



# LancasterHistory

**For Immediate Release**

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## LancasterHistory Announces Leadership Transition

*Long-standing President & CEO will pass baton to Vice President in 2025*

**LANCASTER, PA** — By unanimous vote of the Board of Directors of **LancasterHistory**, Board Chair **J. Richard Gray** announced that **Robin E. Sarratt** will assume the position of President and CEO of LancasterHistory on January 1, 2025, taking over the leadership role from **Dr. Thomas R. Ryan**. Ryan has held the position of President & CEO since January 1, 1997. The transition comes at a pivotal moment for the 138 year old organization as it is currently building a new museum in downtown Lancaster, the **Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy**. Ryan will take on *emeritus* status and focus his efforts exclusively on completing the new Stevens & Smith Center, set to open in late 2025.

Sarratt, now in her 18th year at LancasterHistory, joined the organization in August of 2007 as Director of Development and was named Vice President three years later. A North Carolina native, Sarratt began her museum career at the **Appalachian Cultural Museum** in Boone, NC, and at Doris Duke's home, **Rough Point**, in Newport, RI. A graduate of **Appalachian State University** and the **University of Delaware/Winterthur Program in Early American Culture**, she spent seven years at the **Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Garden, & Library** as the Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations.

“The board couldn’t be more thrilled to have Robin step into the role of President and CEO,” said LancasterHistory Board Chair J. Richard Gray. “Her steady hand, proven skills, and sparkling personality will provide great continuity at a very exciting time for the organization.”

Ryan led the Lancaster County Historical Society through nearly three decades of substantial growth and change. Under his leadership, the historical society developed a robust platform for sharing the history of Lancaster County with the public, creating a vibrant array of exhibits and educational programs, growing its membership program to include members across the nation, forging relationships with other non-profits in the region, and substantially increasing the organization's financial resources. In 2009, the Lancaster County Historical Society merged with the James Buchanan Foundation for the Preservation of Wheatland, reuniting the adjacent properties that once belonged to President Buchanan. Today, the organization operates as LancasterHistory on its 12-acre Campus of History at the corner of Marietta and North President Avenues, and is also home to the **Louise Arnold Tanger Arboretum**.

In 2013, through a \$13 Million capital campaign led by Ryan and Sarratt, LancasterHistory completed the renovation and expansion of its 1955 headquarters, resulting in a 35,000 square foot museum and research center. The facility achieved L.E.E.D Silver Certification thanks to its energy-efficient designs. A second \$3.8 Million campaign enabled the organization to incorporate the entire historical collections of the former **Heritage Center Museum** and the **Lancaster Quilt and Textile Museum** into the **Richard C. von Hess Decorative Arts Center** at LancasterHistory.

“LancasterHistory and Lancaster County owe Tom a great debt of gratitude. Tom’s arrival in the late ‘90s ushered in a new era for LancasterHistory. Over 28 years, he grew the organization’s capacity in multiple ways,” continued Gray. “For decades, the historical society had been a presence in the community. Building on that legacy, Tom’s vision helped transform LancasterHistory from a presence in the community into a leader in the field of history in our region. He navigated campaigns, mergers, the The Great Recession, major institutional change, and a pandemic, all while increasing the organization’s capacity to serve this community. Now with the Stevens & Smith Center, Tom is helping Lancaster highlight stories of major national importance that unfolded right here in Lancaster County.”

“It’s been the honor of a lifetime to shepherd this organization, accompanied by an exceptional

board of directors and a creative and dedicated professional staff, all in a community with a passionate appreciation of its history,” stated Ryan. “It is also an extreme honor to have the capstone of one’s career be the Stevens & Smith Center!”

Ryan plans to officially retire once the Stevens & Smith Center opens in late 2025.

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### **About LancasterHistory**

*LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the homes of 15th US President James Buchanan and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith.*

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**Image of Tom Ryan and Robin Sarratt**

*Photograph should be credited to Fig Industries.*

**Tom Ryan Headshot**

**Robin Sarratt Headshot**

*Headshots should be credited to Julie Liz Photography for LancasterHistory.*

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