In 2006, the Shaker Heritage Society of Watervliet, New York faced nine months of construction and restoration work on its 19th-century Shaker Meeting House, to be managed by the New York State Department of Transportation. When I joined the Shaker Heritage Society as museum director in March 2003, the project was already looming. As a first-time chief executive, I was terrified by the prospect of being involved in major restoration work while also learning the basics of the job. Nightmares about blank-faced bureaucrats carting sheets of vinyl siding around kept me tossing and turning at night. Would future generations point to the project as a catastrophe or as a successful example of public/private collaboration? In the end, budget delays gave me three years to ruminate and get my feet on the ground before the work began.

Established near Albany in 1776, the Watervliet Shaker religious community was the nation’s first. Pioneers in the garden seed industry, the Watervliet Shakers prospered for 150 years before selling the property to Albany County in 1926. The county promptly transformed hundreds of acres of Shaker agricultural land into America’s first municipal airport. Several large Shaker buildings survived the wrecking ball to become a tuberculosis sanitarium, and a new nursing home facility was constructed. Over the next fifty years, the site’s Shaker history disappeared from public memory.

In 1977, plans to build a baseball field next to the old Shaker cemetery led to the organization of the Shaker Heritage Society, which placed the site on the National Register. The county began to abandon the Shaker buildings in favor of more modern facilities, and by the early 1980s the Society leased several historic structures for education and preservation activities. However, the historic site was, and remains, next door neighbor to the busy airport. In the 1980s, a transportation taskforce of state, federal, and local officials decided to realign the roadways surrounding the airport to limit traffic within the Watervliet Shaker National Historic District. While the realignment would divert traffic away from the site, it would also erase the main route once used by non-Shakers coming to purchase the community’s famous goods. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined that realignment would adversely impact the historic site and ordered mitigation for the loss of the historic road. Several years of negotiation produced an agreement to restore the exterior of the 1848 Shaker Meeting House.

When the project was put out to bid, SHPO staff helped ensure that the DOT’s Request For Proposals required contractors to prove they could meet the United States Department of the Interior standards for Historic Preservation. Old Saratoga Restoration of Saratoga Springs, NY was chosen as the contractor, and we could not possibly have been more fortunate. At the first construction coordination meeting in 2006, I was the only female in sight...
The United Society of Believers, commonly called Shakers, was founded in 1747 in Manchester, England. They were called in derision, “Shaking Quakers,” because of their ecstatic and violent bodily agitation in worship. Deciding to remove to America, Mother Ann Lee and eight of her followers landed in New York City on August 6, 1774. Several went upriver to a place outside Albany (today’s Watervliet) and began to clear the land and erect buildings. Harassed and persecuted for their pacifism and religious beliefs, by 1787, the Shakers began to gather into Communities, the first located in New Lebanon, New York. Eventually eighteen Communities were established in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia and Florida. At its height in the 1850s, Shakers numbered about 5000 people.

**www.shaker.lib.me.us.**

**Sabbathday Lake, Maine.**

The Sabbathday Lake Shaker Community, founded in 1783, was one of the numerically smallest and poorest of the eastern Shaker Communities, but today is the only active Shaker Community.

**http://shakermuseumandlibrary.org.**

**Old Chatham, New York.**

The Shaker Museum and Library is the premier center for the interpretation and exhibition of Shaker life and culture. Collections include furniture, woodenware, textiles, tools and equipment, art, photographs, account books, and manuscript diaries. The Library has significant holdings in primary and secondary materials.

**http://mountlebanonshakervillage.org.**

**New Lebanon, New York.**

Starting in 1787, the Shakers at Mount Lebanon led the largest and most successful utopian communal society in America. With over 6,000 acres and 100 buildings – Mount Lebanon Shaker Village was a driving force in the agricultural, industrial, commercial, and institutional activities of its day. The last Shakers left Mt. Lebanon in 1947.

**Other Shaker historic sites outside the Mid-Atlantic region:**

**www.hancockshakervillage.org.**

**Pittsfield, Massachusetts.**

Hancock Shaker Village, Inc., preserved the closed Shaker community as a historic landmark Village, which opened in 1961.

**www.shakers.org.**

**Canterbury, New Hampshire**

Canterbury Shaker Village was established in 1792 as the seventh community, and remained prominent for 200 years.

We quickly drew up alternate plans for the 1,500 fourth grade students who normally learn about Shaker interactions with the outside world by sitting in the Meeting House and learning Shaker songs. Miraculously, the winds stayed calm long enough to stabilize the rising seats and the walls, so the Society’s programs continued as scheduled. The Department of Transportation and Albany County agreed to absorb the significant additional cost of stabilization.

Numerous decisions had to be made on the spot about items ranging from what the doors should look like to how to replicate two triple-hung Shaker windows. Photo documentation provided essential guidance for these decisions. The engineers and contractors went far out of their way to analyze the potential effects of our decisions.

Elaborate charts analyzed types of insulation, various types of door hardware were examined and rejected, and a code officer helped balance historical accuracy with visitor safety. When the contractor could not find ready-made doors that satisfied him, his foreman painstakingly made each door by hand. He even threw in an extra door!

None of the nightmares that had plagued me came true. The 1848 Meeting House emerged restored to its original appearance: a large, ethereal white building that looks like it floats in the air. In fact, the project drew a lot of positive attention to the Society and its efforts to preserve the site. It was clear that everyone involved felt good about returning an important historic structure to its original form. When the time came, we were a little sad to say goodbye to the work crews and our friends at the DOT.
FEATURING RESOURCE **AVENGING THE ANCESTORS COALITION**

**Passionate Activists and Scholarly Professionals: A Dynamic Duo**

Avenging The Ancestors Coalition (ATAC) and others recently won a relentless five-year battle to persuade the National Park Service (NPS) and Independence National Historical Park (INHP) to create an installation at the President’s House in Philadelphia that includes a commemoration of slavery. This commemoration will specifically honor nine people of African ancestry enslaved by George and Martha Washington at America’s first official Executive Mansion. The site, a house owned by Robert Morris and rented to the nation as an executive mansion, stood on today’s Independence Mall, just steps away from the Liberty Bell Center. As the first American monument to the sufferings and labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants, this commemoration also honors many millions whose names we no longer know, by showing how entangled American liberty always was with American slavery.

The battle to build this commemoration was won because activists and scholars found ways to work together. ATAC, a broad-based coalition of African American activists, spearheaded a voluminous letter-writing campaign and accumulated more than 15,000 signatures during a petition drive, all calling for a full exploration of slavery at this site. In addition, ATAC held massive annual demonstrations in front of the site right before Independence Day in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005. Historical researchers provided the factual information -- or, better stated, the historical ammunition -- around which ATAC organized.

Armed with unimpeachable historical evidence, ATAC and other activists also mobilized resources from the city of Philadelphia and the United States Congress to design and build the installation. U.S. Representatives Chaka Fattah and Robert Brady, both of whom represent Philadelphia districts, secured an amendment to the Interior Department’s 2003 budget forcing the National Park Service to develop plans for an “appropriate commemoration” of the nine enslaved Africans. Then, in October of 2003, Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street responded to ATAC’s zealous solicitation of his support by pledging $1.5 million to jumpstart the project. Finally, in August of 2005, Representatives Fattah and Brady won $3.6 million of federal support to build the completed design.

This experience proves absolutely that not only do activists need history professionals continued on page 7

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**GOING TO THE WELL**

**IMLS: Raising public concern for historic collections**

As part of its ongoing mission “to connect people with information and ideas,” the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an independent federal agency, has launched a major initiative in support of collections care. Called *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, the new four-pronged initiative responds to recommendations contained in the 2005 publication, *Heritage Health Index*, which IMLS helped support.

The *Heritage Health Index* (see Cross Ties, Spring 2006, p. 3), concluded that, nationally, 190 million objects needed conservation, sixty-five percent of collecting institutions had sustained damage to collections due to improper storage, eighty percent lacked an emergency plan for their collections and staff trained to carry it out, and forty percent allocated no resources for preservation or conservation in their annual budgets.

Faced with this substantial challenge, the *Connecting to Collections* initiative not only includes special attention within IMLS grant programs to collections care but also intends to raise professional and public awareness of the importance of collections. Unfolding over several years, the initiative includes:

- **A National Conservation Summit** to be held this June in Washington, DC. Though attendance is by invitation only, IMLS will release a DVD summary of the proceedings.

- **Four Forums** for public discussion will be scheduled in cities across the nation between January 2008 and June 2009.

- **A Conservation Bookshelf** of high-quality materials will be made available via a streamlined grant application process.

- As much as $500,000 per year for two years for **Planning Grants** to states, commonwealths, and territories creating conservation plans. Information will be available at [www.imls.gov/about/collections.shtm](http://www.imls.gov/about/collections.shtm).

In unveiling the initiative, Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of IMLS, emphasized that collections care is a national problem. But she expressed confidence that, with everyone working together, “the next time we take the temperature of our heritage’s health we will find the patient much improved.”
At the end of February, the city of Philadelphia and Independence National Historical Park awarded the design/build contract for the President’s House to Kelly/Maiello Architects and Planners. Designs, a press release, and a profile of the team are all available online at www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse/plans/index.htm. In April, archealogists excavating the site located foundations for the back wall of the original House and the basement of the adjoining kitchen. (See also in this issue, the Featured Resource essay by Michael Coard, a founding member of the Avenging The Ancestors Coalition.)

The Historical Society of Washington, DC welcomes new board members and a funding appropriation from the city as it continues to regroup and move forward. Incoming board chair, Merrick Malone, is a principal in Metropolis Development, a former District deputy mayor for economic development, and a former cabinet member under Mayor Coleman Young in Detroit. Three vice chairs, Bernard Demczuk, Alex PDO, and Kateri Ellison, will strengthen the Society’s neighborhood presence. Douglas Evelyn and John Fleckner, both recently retired from the Smithsonian, have also joined the board. Led by director Bell Clement, HSWDC has also substantially reduced its debt. These steps enable the Society to re-establish several interrupted programs, including the publication of its historical journal.

In March, the Organization of American Historians released “The Next Generation of History Teachers: A Challenge to Departments of History at American Colleges and Universities,” calling on academic history departments nationwide to consider how they might help prepare future primary- and secondary-school history teachers. The document, available at www.historians.org/pubs/free/historyteaching/, has been endorsed by the OAH Executive Board and the AHA Council.

The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (W3R-PA), released its new cultural resource guide on April 13 at the newly-discovered American Revolution campsite on the Schuylkill River at 23rd and Race streets in Philadelphia. En route to Yorktown, Virginia in 1781, 7000 Continental and French troops and their livestock camped there before crossing the Schuylkill at Market Street to continue south. The W3R-PA Cultural Resource Guide, developed by historian Robert Selig, will be distributed on CD to Pennsylvania libraries and historical societies. For more information and 2007 commemorative events, see www.w3r-us.org.

This fall, Rutgers University-Newark will enroll its first graduate students in American Studies. The multi-disciplinary program in American Studies offers both masters and doctoral degrees. Students may focus within six interdisciplinary fields: Race, Ethnicity, and Modern Society, Urban Cultures, Cultural History and Artistic Production, America within a Global Context, The Operations of Social Institutions, and Women’s and Gender Studies.

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The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded a $45,000 grant to MARCH to fund a plan to interpret the broad range of historical resources associated with the abandoned Bethlehem Steel works in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The 120-acre site, which closed in the 1990s and was abandoned when Bethlehem Steel Corporation declared bankruptcy in 2003, houses the last remaining fully-integrated steel mill in the United States. MARCH initiated a community-based planning process in 2004 which was endorsed by Bethlehem’s mayor, John Callahan.

The site owners, a group of investors incorporated as Bethlehem Works Now, propose to fund approximately $1 billion of mixed-use redevelopment by opening a state-licensed slots casino on the eastern portion of the site. They set aside a historic area in the central portion of the site, including the five 20-story blast furnaces and several key historic buildings. Working as part of the Lehigh Valley Industrial Heritage Coalition, a group of local and regional cultural organizations, MARCH will bring together scholars, designers, the public, the site owners, and the city on June 14-15 to consider how historic interpretation will contribute to the overall revitalization of the site and community. The outcome of the grant-funded process will be a multi-phase plan for site development, curriculum, and tourist promotion to roll out over the next several years. See details at http://march.rutgers.edu/bethSteelJuneconf.htm.

MARCH regional fellow Camilo José Vergara has extended his website documenting historical change in American inner cities beyond Camden, New Jersey and Richmond, California to include central Harlem, an area he began photographing in 1970, six years after the riot of 1964 there. “At that time, disconnected from mainstream America, Harlem was like a run-down version of Paris,” he writes, “where life was lived outside, on the streets, amid the fading glory of its grand boulevards….There was something vital going on in Harlem in those days and it was not a Renaissance, or a jazz scene, a frenzy of sports, or a world of gospel singing.” The site, www.invinciblecities.com, has been selected by the Library of Congress for inclusion in the historic collection of Internet materials for the Prints and Photographs Web Archive. The project has been underwritten by the Ford Foundation.

Shan Holt took part in a panel on regionalism at the 2007 Organization of American Historians convention. Organized by Warren Hofstra, professor of history at Shenandoah University, the session produced a lively discussion among panelists and audience members about the significance of regional perspectives in contemporary historical thinking. Panelists are currently writing up their thoughts, which Hofstra intends to submit as a collective publication.

MARCH has created a survey for Cross Ties readers, as part of our on-going effort to assess its impact. Responses to the survey will help shape Cross Ties and help us make the case for continuing to publish. Please take a moment and answer the questions yourself, on the MARCH website at www.march.rutgers.edu/newsletter.htm.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

In March 2007, Robert W. Rogers, the Maryland Historical Society’s former chief financial officer, who was rehired last year as acting director, was unanimously appointed director of the Society. Board chair Barbara P. Katz described Rogers as a “great consensus builder…deeply respected by both trustees and staff.” The 163-year-old historical society is the state’s oldest cultural institution. Struggling to regain firm financial footing after years of deficits, the society last year restructured and cut staff in an effort to narrow a $1.4 million budget gap. Rogers and the board are engaged in a wide-ranging strategic planning effort to chart the organization’s future.

Thinc™ New York’s Thinc Design, in partnership with Local Projects, LLC, has been named the lead exhibition design team for the World Trade Center Memorial Museum. Thinc is a leading international exhibition firm whose practice focuses on the intersection of society and exhibit making in the United States, Europe and South Africa. Tom Hennes, founder and creative director of Thinc, presented the firm’s work at South Africa’s Freedom Park at the 2005 MARCH annual meeting in Philadelphia.

The Hagley Museum and Library welcomed Geoffrey Halfpenny as their new director on April 2, 2007. Mr. Halfpenny came to Hagley from the Delaware Museum of Natural History where he had served as their new director since 1998.

The Field Guide to Emergency Response, published by Heritage Preservation, the National Institute for Conservation, won a First Place Media Award from the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) for Special Reference Materials by a Government or Nonprofit Organization. The Field Guide offers continued on page 6.
The Howard Theatre, a premier black entertainment venue in Washington, D.C. since 1910, will reopen again in 2008. Closed in 1977, the theater opened only briefly again in the 1980s. Entrepreneur Chip Ellis has unveiled plans for a restaurant dinner theater, studios for artists and work space for music video producers in the building, a mixture of uses designed to create stable, sustainable income. The reopening of the Howard, and the Lincoln Theater only a few blocks away, is part of on-going revitalization of the historic U Street/Shaw neighborhood. For more information, visit www.howardtheatre.org.

The Maryland Division of Historical and Cultural Programs has openings in its innovative Resident-Curatorship Program for preserving historic houses. The project matches state-owned properties in need of care with people willing to restore, inhabit, and maintain them according to federal standards. The program will begin in the fall of 2007 and continue throughout 2008. For more information, contact project manager John-Bruce C. Alexander at balexander@dnr.state.md.us or 410-260-8457.

The Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center gave a prize to Donna Arcidiacono of Bucks County, its 100,000th visitor on March 27, 2007. “The exhibits really get you thinking about water and its important role in our lives,” Arcidiacono said. “I haven’t been down here in years, but I’m definitely coming back.” The Claneil Foundation also recently awarded a major grant to the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center Water Lab to support its educational programs.

Western Pennsylvania’s Oil Region Alliance announced the winners of the 2007 Oil Heritage Region Historic Preservation Awards on May 16. Duane & Wendy Sheatz, Farmer’s National Bank, the Rev. Robert Guy, Wendell Schwab, and Bob and Kathy Grossman received awards for restoration work on residential and public buildings. The County of Venango and the Allegheny Valley Trails Association received Honorable Mentions. For details, contact Toni Kresinski tkresinski@oilregion.org

Exploring the Mid-Atlantic, continued from page 2


At its peak in the mid-19th century, this community was home to three “Families” of Shakers.

www.shakermuseum.com, Auburn, Kentucky.

Several of the original buildings have been restored and now house a museum of Shaker folklife and material culture. This Shaker community was established in 1807 and closed in 1922.

www.shakervillageky.org/living_history_museum, Harrodsburg, Kentucky.

The Shakers played an important role in American religious history. Their legacy is not only in the furniture and buildings that remain but also in their ideals.

Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To commemorate this event, the Maryland Humanities Council is launching a statewide initiative to engage Marylanders in an examination of Dr. King’s legacy, race relations in their communities, and efforts to resolve racial differences. Programs will begin in the fall of 2007 and continue throughout 2008.

Featured Resource, continued from page 3

professionals with their learning and training but also that history professionals need activists with their visibility and outspokenness. Together, professionals and activists did in Philadelphia what many thought impossible -- they nudged, pushed, forced, and otherwise persuaded the powers that be to “do the right thing.”

The more that history professionals, with their extensive resources, seek out, embrace, and utilize the passion of activists, the sooner we will all be learning history that is relevant, inclusive, bold, and fresh.

Michael Coard, Esq., is a founding member of the Avenging The Ancestors Coalition.
Museum Accreditation: A Gift That Keeps on Giving

On November 12, 2002, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine received the electrifying news that the American Association of Museums (AAM) had approved its final accreditation. The elation among the staff was palpable. We had just joined an exclusive list that included only 13 other museums in our state and five percent of museums nationally. While joining such a seemingly elite group is cause enough for the elation we felt, as I look back at that time, I wonder how many staff members understood the deeper ramifications of accreditation. I know that my feelings towards both the process and accreditation changed dramatically when I moved from a department head to executive director less than a year after our final approval.

As a staff member, most of my desire for inclusion in the AAM accreditation program came from the desire and enthusiasm of my executive director. JaNeen Smith had brought the Museum up from very humble beginnings and was in the final stages of a complete gallery redesign and building renovation in 2002, when I came on as director of education. She considered our move to become accredited vital to our growth and future institutional health. Moreover, our founder and collection benefactor wanted the accreditation as an assurance of professionalism prior to completing transfer of his personal collections to the museum. As a staffer, I understood all of this, and I suppose that was reason enough for me to fully support the program. However, even before I was elevated to replace my retiring director, my views began to change.

As with many young museums, our board of directors was in a state of transition. The national board of Civil War enthusiasts and collectors was beginning to give way to a more regional board of business and community leaders. As I witnessed the early stages of this change, I began to understand that the evaluations and self-study documents created during the Museum Assessment Programs (MAP) and accreditation review were driving these and other positive changes. I also became aware that the effort and study required to meet accreditation standards made our institution stronger. As a staffer, I became more comfortable with the future and direction of the Museum based on the knowledge that the actions of our board and management had been validated as an organization dedicated to professional practices and standards.

When I was asked to take over the directorship of the museum upon the retirement of Ms. Smith, my perceptions of the entire accreditation process underwent a profound change. Initially, as an employee, I valued accreditation as key to a secure job, supported by good governance and professional executive direction. As the new executive director, I began to see accreditation as it affected all aspects of museum operations, community relations, governance and collaboration.

One of the first tasks I undertook as director was to read all of the self-study documents and evaluations from the MAP and accreditation proceedings. My board, I feared, lacked full knowledge of museum practices. I was not in direct contact with most of them and had never worked directly with them. The accreditation visitation team’s documents gave me clear picture of the board and a snapshot of their understanding of the roles they played in the governance of the museum. This information was invaluable in helping me plan strategies that would shape my first year as executive director. More importantly, it gave me a clear understanding of the division of labor between the board and myself.

After three years as director, my view of things has changed yet again. The American Association of Museums website lists advantages of accreditation that I have experienced, like increased leverage, accountability, sustainability, credibility, and sense of purpose. But there are advantages that are simply not listed there. I have found that our association with AAM as an accredited museum has increased the efficiency of both the board and the staff. In a recent case, I asked the board to put in place a much improved personnel policy and tie it to a new ethics code. Information from AAM made the development of these documents much easier. The knowledge that as an accredited institution we had the obligation to uphold the highest standards made passage a mere formality.

As a staffer, I was proud to be part of a nationally-recognized museum. That feeling has never changed. As a director, I now see that AMM and the accreditation process have transformed the museum into a more mature and stable institution. I see AAM and our accreditation as an invaluable asset without which the museum would be truly less than it is today.

George Wunderlich is Executive Director of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in Frederick, Maryland
MARCH thanks Stevie and Ted Wolf for their long-standing support and particularly for their generosity in making this newsletter possible.

Alan M. Kraut is a professor of history at American University in Washington, D.C.

Deborah A. Kraut is an independent author.

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