

A STATUS REPORT ON THE 2021 ANNUAL MEETING

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When the COVID-19 pandemic escalated in the United States this past March, necessitating the closure of schools and businesses and the cancelation of many public gatherings, one of the events affected was our 2020 annual meeting. As you'll know from previous updates, including in previous editions of this newsletter, we canceled our in-person March meeting in Atlanta about ten days out, transitioning in that time to a virtual meeting hosted across several different platforms, including Zoom, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

Because of the timing of our 2020 conference, NCPH was among the first professional organizations in the history and public history fields to have to make that difficult call. Since then, other scholarly and membership organizations have faced the same dilemma. Thus far, organizations have almost universally opted to cancel their in-person offerings and utilize virtual platforms, and many of them are taking huge financial losses to prioritize the safety of their attendees.



We're hoping to see the Salt Lake City skyline in six months. Image courtesy of Visit Salt Lake.

Recently the American Historical Association announced they are canceling their in-person January conference, making them among the first of the 2021 conferences to do so.

Here at NCPH we were hopeful that the spring and summer would provide sufficient time for the United States to develop a response for containment of COVID-19, including ample protective equipment for medical personnel, widespread and rapid testing, social distancing

and mask-wearing mandates, and sophisticated contact tracing programs to track and trace the spread of the virus. Such measures have allowed other countries to approach something like normalcy over the last couple of months, and would have helped us be more confident about what our March 2021 annual meeting in Salt Lake City will look like—and would have helped you feel more confident about traveling to it.

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NCPH AND NPS UNITE FOR A CONTEMPORARY EXAMINATION OF THE US WORLD WAR II HOME FRONT

LEAH BAER / LB2923A@STUDENT.AMERICAN.EDU

The National Park Service Park History Program and NCPH are engaging in a multi-year collaborative effort to promote and support the American World War II Heritage City initiative.

During a routine fireside chat on April 28, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a nation engulfed with fear and said, "there is one front and one battle where everyone in the United States—every man, woman, and child—is in action [...] That front is right here at home, in our daily lives, and in our daily tasks."¹ When World War II erupted in 1939, America's home front mobilization efforts lagged when compared to other Allied nations. Drastic government intervention revived the industrial sector and irrevocably transformed the national psyche.

In 2019, as part of the John Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation



Detention Center at Angel Island, used to house POWs during World War II, is part of the U.S. Immigration, Angel Island National Historic Landmark District. The district was deemed nationally significant for its wartime role and as a major West Coast processing center for immigrants. Library of Congress, Carol M. Highsmith Archive.

Act, Congress authorized the creation of a new federal recognition program that focused on the contributions of individual cities, towns, and other jurisdictions associated with the World War II home front and its commemoration.² The National Park Service (NPS) Park History program was assigned the task of establishing the American World War II Heritage Cities program.

As a first step, the Park History Program and the National Council on Public History are reviewing the National Historic Landmark theme study "World War II and the American Home Front," published in 2007. While it critically examined the mobilization efforts of the federal government and the indelible effects of the war on the home front, an update that addresses questions prompted by contemporary research is critical to understanding the transformative effects of World War II on the nation's social, cultural, and political landscapes. Another facet of this collaborative effort includes summaries for each state and territory that highlight their respective home front stories. One of the objectives of this update is to identify nationally significant sites, either from the National Historic Landmark (NHL) study list included in the theme study or a new one and determine if they are eligible to receive a National Historic Landmark designation.

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NOTICE OF THE FALL BOARD MEETING

On October 3, the NCPH Board of Directors will be convening virtually in lieu of the typical in-person Fall Board Meeting which had previously been scheduled to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah. 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 the board at large (board@ncph.org). Individual board members are listed at <http://bit.ly/ncphcommittees>.

WELCOME, HANNAH!



Hannah Smith is serving as the NCPH Graduate Assistant for the 2020-2021 academic year. She graduated from Purdue University Fort Wayne (PFW) in 2019 with a BA in History. She is currently in her second year of IUPUI's Public History Master's degree program. Prior to NCPH, Hannah has worked as a Student Mentor for PFW's History Department, an Education intern at The History Center in Fort Wayne, a volunteer on multiple oral history projects, and most recently as the intern at the Indiana Medical History Museum.

Welcome New Members!

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RECKONING WITH THE SYMBOLS OF WHITE SUPREMACY

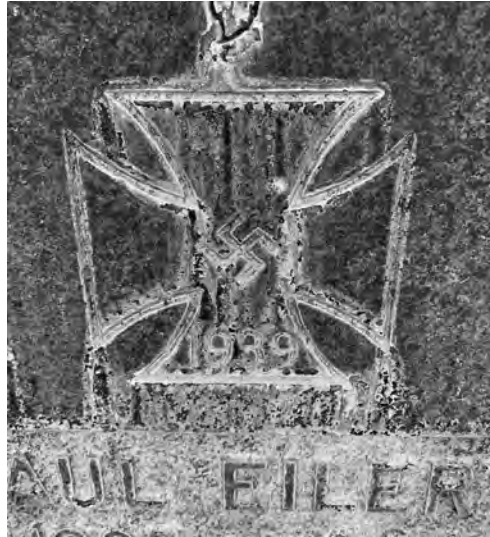


GREGORY E. SMOAK /
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Three months ago, as I wrote my first presidential column in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was hard to imagine that anything else could capture our collective focus in this eventful and tragic year. Then, George Floyd died beneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer. While his death was sickeningly familiar, yet another unarmed Black person killed by law enforcement, the response has been unprecedented. It is likely that well over twenty million Americans have participated in Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations in the past three months, making it the largest mass protest movement in American history. The movement has seen sustained actions across the United States and has even spread to other nations. In spite of the pandemic and within a toxic and divisive political atmosphere emanating from the highest levels of our government, it feels as if a critical mass of Americans are calling for us to reckon with the systemic racism and inequality that has marked our past and mars our present.

It is not surprising that once again monuments to white supremacy have become lightning rods for both those seeking justice and those who would maintain the status quo. For the former, they are visible and visceral symbols of, and tools for, violence and oppression. For the latter, they are heritage; innocent representations of an idealized past. To tear down a monument, this view supposes, is to “erase” history. But as public historians we know that monuments and memorials are not history. As artifacts they are a reflection of society’s values at a given moment in its history. They tell us less about the person or event they are intended to remember than about the people who raised them or the time in which they were created. So, if raising a monument is just as much a political act as taking one down, that act cannot erase history.

Symbols of white supremacy, some subtle and coded, others overt, are everywhere in America. One can be found, at least for the time being, in the historic Fort Douglas Post Cemetery, less than a half mile from my office at the American West Center. During both World Wars, enemy prisoners were held at Fort Douglas as well as at other sites in Utah and, as was common practice, those who died while in custody whose families did not make arrangements for the return of their remains were buried in the military cemetery. Paul Eilert, who died of cancer in June 1944, just



Close-up of Paul Eilert's headstone. Photo courtesy of author.

days after the Normandy invasion, was the first WWII Prisoner of War (POW) to die in Utah. He was a recipient of the Knight's Cross, one of Nazi Germany's highest military honors. His fellow German prisoners pooled \$275 to pay for a large, distinctive headstone engraved with a replica of the Knight's Cross, complete with swastika. The placement of the headstone, more specifically the presence of the swastika in a United States military cemetery, did not sit well with many at the time. Yet, during the war the US military followed lenient policies toward POWs, allowing them to wear their own uniforms and display national symbols, however hateful or divisive. Moreover, Eilert's was not the only marker with Nazi symbolism placed in an American military cemetery. Two other contemporary headstones of German POWs, adorned with swastikas, are located in the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, Texas. Before the war's end more than two dozen other prisoners—German, Italian, and Japanese—were buried in the Fort



Paul Eilert's headstone (back) with Hans Meyer's headstone (front) as contrast as seen in the Fort Douglas Post Cemetery. Photo courtesy of author.

the years, Eilert's anomalous headstone was largely overlooked, if not forgotten.

That changed in the past several years as anti-Semitic rhetoric and acts of violence have increased. My history department colleague Bob Goldberg first learned of the headstone's existence in the summer of 2019. For Bob, the presence of the swastika was a painful affront to the American WWII veterans, some of whom died fighting Nazism, buried in the cemetery. “As a Jew, and as the son of a World War II combat medic wounded in Europe in 1944, I felt this pain personally,” he explained. Bob contacted the Office of Army Cemeteries asking that the marker be replaced with one similar to the other POWs, and that the original be moved to the nearby Fort Douglas Military Museum, where it could be interpreted for the public. His request was denied. The swastika, no matter how abhorrent, was an official symbol of the German government, they replied, and it was “inappropriate for the Army to change a historically accurate representation.”

The issue did not end there. The same week that George Floyd died and protests began to sweep the nation, members of Texas's congressional delegation called upon the US Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) to remove the two headstones at Fort Sam Houston. At first VA Secretary Robert Wilkie was resistant, citing the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and equating “erasing these headstones” with erasing memories of the Holocaust. But within a week the VA changed course and announced it would seek to replace all three headstones with standard markers and move the originals to the historical collections of the National Cemetery Administration. By the end of the month the agency had initiated the review process mandated under the NHPA. How the VA's decision is tied, if at all, to the current BLM protests is hard to say.

What is more certain is that George Floyd's killing and the mass demonstrations which followed have refocused the country on the plague of systemic racism and social inequality, and in the process have again dragged the symbols of white supremacy that permeate our society into the spotlight. It is our job as public historians to help ensure that we move beyond symbolic victories to effect meaningful and lasting change.

-Gregory E. Smoak is the President of NCPH and is director of the American West Center and Associate Professor of History at University of Utah.

Douglas Post Cemetery. All of the subsequent graves, however, were marked by standard white granite headstones listing only the deceased's name, nationality, and date of death. Over

NCPH AND NPS UNITE FOR A CONTEMPORARY EXAMINATION OF THE US WORLD WAR II HOME FRONT // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

As the National Council for Preservation Education intern with the Park History Program I helped lay the foundation for the project by conducting a reconnaissance of twenty-six sites deemed eligible for a National Historic Landmark designation included in the theme study. This reconnaissance consisted of identifying their current status of recognition, ownership, condition, and level of integrity. To assist with the study update I reviewed contemporary secondary literature and recommended areas that would benefit from additional research, such as the Women's Land Army and conscientious objectors. For the state by state summaries facet of this project, I created a working bibliography of monographs, articles, oral histories, and online databases that provide critical information about the home front efforts of each state and territory.

The principal investigator chosen to lead this project is Dr. Matthew Basso, an Associate Professor of History and Gender Studies at the University of Utah. During the preliminary phase of this project Professor Basso and the Park History Program consulted with Professor Nelson Lichtenstein, one of the authors of the original study; Dr. Harry Butowsky, a retired NPS historian; Dr. Stephanie Toothman,

the former Associate Director for Cultural Resources Stewardship and Science; and the superintendents and rangers of National Parks that interpret stories and events related to the home front to discuss developments in the historiography and the efforts undertaken by parks and local communities to preserve oral histories and other records from the era. Further discussions with contemporary scholars who have made critical interventions in a vast range of subject areas will be ongoing as well.

While the project is in its nascent stages, possible subject areas for expansion or inclusion in the updated theme study may include the various employment opportunities, volunteer efforts, and activism of women, African Americans, Indigenous communities, Hispanic Americans, Latinx Americans, Pacific Islanders, Filipino Americans, Chinese Americans, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, among others, on the home front. The update may also explore the effects of mobilization on the environment and the mass expansion of the state.

The American World War II Heritage City program and the accompanying work of NCPH will both challenge our interpretation of the

home front and recognize the catalytic effect of World War II on American culture. The cities designated for the program, along with sites nominated to receive an NHL designation, will serve as tangible reminders of the technological and infrastructural advancements, communal sacrifices, and persistent fights for civil rights that define one of the most transformative eras of our nation's history.

Public historians who would like to recommend a property with a compelling home front story should contact Dr. Matthew Basso at matt.basso@utah.edu.

-Leah Baer is a second-year Public History MA student at American University. She spent this past summer working as a National Council for Preservation Education intern with the NPS Park History Program.

¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Fireside Chat April 28, 1942. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/210556>.

² "Tillis & Rouzer to Designate "American World War II Heritage Cities" Signed into Law," Thom Tillis: U.S. Senator for North Carolina, Last modified March 12, 2019, <https://www.tillis.senate.gov/2019/3/tillis-rouzer-provision-to-designate-american-world-war-ii-heritage-cities-signed-into-law>.



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PRESENT AT THE CREATION PART II: CONTINUED REFLECTIONS ON FOUR DECADES OF PUBLIC HISTORY AND NCPH

Editor's Note: Part I of this conversation appears in the June 2020 issue of Public History News, available on the NCPH website. Special thanks to NCPH's 40th Anniversary Ad Hoc Committee Chair Marianne Babal for working so hard to make sure these reflections are able to reach our members despite the meeting cancelation, and the cancelation of our planned 40th Anniversary opening plenary.



Arnita Jones (AJ) attended the Montecito and National Archives organizing meetings as an American Historical Association (AHA) staff associate with the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History. She was among NCPH's founding incorporators in 1980, served two terms on the board in the 1980s, and was NCPH Chair 1987-1988. She is executive director emerita of the AHA and former executive director of the Organization of American Historians (OAH).



Philip L. Cantelon (PC) attended the National Archives meeting, was among NCPH's founding organizers, and its first executive secretary from 1981-1983. He taught American history at Williams College and founded the college's oral history program. After completing a Fulbright Professorship in Japan, he returned to Washington in 1979 to write a history of the Three Mile Island nuclear accident. With three partners he founded History Associates Incorporated, a historical, archival, litigation, and museum services company, where he currently holds the title of Chairman Emeritus.



Andy Anderson (AA) attended the Montecito public history symposium as a corporate archivist and historian for Wells Fargo & Co. He served on the Board of Editors for *The Public Historian* and the NCPH Board of Directors. He is currently executive vice president and chief historian for Wells Fargo, and the founder and director of the Wells Fargo Family & Business History Center in San Francisco.



Patricia Mooney-Melvin (PMM) founded and directed public history programs at the University of Arkansas and Loyola University Chicago. She is currently associate professor of History and graduate program director at Loyola University Chicago. She was not involved

in NCPH in its earliest founding years, but in subsequent decades has served the organization as an officer and thought leader. She served on NCPH's Board of Directors, and as NCPH President in 1994-1995.

7. Has NCPH achieved what you hoped? What is your assessment of the organization's purpose and value?

AJ: I hoped the NCPH would become an organization that would encourage the professional development of public historians, hold up professional standards, provide a forum to discuss new and emerging issues, and promote the field in the academy and to the general public. I have not been disappointed in these hopes.

PC: No, in a word. It became an academic organization and attempts to set up sections for different aspects of applied history were relatively unsuccessful. I see no figures on what graduate degree holders in public history do or how they are placed. That may be my fault as I have grown further apart from the organization and those metrics may exist.

AA: Ah, the question of the hour. The simple answer is "yes." NCPH has achieved what I hoped it would be—a voice, a platform, and just maybe a career launch for anyone who wants to share their love of history in a meaningful way with other people.

PMM: NCPH provides a welcoming home for a wide range of folks engaged in doing history in a wide variety of settings. Although there has been concern over the years about the domination of folks involved in training programs, these programs and their monetary support, as well as their preparation of graduates who move into all sorts of public history positions, has helped to provide a public "face" to the notion of public history. NCPH provides networking opportunities as just a part of its service to members rather than as an "event" that says *look at us, we are doing something to help historians in non-academic settings*. Working as a historian in a wide range of settings is a norm in NCPH, rather than something to be integrated into an organization's activities.

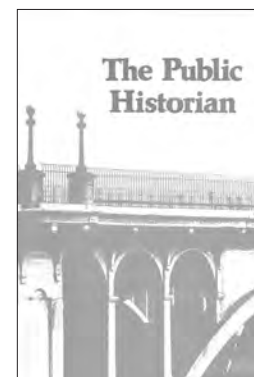
Over the years, it has served as the locus to bring issues of importance into the larger discussion of history in the "traditional" historical associations (AHA and OAH). For example, NCPH's attention to ethics has pushed this discussion from the margins of historical conversations into a more prominent

element of history work. Additionally, its attention to working conditions and issues of equity have forced the larger historical organizations to pay more attention to these issues. Despite the organization's growth, it continues to be a place where old-timers and newcomers to the field can engage in conversation and, in so doing, help sustain intergenerational bonding in ways that are much more difficult in organizations that attempt to serve a wide variety of professional interests.

8. Describe some outcomes of early collaborations among public historians.

AJ: First and very, if not most, important is the journal [*The Public Historian*]. It has provided a forum for issues relating to training, practice, and problems of the field. Crassly, I also realized that a *field* gets a lot of legitimacy in the academy if it has a journal. That has turned out to be true here as well.

PC: The best one was the meeting in Chicago in 1982 or 1983 which Suellen Hoy, Ted Karamanski, and Patricia Mooney-Melvin organized. Suellen managed to get David McCullough as our keynote speaker and a young filmmaker from Walpole, New Hampshire, Ken Burns, to come as well. Neither one had the reputation they would later establish, but it was a genuine coup. McCullough's talk on how an historian works using Louis Agassiz as the model was and remains a classic explanation of our profession, and Burns would talk about a film he was making regarding the Brooklyn Bridge. Moreover, McCullough and his wife Rosalie stayed for the entire time and were fascinated with what was going on. He still remembers that conference. Wow. Who says historians can't be prescient?



Cover of the first issue of *The Public Historian*.

AA: Beyond the obvious, such as the creation of *The Public Historian* journal, I think some of the most important collaborations were in the development of dialogues, conversations, and programs with other long-established historical organizations—

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PRESENT AT THE CREATION PART II: CONTINUED REFLECTIONS ON FOUR DECADES OF PUBLIC HISTORY AND NCPH

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Cover of the 1982 Chicago, Illinois NCPH Annual Meeting Program.

American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, Society of American Archivists (SAA), American Association for State and Local History—to try and present a common voice and united front when needed. I remember being especially energized about professional issues beyond my own work when

I was asked to head up the AHA-OAH-SAA Joint Committee on Historians and Archivists.

PMM: When I arrived at University of Arkansas, I had the opportunity to participate in a gathering at UC Santa Barbara to discuss curriculum issues. At this meeting, in addition to the Santa Barbara folks, I met Noel Stowe, Ted Karamanski, Barb Howe, and Mike Scardaville. This time together, in terms of collaborative activities, led to extensive conversations about public history curriculum and training. It directly led to my role as one of the faculty in the NEH/NCPH Teaching Public History Summer Seminar at Arizona State University in 1984. Noel and I continued to collaborate in the area of curriculum and on the nature of public history training. Noel and I ran several curriculum and training workshops at annual meetings. Over the years, Rebecca Conard joined this close relationship and discussion about the nature and shape of public history training, and our discussion helped sketch the general shape of public history training.

9. What has been the biggest change you've seen in NCPH or the public history movement over 40 years?

AJ: Continued growth and sustainability.

PC: The fact that the organization has survived through bad times and good and resolved some sticky problems that it created itself.

AA: A greater sense of NCPH being *the* home port for those of us not permanently

affiliated with an academic institution. It's a great stepping-off point for evidencing connectedness to a professional organization which aspires to serve the public interest.

PMM: During the early years of NCPH, the notion of the field of public history was much broader. It included all folks who used their historical training in a wide variety of settings. Public historians could be found in the Department of Transportation, in other government positions, in a wide variety of consulting arenas, in business, and engaged in public policy. Over the years, the notion of who falls into the category of public history has narrowed and I think this is a clear result of the growth of training programs. Very few training programs focused on training in policy. As a result, when other historians think of public history, it is typically in terms of museums, preservation, and archives with a smattering of community engagement activities and some media-related activities. This narrowing of identity has opened a window for the American Historical Association's emphasis on career diversity. Many of the ways in which public historians were known to put training in history to work in various settings are now seen as examples of career diversity when talking about historians in business, in policy, etc. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it has important implications for what it means to be an historian and, for better or worse, the AHA still carries weight on these issues. However, it has meant that the wide range of activities that fell under the public history umbrella during the early years are not as visible in the organization today.

10. In your view what are the biggest opportunities/biggest challenges for NCPH or public history?

AJ: One large opportunity is to take advantage of the enormous growth in family history and the nonacademic public's history in doing historical research. A challenge is the fact that many NCPH members are university faculty and that is a world I see changing—and not necessarily for the better.

AA: I'll stay with the biggest opportunity—promoting the notion that “History is always about the future.”

PMM: Increase the participation of folks involved in policy, government, business, etc.; increase the diversity of the profession; be in the forefront of gender equity; understand the importance of addressing difficult histories.

11. What do you think NCPH should be doing to still be relevant 40 years from now?

AA: Marketing. Marketing. Marketing. The simple definition of the word is “to create demand.” NCPH needs to create demand by helping students of history find imaginative ways to make the past the foundation of future planning in people's lives. ‘Storytelling’ a la Samuel Eliot Morison, Ken Burns, and David McCullough is one way to get people to pay attention to the “lessons” of history. Data visualization, a la Edward Tufte, is another. Family dynamics visualization techniques, genographic mapping projects, and DNA and medical genealogies are wonderful ways of personalizing history.

12. What advice would you give students or public historians entering the field today?

PC: Ask why they want to go into public history in the first place, as opposed to a traditionally trained historian who applies their skills outside the classroom. Do we need more public historians? Is there a big demand? Where is it? New students should not become niche historians, but rather individuals who have a vision for where things might go in the future.

AA: The same things I've suggested for about 40 years: focus on clarity of thought and expression—you'll always be speaking or writing about what you know in a way that persuades people you know what you're talking about! Get advice and seek feedback from people who know what they are talking about! Know your audience, which is probably going to be multicultural and multigenerational in this day and age. Learn how to become digital and virtual—contrary to traditional opinion, you can be in more than one place at the same time!! Most of all: Share what you know. And go make the world a better place.

PMM: Possess a diverse professional toolkit; pay attention to depth but do not prepare narrowly; be willing to take some risks; and finally, be able to balance justice, empathy, and information.

NCPH thanks these founders for sharing their comments with us. For more on NCPH's past and future, stay tuned for a 40th anniversary e-publication later this year.

ACCOUNTING FOR FISCAL IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS



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Editorial Note: A slightly altered version of this piece will also appear on History@Work.

As a national organization with a small staff, NCPH concentrates many of its benefits in the few days of the annual meeting: professional development, sharing of scholarship and resources, public events, and, perhaps most important, the person-to-person contacts and conversations that sustain our community. For these reasons, the annual meeting is a primary budget driver, in terms of both expenses incurred and income generated. Therefore, the decision by the NCPH Board of Directors to cancel the 2020 annual meeting in Atlanta, while undoubtedly the correct decision to protect members' health and safety, has complicated financial consequences. And the ongoing pandemic presents a range of long-term financial issues, all of which deserve consideration.

ANNUAL MEETING EXPENSES

Meeting expenses make up one third of NCPH's annual costs, not including the staff time devoted to planning and running the meeting. To pull off a successful and stimulating meeting, we incur costs for special support, such as buses and guides for tours and venue costs for the public plenary. The meeting also requires a host of materials and services, including the *Program* design and printing, promotional materials, audio-visual equipment, and staff and plenary speaker travel.

Far and away, the largest cost of the annual meeting stems from our contract with the host venue. Normally, we take on an obligation for catering and session rooms, which regularly makes up 50% of the total annual meeting spending. When all goes as planned, we are able to budget for and fully cover these expenses. When a meeting does not go as planned, a number of variables in our contract can trigger substantial additional costs.

NCPH signs a contract with the meeting hotel three to five years in advance that stipulates our commitment to fill a block of rooms during the meeting (to defray meeting room rental fees) and to purchase a stipulated amount of catering services. In signing that contract, we accept that we will incur penalties for shortfalls. In a typical hotel contract for our conference, if the reservations in our room block fall below 80% of our promised number, we would begin to incur fees from the hotel based on their lost profit for the unsold rooms. The same would be true of the catering obligation. These fees can be substantial, often totaling as much as \$200,000 (over half of our entire annual budget) depending on the shortfall or date of cancellation.

NCPH takes out an insurance policy to try to protect our investment in these events since they are planned and contracted more than a year in advance. Unfortunately, due to the widespread cancellations and impacts of prior infectious disease events, such as the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009, that insurance policy excludes coverage for infectious or communicable disease that leads to government quarantine or travel restrictions. Given this standard clause, we did not have hopes of finding any relief from the insurer.

Finally, standard contracts include a *force majeure* clause that sets the terms by which the hotel or an organization can break the agreement without penalty: such as acts of God, war, government regulations, disaster, etc. NCPH also typically works to include language about discriminatory legislation and labor disputes. The key factor in this clause is the allowance for "any other emergency beyond the control of

either party making it illegal, impossible, or commercially impracticable ... to provide the facilities or to hold the meeting."

The NCPH board believed that the coronavirus outbreak represented a situation that justified our cancellation, via this clause. Nonetheless, both parties to the contract needed to agree that the terms had been met for the clause to pertain. It was not immediately clear that we would achieve that agreement, but once the city of Atlanta prohibited mass gatherings in the face of the growing COVID-19 pandemic, we received news that the hotel would accept our invocation of the *force majeure* clause, releasing us from the requisite penalties.

ORGANIZATION INCOME AND SPENDING

For NCPH, meeting revenue makes up over 40% of our annual income. Those revenues come from a variety of sources, including advertisements, sponsorships, and exhibitor fees. A host city might offer a subsidy to an organization for holding a meeting, but that has been rare in recent years.

Individual registration fees represent the most substantial portion of income for NCPH, especially in 2020 when we expected the meeting to draw nearly 1,000 attendees. Our budgets for 2019 and 2020 included a total of just over \$148,000 in anticipated registration fees from the Atlanta meeting. Those revenues are not pure profit. Rather, they underwrite staff salaries and benefits and support our programmatic work throughout the year.

Understandably, the cancellation of the in-person meeting resulted in a reduction of this revenue stream. The board and staff were heartened by the outpouring of support. A number of sponsors and advertisers quickly and gladly reported that they would not seek any return of funds, or found other creative solutions to limit damage to themselves or us. Those individuals who could afford to apply their full registration to defray the costs of the cancellation did us a great service. We are grateful to members who were in a position to decline their refunds from the 2020 annual meeting. But we realized that foregoing a refund was not an option for everyone, so we offered a range of refund options. In the end, we refunded roughly \$33,000 in registration fees.

Based on our ability to invoke the *force majeure* clause in our hotel contract, the immediate impact of the 2020 annual meeting cancellation was not as significant as it could have been. Nonetheless, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic poses a range of ongoing challenges. We are in the midst of the pandemic, but we realize that the economic impact will stretch out into the foreseeable future. With many public historians experiencing lay-offs, furloughs, and other financial contractions, we know that people's capacity to keep up memberships and participate in professional events will also be curtailed. Similarly, patrons and partners may be hampered by budget cuts and spending freezes in their institutions. As a result, we anticipate a reduction in membership dues, meeting attendance, and financial donations in 2021. A reduction in meeting attendance will have a cascading effect if we are unable to meet our contracted room block and catering minimum in 2021. Thus, in FY2021, and possibly FY2022, NCPH will almost certainly operate at a deficit.

WEATHERING A DOWNTURN

NCPH reports its financial status annually in *Public History News* (most recently in the March 2020 issue). For the last several years we have operated with a positive margin of between \$1,000 and \$5,000, which we invest in future operations or the endowment. FY2019 generated a

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RALLYING SUPPORT FOR THE HUMANITIES SECTOR DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

BEATRICE GURWITZ / BGURWITZ@NHALLIANCE.ORG



As museums, libraries, scholarly societies, colleges, universities, and other humanities organizations shut down in mid-March due to COVID-19, we at the National Humanities Alliance worked to understand and quickly communicate to Congress how the pandemic was affecting humanities educators and organizations.

Colleagues at museums, historic sites, and independent libraries told us that they were facing severe economic losses due to closures and were anticipating further losses due to canceled festivals and fundraising events. Without additional support, they predicted that these losses would lead to layoffs and possibly closure for smaller organizations. These repercussions were likely to be all the more significant for organizations in communities that were already economically disadvantaged. Humanities educators reported strains as they worked to educate students in unprecedented circumstances, and we anticipated that educators who were casually employed or on contract would be especially vulnerable to the impacts of the crisis. Finally, we heard from scholarly societies who were concerned about the financial challenges associated with canceling in-person conferences and struggling to support their members as they moved to virtual teaching and research.

Early in the Great Recession, Congress did not include funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 even as it provided stimulus funding to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). This time, after years of sustained work by advocates to communicate the public value of the humanities and build support on Capitol Hill, we were hopeful for a better outcome.

We quickly identified advocates whose Members of Congress would play a key role in negotiating the relief bill and facilitated direct outreach to them and their staff. In collaboration with the Federation of State Humanities Councils, we sent a letter to the members of the House Appropriations Committee calling for funding for the NEH and the state humanities councils to provide direct emergency grants to support humanities organizations. We also called for non-profit eligibility for Small Business Administration (SBA) loans and support for casually-employed and on contract educators. We worked closely with the offices of Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and David Price (D-NC) as they wrote a letter to leadership in support of the NEH and the NEA.

When the CARES Act ultimately passed on March 27, it included \$75 million in supplemental funding for the NEH and non-profit eligibility for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Of the \$75 million appropriated to the NEH, 40% would be administered by the state humanities councils for cultural institutions in their states.

And in late June, with an emphasis on preserving and creating new jobs, the NEH awarded 317 grants to support a wide range of cultural organizations and higher ed institutions. Pacific University in Oregon, for example, will use its NEH CARES grant to retain fourteen humanities teaching positions in philosophy, English, and world languages. The University of Arizona Press will retain six permanent full-time jobs and create a temporary full-time position to expand the digitization and production of humanities e-books. Greenwood Community Development Corporation received a grant to add staff members to prepare an exhibition and tours at the historic site of the Tulsa Race Massacre.

While this support will be important in sustaining humanities organizations, it is far from meeting the overall need. The NEH was only able to fund 14% of applications received, while on average the state councils have only been able to fund 38%.

Anticipating this gap and the likely need for additional funding, we have been working to document the needs of the humanities community and share that information with Members of Congress and their staff since the CARES Act passed. We have been hosting virtual congressional briefings—emphasizing ongoing financial challenges (https://www.nhalliance.org/virtual_briefing_local_cultural_organizations_and_the_covid_19_pandemic) and the role of humanities organizations and educators in addressing current challenges (https://www.nhalliance.org/virtual_briefing_humanities_organizations_covid19_pandemic), whether related to COVID-19 or racial justice and anti-racism. And now that the NEH CARES grants have been released, we will be collaborating with the grantees to document the impact of that funding through surveying students and program participants. Most importantly, we have been ensuring that Members of Congress hear directly from their constituents since late March.

We anticipate that the challenges facing the humanities sector will be ongoing and that conversations on the Hill about additional relief for the sector will ebb and flow. When the House passed the HEROES Act in May it included an additional \$10 million for the NEH; however, the Senate's HEALS Act, introduced on July 27, did not include any additional funding. The House and Senate are currently in negotiations, along with the White House, to shape the final bill. Our goal is to ensure that Members of Congress hear from as many humanities organizations and educators as possible so that the humanities sector will ultimately receive additional support, whether in the relief bill the House and Senate are currently negotiating or in a subsequent one. Please be in touch if you are interested in contacting your Members of Congress. We are happy to help.

- Beatrice Gurwitz is deputy director of the National Humanities Alliance.

THANK YOU TO NCPH'S SUSTAINING-LEVEL MEMBERS! SUSTAINING MEMBERS MAKE THE WORK OF NCPH POSSIBLE.

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A STATUS REPORT ON THE 2021 ANNUAL MEETING // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

Unfortunately, today as I write this the United States has more new daily cases of COVID-19 than ever. Public health experts and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have warned we can count on continued significant loss of life for the foreseeable future, as well as increased spread as students, staff, and faculty head back to school. While several vaccines have reported promising results, the final testing and deployment of vaccines will take time, and their efficacy remains uncertain. In short: it's impossible, under these circumstances, to say with any degree of confidence what our lives will look like in one month, let alone six.

We're hopeful that some of us will be able to safely meet in person next March in Salt Lake City, and we are actively working with staff at the Hilton Salt Lake City Center on preparations for a socially-distanced conference that will fulfill our contractual obligations. We expect it to be a smaller conference; we know many public historians have been laid off or furloughed, or seen their travel budgets reduced if not eliminated. In acknowledgment of these extraordinary circumstances, this month our board of directors will discuss pausing our usual policy

against remote presentations, and we're contingency planning under the expectation that at least some of our content will be available on an as-yet-undecided virtual platform.

This hybrid approach is difficult and by far the most expensive; it requires us to plan the in-person meeting and virtual offerings simultaneously, which means more work for our very small staff as well as higher levels of support from our Program and Local Arrangements committees and our Board. However, at the moment it's the only viable option we can plan for with any degree of confidence. We're still too far out from March 2021 to contemplate cancellation of the in-person meeting in favor of an entirely-virtual experience, although we are not ruling out having to make that



Precautions taken in Seattle, Wash., during the Spanish Influenza Epidemic included mask-wearing, and we'll be doing the same at NCPH 2021. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, American National Red Cross Collection, LC-DIG-anrc-02654.

difficult decision again if the guidance of public health experts closer to March indicates it is necessary. While this hybrid approach to conference planning will be complicated, it's also an opportunity to experiment with virtual platforms that have come a long way in just a few months, and to think critically about how to make conferences more accessible and inclusive.

With many of your workplaces in crisis and unprecedented strains on your personal lives, making conference plans for the coming year is likely not among your highest priorities right now. Still, we wanted to give you an update on our thinking for NCPH 2021. Public health and safety will be paramount to our planning process, but any decisions we make will have ramifications for NCPH's financial health, our hard-working committee volunteers, and the professional lives of our members—so you deserve to be kept in the loop, even if the answer is still “we don't know.” If and when decisions are made about the conference in the coming months, we'll communicate them via our website, our weekly eblast to members, and our Twitter (@ncph).

-Meghan Hillman is NCPH's Program Manager.

2021 NCPH AWARDS



Help us honor the best in public history!

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

DUE NOVEMBER 1



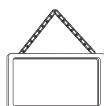
Book Award

Best public history book of 2019 or 2020



Robert Kelley Memorial Award

Distinguished achievement in making history relevant outside of academia



Outstanding Public History Project Award

A model of professional public history practice



Excellence in Consulting Awards

Outstanding work by consultants and contractors



New Professional Travel Awards

2 travel grants to attend #NCPH2021

Robinson Prize for Historical Analysis

Historical study that contributes to the formation of public policy



Student Travel Awards

5 travel grants for graduate students to attend #NCPH2021

Student Project Award

Travel grant to attend #NCPH2021 recognizing student contributions to the field



MAKE YOUR MARK ON NCPH 2021

In addition to the public historians we hope to host in Salt Lake City next March, we're going to be making some portion of our conference content available virtually—opening the NCPH conference experience up to more people and new audiences. We invite you to take advantage of this opportunity for new ways of doing public history with us 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 share the vital work of your organization. For more information, visit <https://ncph.org/conference/2021-annual-meeting/>.

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET WITH THE PROGRAM

The Program Committee is in the process of evaluating session, workshop, and working group proposals for #NCPH2021, but other opportunities to get on the program are either available now or will open soon. Our Call for Posters, Call for Working Group Discussants, and other open calls between now and next March will help you find the right venue to share your work and connect with your fellow public historians. The hub for all conference CPFs, where you'll find information about what we're looking for and a link to the relevant submission form, is <https://ncph.org/conference/2021-annual-meeting/calls-for-proposals/>.

CALL FOR POSTERS

The poster session is a format for presenters eager to share their work through one-on-one discussion, and is particularly appropriate where visual or material evidence represents a central

component of the project. Poster proposals are due October 15. When our in-person 2020 conference was canceled we hosted the poster session on our Instagram, @publichistorians, enabling poster presenters to share their posters with our 2000+ followers on the platform. We're likely to pursue such a solution this year so posters can have maximum impact, so don't hesitate to submit a proposal!

CALL FOR WORKING GROUP DISCUSSANTS

Each working group will be led by facilitators, whose topic has already been proposed and selected by the Program Committee. They'll be looking for 8-12 individuals to join them in preconference online discussion, to exchange brief case statements, and to meet in person during the conference. Because so much of the work of these groups is accomplished before the meeting, it is easily translatable to virtual formats in case you cannot travel to Salt Lake City. The Call for Working Group Discussants will open as soon as the working group selections are



Leisl Carr Childers, Photo of Jetsonorama (Chip Thomas) Art on the Navajo Nation near Page, Arizona 2012. Courtesy of Leisl Carr Childers.

finalized (expected by the end of September), and you can apply as a discussant until November 8.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO COME

This year's conference will be different than NCPH conferences of the past. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it imperative that we rethink the conference experience, and that means new ways to join the program will be made available as March approaches. Keep an eye out for late-breaking opportunities to present your work; we'll be sharing them via our Twitter, @ncph, as well as our weekly *Public History News Update* email and our website.

ACCOUNTING FOR FISCAL IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 8

\$58,000 surplus that was an anomaly due to an unguaranteed conference subsidy and cost savings from an unfilled staff position.

In accordance with non-profit management norms, in 2018 the board established a cash reserve fund for emergencies to secure our ability to operate in unpredictable circumstances. Best practices suggest that the fund should hold between 25% to 33% of the annual operating budget, so the board's goal was to build a fund of \$100,000. To date, we have been able to save roughly \$88,000 in this fund. The decision to establish that operational reserve fund will likely seem prescient in the coming years, as it will provide protection and security for staff in the unpredictable months and years ahead.

Finally, NCPH has applied for a \$30,000 grant predicated on our staffing needs in relation to continuing to provide high-quality programming for public historians as they experience the challenges and vicissitudes of the COVID crisis. If received, this funding will directly replace some

of the gap in funding created by the 2020 meeting cancellation. We will keep the membership posted on the status of this application.

NCPH will weather this storm. We thank those of you who have been supporting the 2020 Vision Endowment campaign; those contributions matter now more than ever, as will contributions to this year's Annual Fund. The staff, the board, and the many, many active committee members remain dedicated to providing the professional community, engagement, and support that members have come to expect from the organization. NCPH may be facing a few tough years ahead, but we steward our resources in a way that communicates our commitments and values. That is why you will see us targeting our time and funding to support the community of public historians as they also weather this storm.

~Sharon Leon is the Secretary-Treasurer of NCPH and an associate professor of History and Digital Humanities at Michigan State University.

PUBLIC HISTORY NEWS

National Council on Public History

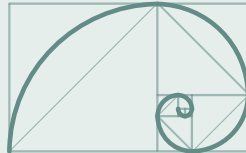
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