



 The Historic
New Orleans Collection

2024–25
Annual Report

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Dear Friends,

This past year has reminded us of something simple and powerful: History is not just about the past. It's about people. It's about how we remember, how we connect, and how we build understanding across generations. That kind of work depends on collaboration and community. At the Historic New Orleans Collection, that sense of connection is at the heart of everything we do. And in 2025, we saw what can happen when more people join in.

We saw a powerful response to our award winning work, engaging more than 75,000 people through our exhibitions and programs. We presented a stirring one-man show about wrongful incarceration, and our 2025 New Orleans Antiques Forum, "New Lives for Old Things," drew a sold-out crowd from across the country.

We added notable pieces to our collection, including the papers of artist Jean Seidenberg, a founding member of the Orleans Gallery whose former home at 527 Royal Street is now part of HNOC's campus, and a 24-inch-tall model of the space shuttle. We loaned pieces to institutions from Minnesota to Croatia, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center.

In the following pages, you will learn how we built an exhibition around new research into our portrait collection, conducted new research into the lives of our buildings' historical occupants, and presented the world premiere of a once-lost opera. Each of these projects shed light on new voices. Each helped us reflect more fully on who we are and how we got here. That kind of reflection is not a luxury. It is a responsibility. And it is a central part of our mission to



steward the history and culture of our city and our region. This work is only made possible through the kind of creative partnerships, scholarly inquiry, and pursuit of excellence that we share with our colleagues and collaborators.

This report is a testament to the collective spirit that drives our work forward. We strive every day to make history meaningful. Your financial support is the catalyst for our work. Thank you for continuing to help us bring history to light for generations to come.

In partnership,

Daniel Hammer
President and CEO
The Historic New Orleans Collection

<p>75,682</p> <p>TOTAL VISITORS</p>	<p>2,255</p> <p>FIELD TRIP ATTENDEES</p>	<p>2,586</p> <p>PROGRAM ATTENDEES</p>	<p>1,497</p> <p>RESEARCH CENTER VISITORS</p>
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Giving Unknown Faces a Close-Up

WHO GETS REMEMBERED IN HISTORY? *Unknown Sitters* asked this question through an artful curation of portraits of people whose names had been lost to time. Many were women, children, or people of color, subjects long overlooked by collectors, curators, and history itself. To give these faces new life, HNOC invited students to write character sketches about one of those sitters, imagining who they were and what their world might have been like. This year's response was unprecedented: More than 1,000 students submitted entries from all 50 states, as well as Washington, DC, and several foreign countries. The exhibition gallery included seating areas, drawing stations, and an interactive magnet wall where visitors could write and post their own captions. Thirty winners were chosen, and select entries appeared alongside the portraits on view.

Two portraits went from obscurity to belonging. In one case, a local woman spotted her grandfather in the gallery, reconnecting three generations of her family with a lost piece of their history. That discovery captured exactly what this exhibit set out to do: show how inclusive, inviting storytelling can make history personal.



1,100
WRITING
CONTEST ENTRIES

50
STATES PLUS DC AND
FOREIGN COUNTRIES

26
PORTRAITS INCLUDED
IN EXHIBITION

2
SITTERS IDENTIFIED





History Behind Bars

25,059
TOTAL VISITORS

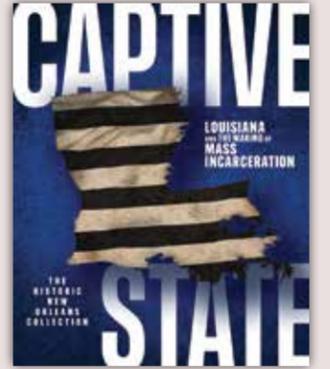
618
RELATED PROGRAM
ATTENDEES

523
PARTICIPANTS IN
DIALOGIC TOURS

100+
COMMUNITY
GROUPS VISITED

CAPTIVE STATE, OUR YEARS-IN-THE-MAKING

exhibition about mass incarceration, opened new conversations about justice and memory. The exhibition was shaped over 10 years with input from an advisory board that included community members and scholars. It received national press and attracted 25,000 visitors to the exhibition and related events. Many attended conversational tours that directly engaged visitors about the material, encouraging reflection, discussion, and connection. *Captive State* was recognized by the nonprofit Innocence and Justice Louisiana with the John Thompson Award for Courage and Justice. It also received first place in the Southeastern Museums Conference awards for exhibitions with a budget over \$100,000.



Featuring powerful objects, from prison uniforms to personal letters, along with the voices of those still incarcerated, *Captive State* gave this complicated subject a human face—most notably in the moving display of Deborah Luster’s series of inmate portraits, *One Big Self*. Nearly 2,000 visitors left written responses, and more than half of tour participants were local. The project also inspired a new book and has helped HNOC build deeper relationships with community partners.



A Musical Homecoming

IN JANUARY 2025, New Orleans became the first city to hear the world premiere of excerpts from a recently unearthed opera by Edmond Dédé. For the 17th edition of our free concert series *Musical Louisiana: America's Cultural Heritage*, *Morgiane* debuted to a standing-room-only crowd 138 years after it was composed—music that had never before been heard.

Born in New Orleans in 1827, Dédé left the country to pursue his career in France, where racial barriers were less severe. Though he found work as a composer and conductor, his magnum opus went unpublished and unperformed. The manuscript remained shelved at Harvard until Givonna Joseph, founder and artistic director of OperaCréole, took it under her wing, stewarding it for over a decade. Eventually OperaCréole, Opera Lafayette, the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, and HNOOC came together to bring the project to life right here in New Orleans, Dédé's hometown. The historic performance took place in St. Louis Cathedral, where Dédé was baptized. Three days after the historic snowstorm that surprised New Orleans in January, the show went on, with 1,200 people in attendance and thousands more listening via livestream and radio broadcasts. Highlights from the opera went on to be staged in Washington, DC, and New York. This effort restored Dédé's place in the history of American music and launched new conversations about the global impact of New Orleans musicians.

138
YEARS SINCE DÉDÉ
COMPLETED THE OPERA

550
HANDWRITTEN
MANUSCRIPT
PAGES TRANSCRIBED

17
INSTALLMENTS OF
MUSICAL LOUISIANA





Peeling Back the Layers of 533 Royal Street

AT THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION, our buildings are not just structures—they're artifacts that make up the heart of our collection. As renovations unfold at 533 Royal Street, our original campus, we are preserving architecture while uncovering new dimensions of the past.

Our in-house team of experts has partnered with architectural historians and archaeologists to learn directly from the site. Careful demolition and excavation have revealed shadow walls of lost fireplaces, long-buried gutters, and more than 900 artifacts that trace the property's evolution from 18th-century military barracks to boardinghouse and beyond. A silver spoon engraved with the initials of previous owner Jean François Merieult anchors a growing body of material illustrating the building's history. Special attention has been paid to the people whose lives touched the site over the centuries. Our team has identified more than 800 individuals connected to this site. These findings will shape our exhibitions at 533 Royal Street, grounding them in human stories that illuminate our complex past. This is 21st-century history: layered, collaborative, and deeply rooted in place.

7
BUILDINGS

5
COURTYARDS

900
ARTIFACTS





From Stitch to Story

THROUGH OUR DECORATIVE ARTS OF THE GULF SOUTH (DAGS) program, HNOC is preserving the material culture of the past while training future historians. Each summer, graduate interns document historic furnishings and domestic objects at partner sites across the region. Their work expands a growing online database that connects decorative arts to the broader story of the Gulf South. In 2024, DAGS staff collaborated with Shadows-on-the-Teche in New Iberia, Louisiana, to research rare 19th-century garments, most too fragile to display. Archival research uncovered ties to Charity, an enslaved seamstress, and other overlooked figures whose labor shaped the collection. These discoveries will inform future exhibitions and make history more accessible through online tools and storytelling. With growing demand and new collaborations ahead, DAGS is evolving into a vital regional resource. Continued funding ensures that students can travel, research, and learn firsthand how to interpret history through objects.



9
YEARS SINCE DAGS
CAME TO HNOC

24
INTERNS SINCE 2016

17
UNIVERSITIES
REPRESENTED

13
TOWNS AND CITIES
VISITED ACROSS
THREE STATES



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\$100,000+

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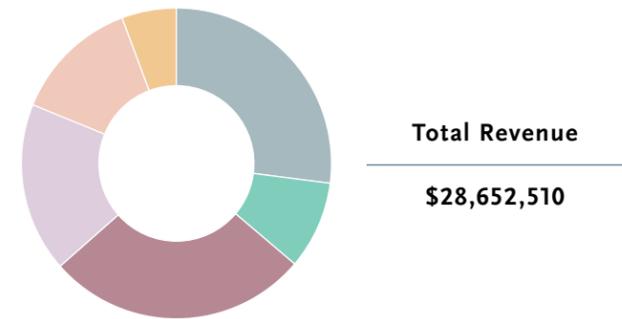
APRIL 1, 2024–MARCH 31, 2025

ASSETS

Unrestricted	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$21,628,284
Investments	\$439,207,102*
Real Estate	\$91,002,809
Mineral Interest	\$423,165
Charitable Gift Annuities	\$25,299
Shop Merchandise	\$281,666
Fixed Assets	\$350,944
Total Unrestricted Assets	\$530,842,521
Restricted	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$6,605
Investments	\$7,866,982
Total Restricted Assets	\$7,873,587
Total Assets	\$538,716,108

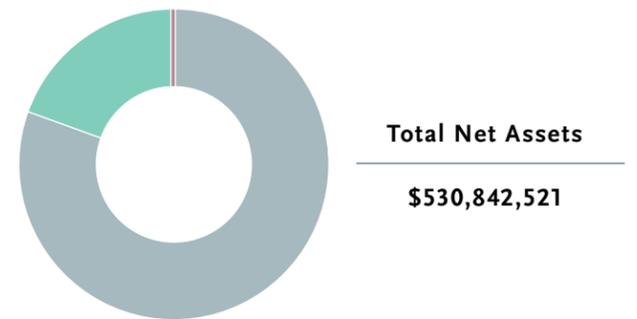
OPERATING SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Net Investment Return	\$24,751,052
Individual Contributions	\$1,054,981
Institutional Contributions	\$357,275
Other Income	\$1,065,382
Retail Sales	\$688,847
Royalties	\$512,656
Rental Income	\$222,317



NET ASSETS

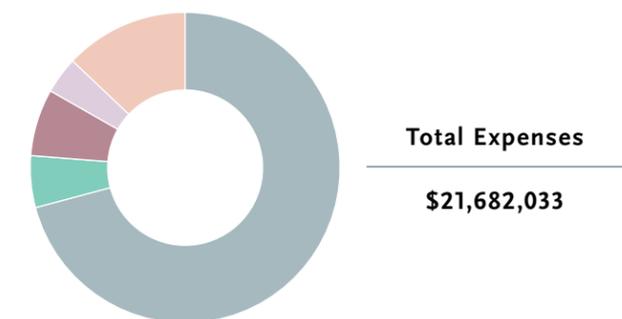
Endowment	\$439,207,102*
Real Estate	\$91,002,809
Other Assets	\$632,610



*Market Value

EXPENSES

Museum	\$15,362,127
Publications	\$1,169,332
Research Center	\$1,513,808
Retail Operations	\$831,354
General and Administrative	\$2,805,412



HNOC by the Numbers

145
Employees

14
Buildings in the
French Quarter

13
Interns

HNOC's holdings comprise the world's largest collection of materials related to the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South region.

235,423
Objects

311,913
Digitized Items

3+
Linear Miles of
Archival Collections

51,061
Library and
Bibliographic Items

2025 was a great year for engagement, with a total of more than 500,000 interactions.

75,682
Total Visitors

2,255
Field Trip Attendees

2,586
Program Attendees

293,148
First Draft
Blog Views

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For further information about the Historic New Orleans Collection financial reports, please contact Mandi Cambre, director of development, at mandi.cambre@hnoc.org or (504) 598-7173.



Young girl with pink bow
 1938 (approx.)
 by Mae 193 (born ca. 1901)
 2007.0086.07

Like many French Quarter artists, Mae 193 created portraits for assembly in Jackson Square. In contrast to those portraits featured in this exhibition, this one was likely made outside of a studio or workshop and was one of the many folk art pieces that circulated from both near and far. While the exact date has been a local mystery, it is likely possible that she was encountering in the city. She may be a young girl from one of the many schools of the French Quarter, including those who had been which is a typical one for the time period. The young girl in this portrait may well be a relative of the artist.

The Mirror
 by Ark L. (approx. 1850-1900)
 Franklin Elementary School, Saratoga, PA

This work is a portrait of a young girl, likely a student of the artist, who is looking into a mirror. The girl is wearing a white dress and has her hair styled in braids. The background is a simple, light-colored wall. The painting is executed in a style that is characteristic of the late 19th or early 20th century, with a focus on the subject's face and the reflection in the mirror.



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