrs. Astor’s staff. Guests are shown about by footmen and the housemaids for an insiders look at what it is really like to work for the “queen of American society.” The Victorian Tour gives visitors the chance to arrive as very welcome guests of the family and to meet family members and domestics. Visitors to the slave cabin might become weary travelers who have come across the cabin while searching for a place to stay for the evening. Living history, because of the resources it requires, may be best if developed for special programs and events.

General **docent-led tours** add that personal touch and connection for the visitors. Docents must be trained in interpretation and their tours based on well-researched, accurate information. Storytelling by the guides makes the events of the past come to life today and is receiving more focus as a method of interpretation. Special tours

focused on specific subjects of interest to visitors can be developed and offered on a regular, but reduced basis compared to the general tours.

As planning moves forward on the exhibit, ideas for using these interpretive methods will come from research, review, brainstorming, and perhaps, a focus group with 8th grade boys.

The subjects themselves often suggest different types of interpretive methods. Scenic beauty is more experiential than intellectual. Words will probably be less effective than environments, visuals, and background sounds. Gold-mining and timbering suggest active, hands-on activities exploring rough living conditions and how tools work and processes evolve. Cherokee removal and slavery suggest more somber, contemplative investigations and perhaps, first-person narration.

The audience, as discussed above, determines a great deal about the appropriate interpretation. The new museum seeks a broad audience, with special emphasis on school children, so a wide range of interpretive techniques should be employed. Museum educators now typically recognize seven different intelligences that manifest themselves in people and which affect their learning styles: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. A museum educator should be involved in the exhibit development to help match the interpretive methods to these different learning styles and advance the objectives of the exhibits. In the *Museum News* article on the new orientation center at Mt. Vernon that was cited earlier, Senior Curator Carol Cadou, stated that, “What we are seeing across the museum industry is a real change in visitor expectation. While you and I may not need anything more than a historic home to draw us to a site, studies are showing the average American expects and wants more and that children in particular need more technology to engage them in this very technological world.” That said, however, the extent of the technology used in the new museum exhibits will need to balance the expectations of visitors, with the purpose and objectives of the museum, and the resources to carry them out.

“What we are seeing across the museum industry is a real change in visitor expectation. While you and I may not need anything more than a historic home to draw us to a site, studies are showing the average American expects and wants more and that children in particular need more technology to engage them in this very technological world.”

—Carol Cadou, Mt. Vernon

5 Promoting Internal Synergies

“One for all and all for one” is the old expression. In planning the new museum, consideration should be given to how it can advance program goals throughout SNCA and how other programs can contribute to the museum. Redundancies should be avoided and synergies sought out.

What will be the relationship between the interpretation at the Folk Pottery Museum and the new history museum? How will the stories be similar or different?

What overlap, if any, will there be between the stories told in the new museum and the nature center?

How can the museum and other program areas benefit from coordination in the planning? Can performances of the theatre group be incorporated in the permanent or changing exhibits as live or recorded elements? Can art classes use artifacts or settings in the museum as subjects for their works? Could a poetry slam contest use settings or experiences in the museum as the subject of the works? How can the environmental studies program and the interpretation of gold mining and timbering in the museum refer directly to each other?

How can the changing exhibits and special events benefit all?

Similar questions relate to space and facilities planning. A basic checklist of spaces for a museum/history center includes the following:

Parking	Other receiving (to ideally keep them separate)
Vestibule	Collections processing/work room
Reception area	Collections storage
Admission/info desk	Library/research room
Museum shop with office/storage	Exhibit preparation
Restrooms, coatroom	Exhibit storage
Multi-use room for classes, programs	Mechanical equipment space
Event space	Storage for maintenance supplies
Kitchen area for food prep	Office/storage for education
Permanent gallery space	Offices for administrator, curator
Changing gallery space	Structure and circulation space
Collections receiving	Outdoor space for “large objects” and for events

The relative and specific amounts of space needed for each of these functions can be determined through detailed programming efforts. The authors of *Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning*, write that the rule of thumb for allocation of space in museum structures is: 40 percent for exhibits, 40 percent for storage, and 20 percent for offices and other activities. Determining the actual size of these spaces depends upon several factors including: collections size and expected growth, projected visitation, and resources for construction, and projected resources for continued operations. In addition, at SNCA, the planning must take into account the facilities already on campus.

What spaces already exist that the museum might share with other programs? How can new spaces relieve existing spaces from their current use and free up that space for something else?

Another important question to address is will the new museum, whether it be a renovation of the existing cannery building, or a new building, be another in the string of buildings already located on campus or might it become a central building. By its placement and its

appearance, might the new facility become a gateway to the rest of the property and programs? A new master site plan coordinated with the building design can look at unifying and creating connectivity between all the buildings and programs. Simple things like a wayfinding system with uniform (not necessarily boring) signage would help SNCA present itself as a whole much greater than its individual parts.

One final related question here is will the renovated or new facility be designed as a “green” building to meet LEED certification. Such a building would emphasize SNCA’s commitment to preservation and stewardship of the environment and community. The building itself could become an “exhibit” or educational tool. Its operating efficiencies would add to its long-term sustainability.

In continued planning for the museum it will become important to bring in an architect and landscape designer to help program the facility. Space allocations and space usage for the museum will be connected to the overall vision for the building and SNCA. It will become important for the museum to study its existing collections and plan for future collections. Determining the requirements for storage, processing, study, and exhibit of the collections now and over the life of the new facility will help planners arrive at answers to space requirements and space adjacencies.

By its placement and its appearance, the new facility might become a gateway to all of the SNCA campus and its programs.

6 Promoting Community Collaborations

In order to make the new exhibits at SNCA the most successful, it will be essential to consider what other museums and organizations in the area and the region are doing or planning so that SNCA’s will be distinctive.

What history are other organizations preserving and presenting?--and not just museums or historic sites, but other organizations and businesses. What are the subjects and themes of their interpretation? What methods are they using? What programs do they offer? SNCA should avoid redundancies and encourage synergies between sites.

The new museum exhibits will tell about local and regional history and refer indirectly, or perhaps, directly, to other historic sites. Serving as a visitor center for not just SNCA but other sites of interest in the area can draw visitors and encourage others to refer visitors to SNCA.

Also, the museum should look for new partners in unusual places or inventive ways. Some art museums have held classes for police officers. Educators use paintings depicting scenes or events to help officers consider crime scenes when they arrive. What has happened? What are the clues? What might be mistaken for something it really is not? Who’d have thought that art appreciation and crime investigations can go hand in hand?. A historic logging site in Minnesota recently built a new visitor center. One of the exhibits is a

simulator for operating high tech modern logging equipment. Visitors use it during the day. The company that manufactures the equipment uses it for sales and training in the evening.

Collaboration is key to a museum's success. The Georgia Department of Economic Development released in October 2008 a "Preliminary Overview of Georgia's Museums Interconnectivity with Georgia's Tourism Industry." It states, "The only sustainable audience development projects are those done in equal partnership with other experts and the audience themselves. Museums will, therefore only break down barriers and broaden their audiences if they confront the issues holistically by being part of a multi-agency approach and working with partners such as other local community groups, county, city, and state agencies or departments." SNCA is already a vital community organization and its existing collaborations are many. It must continue to build on these and look for new opportunities to grow them in regard to the museum and its audiences.

Collaboration is key to a museum's success.

7 Encouraging Continuing Education for Staff and Volunteers

Just as SNCA promotes continuing education for the members and larger community, it must encourage ongoing education for its staff and volunteers in key program areas. Participation by representatives of SNCA in the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries (GAMG) would be of great benefit to them and SNCA. This organization, and others like the American Association for State and Local History and the American Association of Museums offer information and additional resources on best practice in collecting, preserving, and interpreting historical collections. The GAMG annual meeting will be held January 20-23, 2009 in Marietta, Georgia. Early bird registration ends January 9th. More information on GAMG and the conference can be found at www.gamg.org

Section 3 Summary of Immediate Next Steps

1 Research the History and Develop the “Big Idea”

Someone will need to lead the research for and curate the new exhibits. Chris Brooks should be designated as the curator for the project. The research should begin with a review of studies already completed and information organized for the current History Museum, changing exhibits, slave cabin, other programs, and the Folk Pottery Museum. Graduate students and interns may be able to assist in these efforts.

Assemble an advisory team of scholars to provide oversight of the research.

Develop a bibliography of sources used in this research and develop a list of other sources to consider. Include oral histories that should be conducted. Include exhibits at other museums.

Brainstorm further about themes and subjects, and those distinctive to the area. Based upon this, develop a research plan focusing on those “most likely” exhibit topics to be researched first.

Look at the possibility of applying for an NEH *We the People* Interpreting America’s Historic Places planning grant. http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/IAHP_planning.html

2 Research the Collections

Organize lists or group descriptions of artifacts that are already being used in the exhibits or that have been identified in the collections. Use a data base or three ring binders to begin sorting them according to possible exhibit subjects or themes. Add individual worksheets on items more likely to be included in the exhibits.

Develop a list of objects that would enhance the interpretation of the subjects and themes. List possible or identified sources for these.

If notifying the public about the new exhibits and general collecting efforts be certain not to imply or promise that any item offered will be accepted. Leave yourself an out. Often the search begins with an inventory of potential acquisitions.

Review collections policies to see if guidelines are in place for loans and acquisitions especially being considered for exhibit use. For example, should the museum borrow anchor items for exhibits? What would happen if the lender “called in” the object?

As the historical research and the collections research begin to intertwine, bring in an exhibit designer to do conceptual planning for the museum exhibits.

3 Research the Audience

Gather together all existing information on visitation.

Develop and implement a survey of visitors to the Folk Pottery Museum and History Museum.

Consider conducting several focus groups to learn about potential visitors. Perhaps, these could be done in conjunction with other organizations that would benefit from the same information.

Identify representatives of the area schools and scout groups to involve in the planning. Consider holding community meetings about the plans for the museum to learn about interests and needs.

4 Consider the Interpretive Techniques

Keep the various interpretive techniques in mind in researching the history and the artifacts. Some great ideas may come about this way.

Look at the interpretive methods being used by other museums and historic sites for ideas.

Consider the needs and interests of the visitors and the possibility that they are not the same as those of the people developing the exhibit.

Involve a museum educator to help determine or review the interpretive methods that are selected. The museum educator should work with the curator and designer in developing the exhibits.

5 Promote Internal Synergies

In considering exhibit themes and subjects, look at how they connect with other program areas of SNCA.

Begin studying and documenting the space and other requirements of the existing and future museum collections. Complete cataloging and rehousing of the current museum. Determine the past and likely future rate of growth for the museum collections.

When considering interpretive techniques, think about the space requirements. Some will require much larger areas than others.

Consider bringing in an architect to help with programming needs for the museum.

6 Promote Community Collaborations

Continue to work with the local chamber of commerce and the Georgia Department of Tourism.

Visit or meet with other sites and organizations, especially the Hardman Farm, to share plans and consider ways to collaborate.

Keep an eye out for new partners and “inventive” ways to collaborate.

Consider holding community meetings about the new museum to gather ideas and support for it.

7 Encourage Continuing Education for Staff and Volunteers

If not already a member, SNCA should consider joining the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries and sending staff or volunteers to the annual conference, January 20-23, 2009 in Marietta, Georgia.

Also consider memberships in the American Association for State and Local History or the American Association of Museums for access to information and resources.

Section 4

Appendix

- A SNCA History Museum Acquisition and Deaccession Policy
- B SNCA History Museum Strategic Plan 2008
- C Brief, Working Timeline of History in Santee Nacoochee Valleys [included with this draft]
- D Bibliography of Sources [included with this draft]

C **A Brief, Working Timeline of the Santee and Nacoochee Valleys**

- 10,000 B.C. to 8,000 BC Paleo-Indians
- 8,000 B.C. to 1,000 B.C. Archaic Indians
- 1,000 B.C. to A.D. 800 Woodland Indians
- A.D. 800 to A.D. 1540 Mississippian Indians
- 1540? DeSoto's visit is contested (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1567 Juan Pardo spent winter in East Tennessee(*Lumsden NV*)
- 1700 By then English traders had crossed the Blue Ridge and were trafficking with Overhill Cherokees on the Little Tennessee River. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1715-1716 Captain George Chicken of Charleston describes a trip taken by a group under the command of Col. Maurice Moore, from Charleston to Tugaloo in 1715. Mentions Indian towns of Nacoochee at the foot of Alec Mountain and also Chotte. (*Lumsden NV, p. 6*)
- 1725 Colonel Chicken visits Nacoochee again. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1773 John Bartram, botanist, mentions the Chote and Nae oche towns, but did not actually visit them. (*Lumsden NV*)
- July 1776 Nacoochee Indian villages is the site of an early skirmish of the American Revolution. Cherokees allied with British harassed the American frontier. In retaliation Georgian Col. Samuel Jack led a party of 200 fellow Georgians on a raid against the towns of Tugiloo and Chota. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1796 Col. Benjamin Hawkins visited Nacoochee. "He describes the site of the 'ruined village of Little Chote, with the mountain to the south (Yonah) covered with a sheet of ice formed on the rocks near its summit.'" (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1802 "Georgia gave up its claims to the areas that are today Alabama and Mississippi in exchange for a promise from the federal government to remove all Indians from her remaining claims." (*Rensi and Williams, p. 5*)
- "The 1802 treaty with Georgia stipulated that any lands granted by the Cherokee must be 'peaceably obtained,' and the Cherokee obviously had no intention of giving up their nation without a struggle. (*Rensi and Williams, p. 5*)

- 1817 Unicoi Turnpike completed and opened. Russell Goodrich of Savannah foresees value of a wagon road—develops Unicoi Turnpike. (*Lumsden NV, p. 8*)
- July 8, 1817 In a treaty, the Cherokee Nation ceded the lands east of the Chattahoochee River to federal government. (*Roth*)
- 1818 Border Commission appointed by the Governors of Georgia and Tennessee to establish boundary line between two states travels the road and records trip. “June 29, 1818 ...I proceeded on 12 miles to Walter Adairs’ on Soquee and spent the night, having to remain there to get one of horses shoes removed. This is one of the handsomest places I ever saw.” [Adair was a wealthy half blood Cherokee who operated a big farm and lime kiln and the opulence inspired the admiration express in the journal.]” Lumsden mentions how the journals refer to other Cherokee living in the area at this time. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1818 Border Commission appointed to survey and establish the line between Tennessee and Georgia. (*Roth*)
- Feb. 27, 1819 Treaty of Washington verified the Cherokee cession. (*Roth*)
- 1819 Habersham County established by act of the Georgia Legislature. (*Roth*)
- 1819 “First Habersham County Court session was held at the intersection of Macedonia and Low Gap Roads 4 miles north of present site of Clarkesville.” (*Roth*)
- 1820 Land lottery distributed lots in Habersham County. (*Roth*)
- 1822 61 white families come across the Southern Appalachians from North Carolina to settle the Valleys. (*SNCA*)
- 1824 Habersham County’s population 4451 (*Roth*)
- 1825 “By 1825 the Treaty of Indian Springs sealed the fate of the creeks and Georgia quickly turned its attention northward to the Cherokee Nation, bounded on the south by Chattahoochee and on the east by the Chestatee. (*Rensi and Williams, p. 5*)
- 1828 Gold is discovered in the Valley. (*SNCA*)
- 1828 Discovery of a large nugget of gold along Duke’s Creek by a slave of Major Frank Logan. (*Roth*)
- c. 1828 Gold discovered here and then shortly after on the Chestatee in Cherokee territory. (*Lumsden NV, p. 9*)

“On December 20, 1828, the state [STATE] legislature enacted a bill mandating the extension of Georgia’s authority over the Cherokee, to take effect on June 1, 1830. After that date all laws and customs of the Cherokee Nation would be declared null and void.” (*Rensi and Williams, pp. 5-6*)

“The sudden influx of thousands of miners into the Cherokee Nation was known even at the time as the ‘Great Intrusion.’” Georgia was not to take possession of the area until June of 1830 and even then the Cherokee would retain title to their property until the state might decide how best to dispose of it. The natives protested loudly against this obvious infringement of the agreement.” (*Rensi and Williams, p. 8*)

_____ British geologist and author, Featherstonhaugh was guided into the area by John C. Calhoun. Featherstonhaugh described the desolation which resulted from the gold mining operations. (*Lumsden NV, p. 9*)

_____ “Following the discovery of gold many natives carried out a dual existence, farming in the spring and summer, and mining in the fall and winter.” (*Lumsden NV, p. 9*)

On June 1, 1830, Gilmer issued a proclamation ‘notifying all persons whom it may concern, that the jurisdiction of this State is now extended over all the territory in the occupancy of the Cherokees.’” (*Rensi and Williams, p. 9*) ...

1830 Habersham’s population 10,671 (third most populous county in the state.” (*Roth*)

1830s Clarkesville flourished as merchants worked their own ‘goldmine,’ the increasing tourist trade. (*Roth*)

By 1831 The Williams store was no longer merely a country store serving the local farm populace but a trading post which still exchanged farm and finished goods, but now also dealt in mining supplies and gold-dust. Cash in the form of gold was slowly displacing the barter system. (*Roth*)

1831 Nacoochee Hydraulic Mining Company chartered by Georgia Legislature (*Roth*)

1831 Surveyors entered the Cherokee country ...preparing for a statewide lottery scheduled for the autumn of 1832. They divided the Cherokee country into four sections, each containing a designated number of districts. The Gold Districts, of which there were thirty-three, were divided into lots of forty acres each, while the Land Districts, numbering sixty, were divided into lots of 160 acres.” (*Rensi and Williams, p. 13*)

“In December of 1835 a minority faction of the Cherokee Nation, including Major Ridge...gathered at New Echota to place their signatures on a removal treaty. ...This Treaty of New Echota called for the Cherokee to relinquish all claims to their eastern lands in exchange for five million dollars and the hollow promise

that their new lands in the west would never become part of another state or territory without Cherokee consent.” Chief John Ross and others fought the treaty, but U.S. government made it clear they would enforce it. (*Rensi and Williams, p. 31*)

1838-1839 Trail of Tears

1849 A small town named “Nacoochee” contained three stores, a hotel, a church, and several mechanics shops. (*Roth*)

1857 Cleveland made the county seat of then newly formed White County (the western portion of Habersham originally) (*Roth*)

1858 Hydraulic mining first introduced into North Georgia (*Lumsden NV*)

Civil War “Number of young men left Nacoochee, many never to return. No battles fought. Sympathies little divided—sentiment almost entirely for States Rights and Southern Supremacy. War was an economic disaster for many of the Valley dwellers.” (*Lumsden NV*)

1863 “Documents trace tiny Bean Creek to at least 1863. (*The Rambler, November/December 2006*)

Reconstruction The origins of the Bean Creek Church date back to the beginnings of the Bean Creek community, which, according to oral sources ‘has been there since Reconstruction.’ In 1866 the church was formed as an offshoot of the Nacoochee Baptist Church, itself established in 1822. ²⁹ (*Roth*)

1873 Sautee Store opens. (DR) Built as a U.S. Post Office and operated as such until about 1962 (*Lumsden NV*)

1870-1930 Railroad Development, Tourism, and the Timber Boom

1880-1900 “During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, the Nacoochee and Sautee Valleys experienced a particularly significant residential building ‘boom’ in which the Valleys became studded with high-style Victorian homes, many of which still stand today.” (*Roth*)

1890 First baseball team organized in Nacoochee. (*Lumsden NV, p. 29*)

1893 First P.O. in valley, the Lynch Post Office, is established. (SNCA)

Late 19th C. Hollywood was the site of several active asbestos mines. (*Roth*)

1903 Nacoochee Institute established (*Lumsden NV*)

- 1911 Gainesville and Northern RR line was built, the Morrison Brother's sawmill began operations in Helen for the production of finished lumber products (*Roth*)
- 1911 Lynch post office closed and a Rural Free Delivery Route established from Sautee. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1912 Byrd-Matthews Lumber Company mill built beginning in 1912. (*Lumsden NV, p. 28*)
- 1913 Helen was chartered by act of the elevator August 1913. (*Lumsden NV, pp. 27-28*)
- 1913 The Gainesville Northwestern Railroad was completed into Helen and the Nacoochee Station was built across the tracks from the stores and post office [Nacoochee Station and Post Office]. (*Lumsden NV, p. 24*)
- 1913 Tallulah Falls dammed.
- 1918 Morse Brothers Lumber Company succeeded Byrd-Matthews in 1918. (*Lumsden NV, p. 29*)
- 1920s A rail depot and several stores were built at Western end of the Nacoochee Valley to serve not only the mill at Helen but those at Robertstown and Cleveland as well. (*Roth*)
- 1920s The appearance of the automobile as a major mode of aided the development of resort activities in communities not served by railroads. (*Roth*)
- 1926 Fire destroys main classroom building of Nacoochee Institute. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1928 Last of the virgin timber stands were decimated. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1928 Nacoochee Institute merges with another Presbyterian school in Rabun County to found Rabun Gap Nacoochee School. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1928? 1931? The Gainesville and Northwestern left Helen. (*Roth*)
- 1930-1940 Habersham County's population grew from 12,748 to 14,771 while smaller White County grew from 6056 to 6417.⁶⁰ (*Roth*)
- 1934 An encampment for the newly created New Deal CCC was built on Smith Creek above Robertstown. (*Lumsden NV, p. 28*)
- 1936 The National Forest Reservation Commission purchased 1,574,325 acres of land in the northern part of Georgia for the creation of the Chattahoochee National Forest as authorized by the U.S. Forest Service." (*Roth*)

WWII

- 1959 Nacoochee high school students consolidated with others into one school in Cleveland. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1969 Business owners in Helen convert the village into a Bavarian style tourist destination.
- 1970s A group of forward-looking community members joined together to protect their beautiful and historic Nacoochee Valley. Had the Valley placed on the National Register as an historic district. (SNCA)
- Group formed the Sautee-Nacoochee Community Association. (*SNCA*)
- 1974 Nacoochee Grammar School consolidated with others. (*Lumsden NV*)
- 1981 The group submitted a rural preservation study to State of Georgia; the following May the National Trust for Historic Preservation honored SNCA for its study. (*SNCA*)
- 1986 Sautee Valley added to the National Register. (*SNCA*)
- 1986 SNCA votes to purchase Nacoochee School Building to develop it into an arts and community center. (*SNCA*)
- 1990 SNCA hosted first major summer event. (*SNCA*)
- 1993 SNCA became a charter member of the Environmental Fund for Georgia. (*SNCA*)
- 2000 Recognized by Georgia Council for the Arts as number one among arts orgs. With budgets of comparable size. (*SNCA*)
- 2006 SNCA opens the Folk Pottery Museum

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