

**MUSEUM CELEBRATES 250 YEARS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY
AND CULTURE WITH FREE FESTIVAL**

Celebration includes musical performances, art activities and history experiences

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Feb. 14, 2019 – Celebrate 250 years of Charlotte’s vibrant African-American history and culture on Saturday, Feb. 23, at The Charlotte Museum of History from 12-4 p.m. The African-American Heritage Festival is free and made possible with support from the Arts & Science Council and Walmart.

Visitors will explore the African roots of Southern foods; tour the 1774 Rock House home site through the eyes of Bet, one of the enslaved people who lived and worked on the property; examine what an escape from slavery to freedom might have been like through the Great Dismal Swamp experience; and learn how to preserve and tell their family’s stories.

Activities and Experiences

Visitors of all ages will enjoy a full afternoon of free activities, including:

- **From the Civil Rights Movement to the Fair Housing Act.** *12 p.m.*
John Howard, former board member of The Charlotte Museum of History, will speak about the transition from the Civil Rights Movement to the Fair Housing Act. Howard is a planner at the Charlotte Area Transit System and was formerly Historic Districts Administrator with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Planning Department.
- **Voices of Eden Gospel Choir,** *from 1:15-1:45 p.m. and again from 3:30-4 p.m.*
The Voices of Eden Gospel Choir will perform, sharing the rich history of Gospel music and its connections to the African-American experience.
- **The Great Dismal Swamp Maze,** *from 12-4 p.m.*
The name “Great Dismal Swamp” can conjure up images of despair. But for an estimated 500,000 enslaved people, the swamp represented freedom and a chance to escape the horrors of enslavement. Visitors will learn about navigating

the dangers of the Great Dismal Swamp to better understand the hardships these communities endured to have basic freedoms.

- **Traveling Blue**, 2-3:15 p.m.

Tenya Coleman and Ana Lucia Divins of Traveling Blue will perform music ranging from Mississippi blues and traditional jazz to Latin-American folk songs. Traveling Blue's performance is sponsored by a Culture Blocks grant. Culture Blocks is a community partnership between the Arts & Science Council, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation to bring arts and cultural experiences closer to where residents live. Mecklenburg County funds Culture Blocks.

- **Charlotte's Champions of Equality**, 12-4 p.m.

UNC-Charlotte's Atkins Library is home to a wealth of resources that highlight Charlotte's civil rights history. From personal accounts to letters from Martin Luther King Jr., the library archivists will be onsite to help you hear the voices of the Queen City's champions of equality.

- **Blacksmith Demonstration**, 12-4 p.m.

Many enslaved people were skilled craftsmen and master tradesmen. Join representatives from Historic Rosedale Plantation to learn how one enslaved man named Nat became a renowned blacksmith here in Mecklenburg County.

- **Explore the African roots of Southern foods**, 12-4 p.m.

Explore African influences on Southern food culture with the museum's costumed interpreters.

- **Explore the Hezekiah Alexander Home Site**, 12-4 p.m.

Visitors can step inside the Hezekiah Alexander Rock House (ca. 1774), the oldest home in Mecklenburg County, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- **Finding Your Family Story**, from 12-4 p.m.

Join the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and the Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society to learn about genealogy resources for tracing your family's history and tips and tricks for preserving your family stories.

- **Folk Art Traditions, 12-4 p.m.**

In this hands-on activity with folk artist Wanda Clark, visitors can create their own artwork and learn about folk art traditions. Wanda is a folk artist born and raised in Iredell County. Her paintings, representing both important and mundane moments in her life, are filled with color to draw in curious minds. A selection of original artwork by Mecklenburg County folk artist Nellie Ashford also will be on display. Ashford's mixed-media folk art depicts the experiences of Charlotte's African-American community during the era of Jim Crow in the U.S. South.

How to Go

The *African-American Heritage Festival* is Saturday, Feb. 23, from 12-4 p.m. at The Charlotte Museum of History's eight-acre campus at 3500 Shamrock Drive. Online [registration at charlottemuseum.org](https://www.charlottemuseum.org) is requested but not required.

About The Charlotte Museum of History

The Charlotte Museum of History engages a broad audience in the history of the Charlotte region through the stories of its people, places and events to promote dialogue and historical perspective. The museum is the steward of the Hezekiah Alexander House (ca. 1774) and home site, a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the oldest home in Mecklenburg County. To learn more, visit [charlottemuseum.org](https://www.charlottemuseum.org) and follow the museum on Facebook and Twitter (@CLThistory).

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