

Public History at Sites of Protest: Citizenship on the President's House Viewing Platform



Photo by Dong Heller

Dr. Cheryl LaRoche talking with visitors on the viewing platform.

After years of protest, archaeological investigations began in March 2007 on a portion of the President's House site on Philadelphia's Independence Mall. The dig lasted – thanks to relentless public pressure and interest – until the end of July. Archaeology exposed foundations for the kitchen where the enslaved chef, Hercules, labored and probably planned his successful escape, the bow window where George Washington and later John Adams stood in state, and a subterranean passageway used by those toiling in the kitchen to transport food to the State Dining Room, out of sight of visiting dignitaries and other official guests.

As the site emerged from obscurity, potent reactions and powerful debates emerged as well. Buried for decades under a public toilet, the site has become one of the most important new historic finds in the region, and one of the hottest places for public protest and citizen engagement. On a sturdy, utilitarian wooden viewing platform overlooking the dig site, archaeologists and other interpreters spent the summer engaged with a stream of impassioned, inquiring visitors gripped by the historical and moral significance of what emerged from the ground. Pointing out the

foundations that survive and telling the story of what they represent has meant telling long-buried truth about the presidency, slavery and the formation of the nation.

In 1790, President George Washington and his wife, Martha Custis Washington, arrived in Philadelphia with eight of the nine enslaved Africans who would eventually toil at the nation's first executive mansion. Washington ordered that sleeping quarters be built for enslaved stable workers at a site now five feet from the front door of the Liberty Bell Center. Despite protests, construction of the Center went forward in 2003 without archaeological investigation of this slave quarters area. The fact that the story of American slavery was being buried beneath an international symbol of freedom galvanized an angry and insistent public. Protesters demanded a full excavation of the rest of the President's House site as part of a larger project to interpret and commemorate the unrecognized contributions of enslaved African captives.

Important African-American historical and archaeological sites frequently emerge only after lengthy public protest. At the African



Photo by Dong Heller

Professional archaeology team at the President's House site

At www.ushistory.org, readers will find a detailed record of on-going public mobilization around the President's House, as well as the history of the House and its occupants. Visitors can learn about the work and express their own opinions.

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EXPLORING THE MID@LANTIC

The Mid-Atlantic region has a rich history of African-American and Euro-American interaction, including numerous sites of memory and institutions working hard to uncover and interpret the complex history of race, slavery, resistance, and emancipation in America.

www.africanburialground.gov

This website, connected to the Office of Public Information and Education at New York's African Burial Ground, offers background, online source material, and updates on efforts to design and build a commemorative installation here. Some human remains were ceremonially reburied here in 2003, having been removed in 1991 during construction of a Federal facility. That story, and others related to the site, and to African slavery in New York City, are available through this site.

www.petermotthouse.org/museum.html

The Peter Mott House, home of Peter and Eliza (Thomas) Mott, was built circa 1845 and served as an Underground Railroad station. Peter Mott was a preacher and the first Sunday school superintendent at Mount Pisgah African Methodist Episcopal Church in Lawnside, New Jersey. Restored and operated by the Lawnside Historical Society, the house is on both state and National Registers of Historic Places and has been open to the public since 2001. Links to other New Jersey Underground Railroad sites can be found through at www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/underground/nj2.htm.

www.explorePAhistory.com

This site, which covers the entire state of Pennsylvania and is regularly updated, also includes a search function. Searching for "slavery" produced 87 hits, searching for Underground Railroad produced over 600. Searching for "George Washington" produced 111 hits. Hits include text, sites, historic markers, and educational tools, so it is an excellent starting point for touring or teaching.

www.udel.edu/BlackHistory/overview.html

The University of Delaware offers on its website a short essay called "Black Americans in Delaware: An Overview," by James E. Newton, as part of an e-book edited by Carole Marks, and entitled *A History of African Americans of Delaware And Maryland's Eastern Shore*. The e-book contains other useful essays on African American experiences in both Delaware and Maryland.

www.heritage.umd.edu/CHRSWeb/AssociatedProjects/Hampden.htm

The University of Maryland has developed a community-based archaeology project in Baltimore's Hampden neighborhood that

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Burial Ground in New York City, for example, an insistent public quickly recognized and fought for the deep historical significance of the site against public officials inclined to dismiss or ignore it. Sonny Carson, one of the most forceful activists at the African Burial Ground, called for an insistent, persistent, resistant public. At the Philadelphia site, various informed, outraged, and committed community protest groups sustained years of pressure on the National Park Service and Independence National Historical Park without fragmenting or losing focus. These two sites of protest began with government malfeasance concerning African American history and developed despite reluctance to engage fully with the often painful and troublesome aspects of that history.



NPS archaeologist Jed Levin talking to visitors.

In addition to a mobilized and effective protest community, both cities also had African-American mayors—David Dinkins in New York and John F. Street in Philadelphia. The mayors offered crucial local government support, strengthening and validating community demands. New York Congressman Gus Savage, then chairman of the U. S. House Ways and Means committee, exerted his influence to close the African Burial Ground to further excavations, while at the President's House, U. S. Representatives Chaka Fattah and Robert Brady secured Federal support for interpretation.

Sites born in protest create unique working conditions for public history professionals. In both cities, the public grappled passionately with the deeper meaning of freedom and personal liberty in the face of slavery. In Philadelphia, months of public discussion and media attention deepened understandings of slavery. Many people realized for the first time that slavery had existed in the North,



Students visiting the Liberty Bell observe the dig.

and in cities, not just on southern plantations. Proprietary control of scholarship was angrily challenged as new understandings dislodged old narratives.

Participating in these organic and unpredictable processes of civic debate becomes central to professional work at sites of protest. Though this complex, multilayered process brought together interdisciplinary scholarly teams, the scholars, mostly uncomfortable with high emotions, strident rhetoric and frank discussions about race, struggled with the spiritual and emotional dimensions of visitors' responses. In Philadelphia, archaeologists and interpreters on the viewing platform witnessed, and supported, countless individual struggles with centuries-old historical tropes glorifying Washington, excusing slavery, and tolerating slavery at the founding of the nation.



Passage, kitchen, and bow window foundations.

Even with the site's national academic and public visibility, the local Philadelphia community remains vigilant to prevent loss of this heritage. Ignoring skyrocketing interest in the finds, the officials in charge clung through the summer to their original intention simply to rebury the archaeology

FEATURED RESOURCE *The Tuscarora-English Dictionary*

The Tuscarora-English dictionary, language as a window on Native American culture

When New Line Cinema decided to make its 2005 film *The New World*, the corporation sought an unusually high degree of authenticity in presenting both English and Powhatan lifeways. Achieving that ambition required substantial engagement with contemporary Chesapeake Bay native communities. Though the movie's seeming authenticity ultimately strengthened the Pocahontas mythologies in ways that irritate native communities, New Line did contribute substantially to local history by commissioning Professor Blair Rudes, a linguist at the University of North Carolina—Charlotte to reconstruct Virginia Algonquian, the language spoken in the Powhatan Confederacy and extinct since the early nineteenth century.

Retrieving native languages, especially along the Atlantic coast where many disappeared rapidly after European arrival, offers new ways of deepening both

scholarly and public understanding of Native American history. Rudes, who got his undergraduate and graduate education at SUNY—Buffalo, spent decades studying Tuscarora, an Iroquoian language spoken by a matrilineal society that migrated north from North Carolina to join the Iroquois Confederacy early in the eighteenth century. In 1999, Rudes published a Tuscarora-English dictionary that offers guides to pronunciation as well as meaning. Designed for use by scholars, the interested public, and the Tuscarora themselves, the dictionary incorporates existing early records, modern linguistic methods, and guidance from the few surviving native speakers. Francene Patterson, chair of the Tuscarora Language Committee, has been actively working to save and revitalize Tuscarora in western New York since 1995. Patterson was involved with the dictionary effort, but the bulk of the Language Committee's work develops from the grassroots, through projects like



Tuscarora Nation Boundary Sign, Niagara County, New York

Photo by Francene Patterson

signage, holiday greeting cards, and school projects developed using Tuscarora. Her conviction is that returning the language to active use should draw on the resources and commitment of the people themselves. ✕

and continue installing interpretation designed before the dig began. Local activists focused public outrage from around the nation to force a revision of that plan. Late in July, Mayor Street asked architects and designers to incorporate the three most compelling architectural/archaeological discoveries -- the kitchen, bow window, and passageway -- into an altered design. Only continued vigilance, however, can assure that the very solid and tangible foundations of the President's house and other archaeological features remain as a visible symbol, helping us see George and Martha Washington -- and the United States -- as they were, rather than as they may have wished to be remembered.

Dr. Cheryl LaRoche of URS Archaeology is a leading national expert on handling controversial archaeological projects. ✕

Exploring the Mid@lantic, continued from page 2

incorporates public history, archaeology, job training, public education, oral history and applied anthropology to help Hampden represent itself through studies of its heritage. The neighborhood, long a strong center for working class life, is changing rapidly, and the project intends to empower residents to understand, value, and preserve Hampden's past.

<http://digital.mica.edu/exhibition/>

The Maryland Historical Society collaborated last year with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture and the Maryland Institute College of Art to produce the exhibit *At Freedom's Door*, open at all three locations through October 3, 2007. The online version, which includes teaching resources, is richly informative about both the collaborative process and the resulting exhibit.

www.culturaltourismdc.org/

Cultural Tourism DC offers a well-designed African-American Heritage Tour. Over 200 sites of significance to the District's African-American history were chosen through an open, popular nomination process. Mapped by site and by neighborhood, and searchable by keyword and or topic, the various theatres, homes, banks, eateries, and other kinds of places can be configured into any number of customized tours. Each individual listing has links that point visitors toward greater and greater detail. The site also includes a brief introduction to Washington's African-American landscape and history written by Marya Annette McQuirter. ✕

PROJECTS TO WATCH



Governors Island from Brooklyn, 1890s

Governors Island in New York harbor continues to attract design attention. PlaceMatters nominated the Island as its featured place of the week in early June. Last year the Governor's Island Alliance published a booklet outlining design principles for the Island, and this summer, five design teams competed for the award. The Alliance booklet is available online at www.governorsislandalliance.org, and information about the winning design can be had from the Center for Architecture at 536 LaGuardia Place, New York, NY 10012, 212.683.0023; info@aiany.org.

The **Heritage Emergency National Task Force** has released a set of downloadable

tools for protecting cultural treasures in the event of natural or man-made disasters. The Task Force, a partnership of 41 national service organizations and federal agencies, was founded in 1995 and is co-sponsored by Heritage Preservation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. New publications include *Tips for Working with Emergency Responders*, *Guide to Navigating FEMA and SBA Funding*, and *Recommended Professional Emergency Management Training*. Another resource guides organizations wishing to participate in **MayDay**. Created by the Society of American Archivists, MayDay, expanded in 2007 to include libraries, museums, and arts and historic preservation organizations, is an annual event that encourages cultural institutions to undertake one simple emergency preparedness task. The Task Force has



MayDay logo

Courtesy of LoC/HABS

produced a list of suggested MayDay activities, as well as promotional materials. All these materials are downloadable from www.heritageemergency.org. For more information, contact Mary Rogers, 202-233-0800 or taskforce@heritagepreservation.org

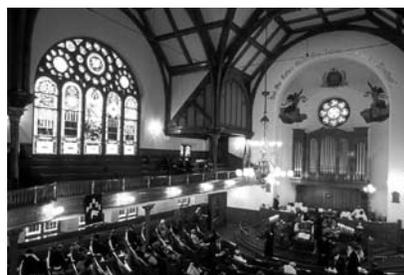
Brooklyn's industrial waterfront was named one of the **11 Most Endangered Sites** in America this year by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Pressured by skyrocketing real estate values and lax enforcement of New York's strong preservation laws, buildings key to histories of immigration, maritime life, and nineteenth century work and community are disappearing. For more information and ways to support this preservation effort, go to www.nationaltrust.org/11most/01.html.



Brooklyn waterfront

Courtesy of LoC/HABS

Philadelphia launched its **"Quest for Freedom"** program on Juneteenth (June 19th), as part of a statewide initiative to explore Pennsylvania's central role in supporting fugitives from slavery and the drive for emancipation. Philadelphia's contribution includes tours, living history programs, and site brochures, and includes the developing President's House Commemorative Site on Independence Mall. Statewide, regional tourism partners have built collaborations with important sites and local archives. For more information, see www.gophila.com/questforfreedom or www.visitPA.com.



Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Philadelphia

Photo by G. Widman for GPTMC

REGIONAL ROUNDUP



Dr. Diane D. Turner

Photo by Joseph T. Labolito/Temple University

Temple University announced that historian and archivist **Dr. Diane D. Turner** would take over in September as curator of Temple's renowned Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection. Turner, noted for her scholarship on African-Americans in the Philadelphia musicians union, was curator of collections and exhibitions for the African-American Museum in Philadelphia, and a guest curator for the Rosenbach Museum's landmark recent exhibit, *Look Again: African American history IS American history*. She has also been working with MARCH as director of the 2007 Bard College

Clemente course in Camden.



Karen Young

Courtesy of FEMAC

Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center appointed Karen Young as its new executive director. Young brings

a background in communications and education, and a clear sense of the relationship between history and environmental work. As she noted, "The Fairmount Water Works ... represents the history of the development of a city and societal influences that helped make it great. ... We can be a resource to people around the world who are facing [environmental and open space] issues."

Congratulations to all the **Upstate (NY) History Alliance award winners** for 2007. These include the Landmark Society of Western New York, The History Center in Tompkins County, the Madison County Freedom Trail

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MARCH HAPPENINGS

MARCH welcomed four new advisory council members at its annual meeting in Philadelphia June 7th:

- **Sara R. Cureton**, Director of Grants and Programs for the New Jersey Historical Commission. She joined the Commission staff in 2004 after twenty years at historic sites in New Jersey, most recently as director of Atlantic City's Absecon Lighthouse.
- **Melissa McCloud**, a public historian and member of the Maryland Humanities Council, directs the Breene M. Kerr Center for Chesapeake Studies at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. The Center conducts and promotes original research in the history of the Bay and oversees the museum's curatorial, exhibition, and education activities.
- **Bill Adair**, Hirsig Family Director of Education at the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia. The creator of innovative exhibits and web-based curricula, Adair wrote about the Rosenbach's recent exhibit, "Look Again" in the Winter 2006 issue of *Cross Ties*.
- **Timothy A. Slavin**, Director of Historical and Cultural Affairs for the State of Delaware, served as a Dover city councilman from 2004-to 2006, after many years as an archivist and information technology specialist. In 2003, Slavin co-authored a pictorial history of the city of Dover with journalist Peter Slavin.

John Payne, professor of law at Rutgers-Newark and **George Vogt**, former director of Delaware's Hagley Museum and Library left the board with our thanks and best wishes. Vogt is now director of the Oregon Historical Society.

MARCH was pleased to welcome **Alice Greenwald**, director of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, back to Philadelphia to present this year's Fredric Miller Memorial lecture on June 7th.

Greenwald unfolded the many challenges of creating a memorial space, in the midst of priceless urban real estate, that will meet both the national need to understand the 1993 and 2001 attacks and the needs of thousands of bereaved families to mourn and remember. As head of one of the region's, and the nation's, most fractious historical projects, Greenwald's optimism about what is taking shape gave renewed heart to many in the audience.

On June 14 and 15, MARCH returned to **Bethlehem, Pennsylvania** to kick off a six-month interpretive planning process for the abandoned Steel site. With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and generous in-kind contributions from the city itself, MARCH welcomed 15 selected scholars, 14 local leaders, and about 150 local residents to a two-day conference. Local residents were invited to share their thoughts on a wide range of stories and ways of delivering interpretation, while the scholars and local cultural leaders listened closely and worked to coordinate all the information. Follow-up continues and the plan will develop with further public input through the fall, with implementation set to begin in early 2009.



Camden, NJ Clemente course graduates, August 2007
 Back row: Gregory Stevens-Jackson, Brendan Belcher, Reginald Ross, Wade Taylor
 Middle row: Evangeline Jones, Winter Jimenez, Lourdes Gutierrez, Michelle Alvarez, Brenda Richardson, Dr. Ed Viner, Monica Lesmerises
 Front row: D'Nique Pullin, Catherine Lawrence

MARCH was very proud to graduate 16 students with 6 college credits from our Camden-based **Clemente course** in the humanities. The students worked for 28 weeks with a team of faculty mixing full-time academics and practicing public historians. The program, created by Bard

College in New York, offers a "re-entry" to advanced study for people whose circumstances thwarted their ambition for college degrees. The Camden course, co-sponsored by Cooper Hospital, was supported by NEH's *We the People* program through the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.

MARCH sponsors two programs this October. At the first, on Wednesday, October 10th, at 6:30 pm, the Museum of the City of New York (1220 5th Avenue) hosts a discussion of the Invincible Cities project developed by MARCH regional fellow **Camilo José Vergara** with support from the Ford Foundation. The occasion will officially launch the Harlem section of www.invinciblecities.com, the Invincible Cities website. Panel discussants, in addition to Vergara, include **Deborah Willis**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography and Imaging at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Columbia University associate professor **Lance Freeman**, author of *There Goes the Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*, and MARCH director **Howard Gillette**.

For the second program, on Saturday, October 13th from 1-4pm, MARCH joins with the Historical Society of Princeton to sponsor a panel and exhibit called "Public Memory and Social Landscape." The exhibit features haunting photographs by **Kristine Weilbacker Hanson** of the abandoned North Princeton Development Center, once a famous mental health center, now slated for demolition and redevelopment. Panelists include **Janet Golden**, Professor of History at Rutgers-Camden, **Ron Emrich**, Director of Preservation New Jersey and **Brad Fay**, former president of the Van Harlingen Historical Society. The panel and the exhibit opening take place at the Johnson Education Center of the D&R Canal Greenways in Princeton. Directions: www.drgreenway.org/contact_us.html. The project is made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. ❖

Regional Roundup, continued from page 4

Commission, the Northern New York Library Network, and the Edward Frisbee Center for Collections & Research. In addition to the awards, the UHA gave certificates of commendation to volunteers Betty Ball and Diana Castor at the Chemung County Historical Society, Historic Cherry Hill in Albany, the North Tonawanda History Museum, the Interlaken Historical Society, the Madison County Bicentennial Heritage Trails Coordinating Council and the Museum of disability in Williamsville. Information on the winners and on the Alliance can be found online at www.upstatehistory.org.



Lombard Street, Baltimore, 1939

Courtesy of the Baltimore Sun

The **Jewish Museum of Maryland** will open a new exhibit, *Voices of Lombard Street*, on October 14. The exhibit chronicles Jewish life in the Museum's own East Baltimore neighborhood from 1900 to the present. Lombard Street -- known as Corned Beef Row in recognition of its roots as a bastion of Jewish food merchants and eateries -- was once the center of Jewish life in Baltimore. The exhibition, part of a multi-year interpretive initiative, immerses visitors in the life of the neighborhood through first-person narratives, hands-on discovery activities, authentic artifacts, and media elements.

The **National Canal Museum** in Easton, PA recently acquired the corporate records of the Watts-Campbell company of Newark, NJ. Founded in 1851 and still in business, Watts-Campbell is the oldest continuously operating machine shop in America, and famous for producing stationary steam engines. The collection includes ledgers,

payrolls, correspondence, engineering drawings, patterns, photographs, and miscellaneous smaller artifacts.

In August, Philadelphia's Independence Seaport Museum made **Lori Dillard Rech** its new executive director. Rech succeeds **John S. Carter**, who left in March 2006 amid charges of fraud and fiscal mismanagement, and interim president **Theodore Newbold**. A competitive sailor and vice commodore of the Liberty Sailing Club, Rech has been director of the Betsy Ross House in recent years. Before that, she served as director of education and public programs at the National Museum of American Jewish History and as education director at Fort Mifflin.

In May, the Pew Charitable Trusts announced the appointment of **Paula Marincola** to succeed **Barbara Silberman** as director of the Heritage Philadelphia Program (HPP). Marincola, long-time director of the Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative (PEI), had been serving as interim director for HPP before taking the position permanently.

Janet Greene has left New York's General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen to become an Assistant Professor of Labor Studies and Social Theory at the Harry Van Arsdale Center for Labor Studies at Empire State College, SUNY. Ms. Greene helped restore the magnificent library at the GSMT, and helped to develop the program in which she will now be part of the full-time faculty.



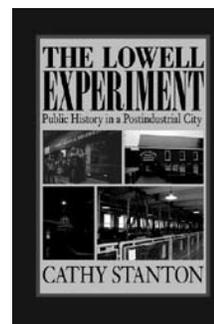
Janet Greene

Courtesy of Janet Greene

The **AASLH Annual Meeting** will be held in Atlanta on September 5-8, 2007. At a session on Saturday Sept. 8, 2007 at 8:30 AM, Ken Turino, Exhibitions Manager at Historic New England, will be discussing the benefits of AASLH's awards program for historical organizations. Panelists bring experience with national, regional, and state awards programs and will

discuss the impact of winning awards and how institutions use awards to promote themselves in their communities. Watch for Turino's reflections on this subject as the Famous Last Words essay in the Winter 2007 issue of *Cross Ties*.

Dr. Cathy Stanton won the National Council on Public History's annual book award for *The Lowell Experiment: Public*



University of Massachusetts Press

History in a Postindustrial City. Stanton is part of a group of consultants working with MARCH on developing interpretation for the Bethlehem Steel site.

In late June, Governor Edward G. Rendell named 9 people to Pennsylvania's **Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission**, including MARCH council member **V. Chapman-Smith**. Led by Gordon Haaland and Katherine Haley Will, past and current presidents respectively of Gettysburg College, the commission also includes David Atkinson, Economic Development Specialist for State Sen. Gibson Armstrong, Gabor Boritt, the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, Rep. Bill DeWeese, Pennsylvania House Majority Leader, Michael DiBerardinis, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Sen. Andrew Dinniman, and Barbara Franco, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum.

Sara Ogger assumed the position of director of the New York Council for the Humanities following the retirement of David Cronin in April. Before joining the council as a grants officer in 2002, Ogger taught German at Montclair University in New Jersey. She has served on the board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils since 2006 and is a member of the advisory board of 826 NYC, a writing center for Brooklyn children and teens. ❖

FAMOUS LAST WORDS ROSALIND REMER

Finding Ben Franklin a home in the museum world

Curators and managers for the landmark tercentenary exhibit, *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*, learned some eye-opening lessons about contemporary museums in their efforts to send Ben on a multi-year international tour. The exhibit, an 8,000+ square-foot presentation, drew on almost 80 collections of Franklin materials from Philadelphia, across the United States, and abroad. Sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts, *In Search of a Better World* was prepared for Franklin's 300th birthday in 2006, by a consortium of Philadelphia institutions with extensive Franklin collections. After opening at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center, it was to travel to the major "Franklin" cities of Boston, London and Paris.

Things did not go exactly as envisioned. Though Paris proved just as eager to host Franklin now as it was in the eighteenth century, London and Boston declined. Ben traveled instead to St. Louis, Houston, Denver and Atlanta – places that could only have existed in his imagination. Creating this exhibition – and finding suitable hosts for it – highlighted the disciplinary distinctions that drive temporary exhibition planning at museums, financial pressures that privilege blockbuster exhibitions, and the limitations of space, security and climate that challenge museums of all descriptions.

In London, no museum would give Franklin top billing, although some considered featuring Franklin along with the Englishmen and -women involved with him in his London years. To British institutions, Franklin was a relatively minor figure on the wrong side of imperial history.

The Boston Museum of Science signed on early, but balked at an exhibition team made up primarily of historians and material culture specialists. BMS staff and leadership worried both that science would be slighted and that the historical Franklin wouldn't "sell." Under pressure to bring in "blockbuster"-type revenue, BMS hosted a Star Wars exhibit instead.

To replace Boston and London, the team sought new American venues. *In Search of a Better World* includes almost 250 pieces of art, rare artifacts and paper and over 40 interactive devices, requiring stringent climate control and security. In order to bring visitors as close as possible to Franklin's material world, paintings were displayed unglazed and artifacts placed on platforms rather than in cases. Many science museums, daunted by the required security, removed themselves from consideration. And despite the gorgeous and significant art in the exhibition, art museums were suspicious of the high level of interactivity and the "barrier free" design.

Following Franklin's own example, the team broadened its search for partners, and ultimately found eager hosts. Franklin never went to Houston in his life, but in the 21st century, he got a Texas-sized welcome there. The director of the Houston Museum of Natural Science exclaimed, "Pinch me! We're getting all these treasures here in Houston? This is the greatest!" After hosting 125,000 visitors, including 60,000 school children, he asked for the right of first refusal for the team's next exhibition effort. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science also saw crowds of happy visitors (212,000 in only 11 weeks), despite anxiety that their core audience would ignore Ben in favor of the museum's popular "Space Odyssey" experience. Franklin succeeded in Denver in part because staff and volunteers worked overtime mastering the Franklin material and connecting it to their own holdings and core strengths.

Science museums generally create larger temporary exhibit spaces than history museums and expect significantly more visitors. While Houston and Denver took a chance on Franklin, neither one expected, or got, anything like the 500,000 to a million visitors who came to see *Star Wars* or *Body Worlds*. By contrast, Philadelphia's National Constitution Center was delighted to log 200,000 visitors and Missouri Historical Society was very pleased with



Diorama of Franklin appearing before Alexander Wedderburn in 1774. The exhibit, *In Search of a Better World*, traveled over one summer. History museums commonly plan temporary gallery space in the range of 6,000 square feet. Keeping this size range in mind for traveling exhibitions could encourage greater history museum participation. But blockbusters like *Titanic*, *Tut*, and *Gold*, with massive popular and commercial appeal (and marketing budgets), have become staples of the science museum world, despite their often weak science content. History museums seem, in a sense, to have lost "market share" to science museums, even for topics of greater historical than scientific interest.

The cost of hosting Franklin also created barriers, especially for history museums. To minimize costs for host institutions, the organizers underwrote insurance and shipping and declined the customary sharing of gate receipts. But hosts spent for marketing and programs to augment the exhibit, and museums had to weigh those costs against their expectations for visitation.

In the end, Franklin visited a mix of museums representing a wide geographic spread. By the end of his grand tour, Franklin will have appeared at a new history/civics museum, two history museums, and two natural history museums in the United States as well as – in Paris – a science and technology museum and a city history and material culture museum. The French venues will divide the exhibition more or less according to their disciplines. *In Search of a Better World* will also remain available at www.benfranklin300.org for use in homes, libraries and classrooms. Looking back now, it's clear that Franklin took his newly adopted cities by storm. And, as always, Franklin's experience contains lessons the rest of us can use to improve our work.

Rosalind Remer is Executive Director of The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary ☘

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An illuminating look at urban unrest in America during the 1960s, featuring more than 100 oral histories, the latest exhibition design and media technologies, and a variety of interactive educational programs.

July 17, 1967: Soldiers patrol a deserted Springfield Avenue in Newark, New Jersey
Image donated by Corbis-Bettmann



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