

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS



MARLA MILLER / MMILLER@HISTORY.UMASS.EDU

How is public history practice shaped by the time period being interpreted? Our work resonates and responds in particular ways

when our audiences have experienced the very events we aim to interpret. What happens when we are talking about more distant pasts?

We considered this question in July at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR), where I had the pleasure of participating in the President's Plenary, "Public Histories and the Early Republic Historian." Organized by SHEAR president Craig Thompson Friend—CHASS Distinguished Graduate Professor of History and Director Emeritus of Public History at North Carolina State University—the plenary asked what, if anything, is different about public history practice when it engages stories of the nation's founding.

I welcomed that conversation because my own public history practice only occasionally intersects with my graduate training in early American history. Indeed, one of the things I love best about public history work is the intellectual agility it requires: in recent years I've had the chance to co-author (together with NCPH Digital Media Group chair and University of Massachusetts Amherst alumna Laura Miller) an ethnographic report for New Bedford Whaling National Historic Site;

developed strategies to connect residents of assisted living centers with local history collections; and documented and interpreted the national crisis that is mass incarceration, to give just a few examples. The opportunity to write about the much-misunderstood craftswoman Betsy Ross has led to a long relationship with the terrific staff at the Betsy Ross House, and most recently I've had the honor of contributing an entry on "The Founders" to the *Inclusive Historians Handbook*, a new resource being developed in partnership between NCPH and the American Association for State and Local History. But on the whole I don't spend as much time interpreting early American lives as one might think.

So I welcomed the chance to contemplate the distinct challenges of working in that period. As Friend suggested in the session's description, "The stories of the early American republic—from the origins of American capitalism to the rise of the carceral state, the evolution of American enslavement, the formation of gendered and racial binaries, the constitutional structures meant to sustain and protect a republican government, and the mythologizing of the founding generations—have never been more relevant to our contemporary political culture." What do historians of those decades need to think about when seeking to engage audiences in this particular chapter of the US past?

Patrick Spero, Librarian and Director of the American Philosophical Society, led



Betsy Ross House by Coolcaesar via Wikimedia Commons.

the conversation. Panelists included Ashley Bouknight, Curator at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage; Philip Mead, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Chief Historian at Museum of the American Revolution; Robert Parker, Director of Exhibits, Education, and Visitor Services at the United States Navy Memorial; Kathryn P. Viens, Director of Research at the Massachusetts Historical Society; and myself. Many thanks to the Twitterstorians whose #SHEAR18 tweets help document the session and inform the recap that follows.

Spero opened the discussion by inviting panelists to offer a definition of public history. Together we sketched the contours of the field: the importance of material culture, the role of interdisciplinarity, and the need for emotional engagement. We reflected on the need to sit back and listen, to respond to needs and questions pressed by others.

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ACTS OF REPAIR IN HARTFORD

MEGHAN HILLMAN / MEGHILLM@IUPUI.EDU

If my Twitter feed is anything to go by, public historians of all stripes are pretty frustrated these days, seeking ways to make a difference that don't exact too heavy a toll on our spirits. We feel a responsibility to each other, and to the communities in which we live and work, and to larger discourses about the importance of historical thinking, advocacy, and inclusion. If things are broken—in our organization, in our field, or in our political and cultural spheres—we are called to do our part to fix them.

NCPH's 2019 conference theme, "Repair Work," was selected by Program Committee co-chairs Cathy Stanton and Seth Bruggeman and Local Arrangements Committee co-chairs Leah Glaser and Elizabeth Shapiro to channel this impulse, and to create a space to share our successes and talk about what we should be doing better. Sometimes our repair work is literal; public historians preserve documents, buildings, and objects. Sometimes it's more conceptual: we contribute to economic, civic, and environmental revitalization efforts and reconsider stories that haven't been fully or



Hartford in Fall. Photo courtesy Hartford Department of Tourism.

fairly told. And sometimes this restorative work is about us as individuals and NCPH as

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NCPH inspires public engagement with the past and serves the needs of practitioners in putting history to work in the world by building community among historians, expanding professional skills and tools, fostering critical reflection on historical practice, and publicly advocating for history and historians. *Public History News* is published in March, June, September, and December. NCPH reserves the right to reject material that is not consistent with the goals and purposes of the organization. Individual membership orders, changes of address, and business and editorial correspondence should be addressed to NCPH, 127 Cavanaugh Hall – IUPUI, 425 University Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140. E-mail: ncph@iupui.edu. Tel: 317-274-2716. Join online or renew at www.ncph.org. Headquartered on the campus of IUPUI, NCPH is grateful for the generous support of the IU School of Liberal Arts and the Department of History.

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WELCOME, SAM OPSAHL!



Sam Opsahl is serving as the NCPH Graduate Assistant for the 2018-2019 academic year. He graduated from Purdue University (West Lafayette, IN) in 2017 with a BA in History, and is currently in his second year of the IUPUI Public History Master's program. Before NCPH, Sam also interned at the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology as well as the Indiana State Museum, both of which are located in his home city of Indianapolis.

MEMBER KUDOS!



Theodore Karamanski, Professor of History and Director of the Public History program at Loyola, was awarded the Frederick Jackson Turner Award for Lifetime Achievement in Midwestern History.

The prestigious award is given annually by the Midwestern History Association, and honors senior scholars “whose work carries forth Turner’s interest and influence upon the practice of Midwestern history across multiple professional dimensions.” Karamanski has had a prolific career, as an author, a public historian, and a professor. He co-founded the public history program at Loyola, was a founding board member (and later president) of NCPH, completed more than \$1 million in external public history grants in contracts, authored ten books and articles in sixteen journals, and is one of the few historians to be published in *Science* magazine. He has also served as a mentor to many students beginning careers in public history over the years.

Welcome New Members!

McKinley Albert Hartford, CT	Maria Leonor Cruz Amadora, Portugal	Taylor Hegler Vicksburg, MS	Jessica Markey Souderton, PA	Holly Smith Cary, NC
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Spero then cut to the chase, asking us to reflect on what, if anything, might be unique to the practice of public history in and around the early American Republic. Ashley Bouknight—an African American woman—plunged in first, saying “I work at The Hermitage so you know about the challenges I face—plus you add me and it’s complicated.” She described the significance of the objects, the built environment, and the archival record as she works to interpret Jackson and the enslaved people at The Hermitage.



The Hermitage by Jim Bowen via Wikimedia Commons.

Many of our observations were grounded in the considerable weight attached to mythologies attending figures from the early Republic. Patriotic veneration divorced from informed understanding can be a stultifying force, while popular culture has introduced erroneous but much-loved ideas about many celebrated figures or events. Parker, who served as Superintendent of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historic Park, described the difficulties there, in part because no material culture survives to document Tubman’s work. He explained that, though popular historical imagination envisions Tubman leading hundreds of enslaved men and women to freedom, in fact the archival record documents Tubman’s thirteen trips to Cambridge, freeing “only” some seventy-six people. The site had to approach this reality with caution, as visitors come deeply committed to a particular narrative and sometimes resist efforts to replace those ideas with others more firmly grounded in the historical record.

That’s something I know well from my work with the Betsy Ross House, which likewise must balance visitor expectations with the richer truths of Ross’s life as a craftswoman. Correcting such misapprehensions requires the tact, diplomacy, and patience required of all public historians.

The delicate work of meeting visitors’ prior beliefs with new stories is also important to Philip Mead and the staff at the Museum of the American Revolution, where loyalist voices permeate the exhibit narrative, cultivating the sense of contingency that many Americans experienced during the Revolution. Viens observed how the research public historians undertake to mount those new interpretations contributes to the field’s historiography, often in ways of which historians based on college or university campuses may not be aware.

As someone who often contemplates histories of public history practice, I noted the layered evolution of sites associated with the early Republic. Many of the first historic sites to be created in the US—such as Hasbrouck House (George Washington’s headquarters at Newburgh), and of course Mount Vernon—appeared because they were associated with the nation’s founding. At these places, decisions made in the mid-nineteenth century about what to keep (from building fabric and landscape features to archival materials), and what to demolish or discard, reflect values very different from those we hold today. Invoking Patricia West’s valuable thinking about “conservative undertow” (that is, the difficulty of overcoming the vision that initially led to any given site’s creation), I emphasized the ways in which the politics of the founding moments themselves prove challenging for current-day staff who want to change a site’s direction or expand its scope. As I write in the draft of my entry for the *Inclusive Historians Handbook*, “Such sites aimed to cultivate awe and reverence, emphasizing the U.S. Founders’ larger-than-life status as intellectual giants, political visionaries, and moral leaders. The motives and aspirations of the men and women who created these historic sites, as well as the continuing expectations and desires of visitors, have made efforts to complicate those interpretations in the wake of ongoing scholarship and cultural change challenging.”

Bouknight urged the audience to keep archive creation in mind, and to acknowledge the inherent racism that shaped decisions about what to save. Any interpretation of the early Republic, she noted, must acknowledge not only the bias of the source base itself, but also generations of prejudice that limited access to museum and archival training among students of color, boxing them out from roles as public history professionals.

Mead described the resistance to such inclusive practice as he shared his reaction to a review of the new Museum of the American Revolution

in the *Wall Street Journal*, which, while noting that “historical scholarship has become vastly more inclusive,” took the museum’s leadership to task for interpretation that aimed to



Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center via Ted Eytan on Flickr.

“de-sacralize the Revolution,” and prioritizing inclusion over the Revolution’s “symbolic and aspirational power.”

In conversation with the audience, both panelists and attendees acknowledged the courage often needed to address these challenges head-on. Given the real push-back and risks in terms of visitation numbers and donor support, public historians need to maintain the courage of their convictions, to tell the stories they need to tell, and have faith in their audiences.

The plenary closed with some final comments about public history as a home for students training toward careers in history, which gave me a terrific opportunity to plug NCPH’s *Public History Navigator*. I hope we’ll see some of those early Americanists at our annual meeting in March!

Marla Miller is the President of NCPH and is Professor and Director of the Public History Program in the history department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.



NOTICE OF FALL BOARD MEETING

On October 26-27, the NCPH Board of Directors will be meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. The board welcomes comments, questions, and suggestions from NCPH members throughout the year, and especially for the fall agenda. Please contact the executive director (rowes@iupui.edu) or individual board members listed at <http://bit.ly/ncphcommittees>.

NCPH'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY PLANNING IS UNDERWAY

MARIANNE BABAL / BABALM@WELLSFARGO.COM

Between 2018 and 2020, NCPH will be celebrating some notable milestones for the organization. This year marked the 40th anniversary of our journal *The Public Historian*, being celebrated with an open-access special issue for the remainder of the year. It was nearly forty years ago that a group of historians gathered in Montecito, California in April 1979 to discuss and exchange ideas on a new perspective and emerging scholarship in the history field—a growing movement known as public history. The Montecito meeting brought together a disparate group of practitioners working in universities, archives, government, business, and as individual entrepreneurs. They found they had a lot in common, and several months later a small group met in Washington, DC and made plans to form a council on public history. In the spring of 1980, the second national public history conference took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and on May 2, 1980, the National Council on Public History was incorporated.



First NCPH Annual Meeting.

NCPH has come a long way over our nearly four decades. New generations of public historians have discovered the same enthusiasm and camaraderie that inspired those hundred pioneer public historians in Montecito and Pittsburgh. It is time to celebrate, certainly; but also an opportunity to reflect on NCPH's past as well as to plan for its future.



Past Presidents at Portland 30th Anniversary Celebration in 2010.

A new ad hoc committee has been convened by the board and charged with coordinating NCPH 40th Anniversary activities. The committee includes past NCPH presidents, current board and staff members, and emerging and established professionals. Together, we will plan events at upcoming annual meetings, culminating in NCPH's 40th birthday celebration in 2020 in Atlanta. In addition, our anniversary observance will be rolled out across all the digital and print properties of NCPH: the journal, newsletter, *History@Work*, and the Public History Commons. The anniversary committee will also work with our Council of Past Presidents and build on their efforts to record oral histories from founding members and leaders, and also dovetail with the efforts of the Development Committee, which is working to build the NCPH Endowment Fund to sustain and benefit the organization in future decades.

The committee is just beginning efforts to plan this party, so look for more commemoration content to come. Did someone say 'cake'?

Marianne Babal is Senior Historian and Vice President at Wells Fargo. She is a Past President of NCPH and currently serves on our Development Committee. She is chair of the NCPH 40th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee.

2020 VISION ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN UPDATE

This past April in Las Vegas, the NCPH Board and Development Committee launched the 2020 Vision: Endowment Campaign for a Brighter Future. The Campaign seeks: (1) to expand professional development opportunities; (2) to promote diversity and inclusion within NCPH through scholarships and awards; and, (3) to enhance the organization's financial independence. The goal is to raise the funds required to bring the endowment to \$1 million by the time NCPH celebrates the 40th anniversary of its incorporation at the 2020 annual meeting in Atlanta. The exact amount needed fluctuates with the market, but the total remaining to reach this goal approximates \$160,000 at the time of writing.

We have already raised over \$60,000 through targeted solicitations, including 100% participation from the board and staff. We will spend the fall aiming to achieve full participation from NCPH committee chairs and committee members. The development committee urges all members and friends to contribute to this effort at a level that is meaningful to them and reflects the significance of NCPH to them both professionally and personally. For more information on the campaign, and to donate online, visit the NCPH website at <http://ncph.org/giving/>.



Building Our Future
2018-2020 Endowment Campaign

NCPH has embarked on a three-year campaign to top our endowment at \$1 million by our 40th anniversary in 2020. With your help we will secure the future of our public history community.

SHARON LEON Michigan State University

"I've set up my online checking account to send NCPH a monthly donation to the endowment because I know that the NCPHers are my people. I count on this community for intellectual engagement and to constantly re-energize my public history practice, and for that I owe an ongoing debt."



<http://ncph.org/giving/endowment/>



IUPUI Graduate Program in Public History

Established in 1984, the Graduate Program in Public History at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) trains historians in the research, analytical, and communications skills needed to apply their work in the public arena. Students benefit from a combination of classroom instruction and practical experiences that prepare them for a wide range of public history occupations. Campus adjacent to downtown Indianapolis, which serves as a learning laboratory for public history students.

Program highlights include:

- A nationally-recognized public history degree program, with opportunities for students to pursue additional qualifications and certifications in Library Science, Museum Studies, and Documentary Editing
- Two academic years of half-time paid internships in local institutions provide significant practical training (interns also receive a substantial tuition remission and health insurance)
- Situated near several long-time partner institutions and research repositories (including the Indiana Historical Society, Indiana State Library and Historical Bureau, and Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art)

Graduate public history courses include: Digital Humanities, Historical Administration, Historic Preservation, Historic Site Interpretation, Introduction to Archival Practices, and Local and Community History

For more information, contact Dr. Philip V. Scarpino, Director of Public History:
pscarpin@iupui.edu | (317) 274-5983
<http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/history> - Click on "Public History"



2019 NCPH AWARDS



Help us honor the best in public history

Submission details at <http://ncph.org/about/awards>

DUE NOVEMBER 1



Book Award

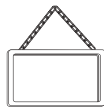
Best public history book of 2017 or 2018



Robert Kelley Memorial Award

Distinguished achievement in making history relevant outside of academia

DUE DECEMBER 1



Outstanding Public History Project Award

Robinson Prize for Historical Analysis
Historical study that contributes to the formation of public policy



Excellence in Consulting Awards

Outstanding work by consultants and contractors

New Professional Travel Awards
2 travel grants to attend #ncph2019



DUE JANUARY 1

Student Travel Awards

5 travel grants for graduate students to attend #ncph2019



Student Project Award

Travel grant to attend #ncph2019 recognizing student contribution to the field



ACTS OF REPAIR IN HARTFORD // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

an organization: what can we do to take care of ourselves and our colleagues? How do we ensure that the public history field is inclusive and accessible to all?

In this spirit, the 2019 NCPH conference in Hartford will look a little different as we strive to take an active role in this repair. In recent years we've made strides in accessibility—including the addition of microphones in all session rooms, the increased presence of ASL interpreters, and the addition of a nursing mothers' room. In the coming months we'll be codifying these efforts into a formal accessibility plan that will govern how we make accessibility arrangements at the conference. Our Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, NCPH Inclusion, has encouraged us to take new steps to ensure the comfort and safety of attendees: for starters, we'll be asking attendees to share their pronouns (and providing you with the means to do so) and setting up at least one gender-neutral/all-gender restroom in the Connecticut Convention Center.

Hartford is the right place to be talking about repair. As planning for the conference has taken shape, one major theme has emerged



Memorial Arch and State House, Hartford, Conn., c1906. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-D4-19171.

that will be present across several lines of content, including the Friday evening public plenary event: the history and role of firearms, gun violence, and gun control in American life. Just blocks from our conference is the recently-established Coltsville National Historical Park, which hopes to open to the public in 2019. What does it mean to talk about the history of gun manufacturing in a city that experiences dozens of gun deaths per year—and is an hour away from Newtown, site of the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting? How do we talk about and contextualize firearms at historical sites and museums across the country when gun violence has become a part of our daily lives (and the lives of the people who consume public history)? And, perhaps most importantly, how do we ensure these difficult conversations are nuanced, humane, and productive?

You'll probably have noticed that I've raised a lot of open-ended questions in this piece that I don't have the answers to. I hope you'll join NCPH in Hartford next March 27-30 to help us work them out.

Meghan Hillman is NCPH's Program Manager.



The Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Hartford, Connecticut. Image courtesy of the Hartford Department of Tourism.

AN NCPH MINI-CON
**(RE) ACTIVE
PUBLIC HISTORY**
#NCPHactive
October 18-19, 2018

Join us on Twitter for NCPH's first virtual mini-con! Plan to "attend" wherever you are – no registration required! Follow #NCPHactive for sessions on:

- Public history as activism
- Active outreach and educational programming
- The intersection of privilege, ableism, and public history
-and more!

Full details at
[http:// bit.ly/ncphactiveph](http://bit.ly/ncphactiveph)

NCPH
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON PUBLIC HISTORY

MAKE YOUR MARK IN HARTFORD



An exhibitor at the 2018 conference in Las Vegas.

Over 800 public historians are expected to attend the 2019 NCPH Annual Meeting in Hartford, Connecticut. We invite you to raise your institution's profile by reserving exhibit space, advertising in the conference *Program*, or sponsoring an event. Reach potential customers, partners, or students; promote the latest scholarship, forthcoming titles, and

journals from your press; and celebrate the accomplishments of your organization. For more information, visit the 2019 conference page on the NCPH website: <http://ncph.org/conference/2019-annual-meeting>.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET WITH THE PROGRAM

Now that the Program Committee has worked through the session, workshop, and working group proposals for the 2019 conference in Hartford, we have opened the call for poster submissions and will open the call for working group discussants this month.

CALL FOR POSTERS

The poster session is a format for presenters eager to share their work through one-on-one discussion. It can be especially useful for

works-in-progress, and may be particularly appropriate where visual or material evidence represents a central component of the project. The Call for Posters is available now at <http://bit.ly/ncph2019callforposters>. Proposals are due October 17.

CALL FOR WORKING GROUP DISCUSSANTS

Each working group has facilitators who have already proposed the topic. They will be looking for 8-12 individuals to join them in preconference online discussion, to exchange brief case statements, and to meet in session during the conference. Look for the call in September; it closes October 15. Information about NCPH Working Groups can be found at <http://ncph.org/conference/2019-annual-meeting/>.

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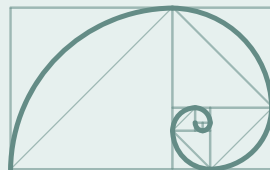
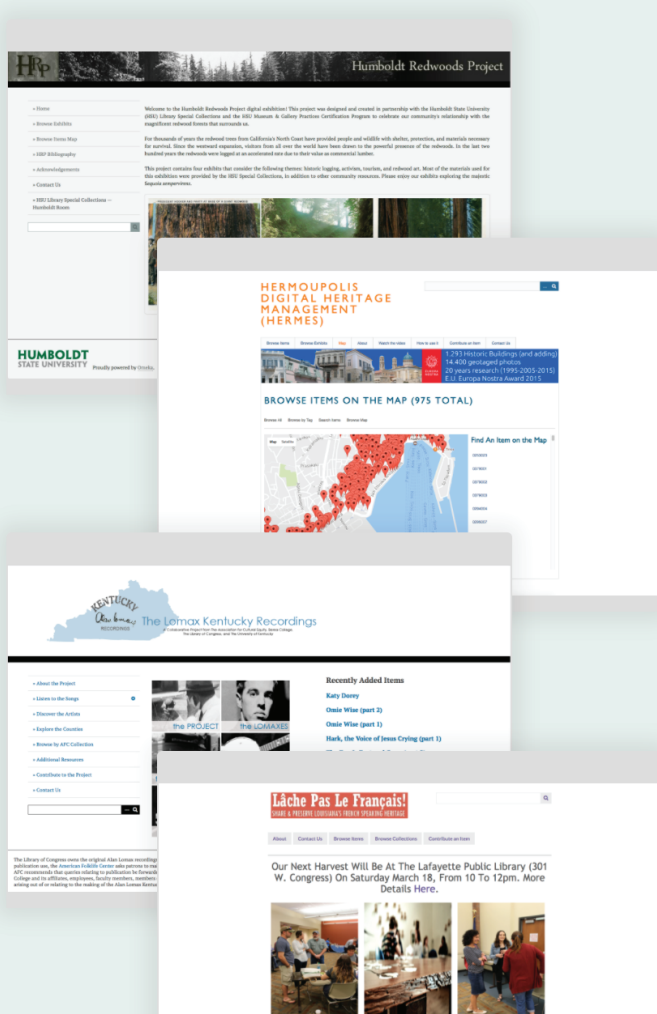
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425 University Blvd.
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