

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION  
FEBRUARY 6, 2013  
MINUTES

A meeting of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission was held on February 6, 2013 in the 5<sup>th</sup> Floor board Room of the State Museum, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The following Commissioners were present: John A. Barbour, Karen Dougherty Buchholz, Susan M. Corbett, Senator Jim Ferlo, William V. Lewis, Andrew E. Masich, Ann M. Moran, Representative Scott Petri, Fredrick Powell, Richard Sand participated via conference call, Katie Eckhart for Senator Joseph Scarnati and Alice Lubrecht.

The following staff were present: Richard Beard, Jean Cutler, David Dunn, David Haury, Tom Leonard, Howard Pollman, Brenda Reigle and James Vaughan. Mickey Rowley and Rhonda Newton represented the Pennsylvania Heritage Foundation.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Masich called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

**Minutes of November 7, 2012** – Chairman Masich called for a motion to approve the minutes from November 7, 2012. Ann Moran noted a typo on page 6 under Executive Session, “Chairman Masich called and Executive” should read “Chairman Masich called an Executive”. On motion by Bill Lewis, seconded by Fred Powell the November 7, 2012 minutes were approved with corrections by Ann Moran.

**Funding for PA Museums, Next Steps** – Chairman Masich updated the Commissioners on Funding for PA Museums. PHMC is the official history agency of the Commonwealth. Part of our strategic plan is to partner with professional museums, preservation and archive communities across the commonwealth. In the past, the Commission awarded museum assistance grants to museums. Under the Rendell Administration, those grants were eliminated. Recently, with assistance from Senator Scarnati, a small amount of money was made available to those museums who qualify for the museum assistance grants.

Chairman Masich is working with Senator Jay Costa and Senator Pat Brown to form an Arts and Culture Caucus.

A new grant program could take a lead from the temporary one that was setup last year that focuses on performance. Museums should meet the minimum definition of a museum defined by the American

Alliance of Museums. If museums are going to be eligible for state funding, they should be on the AAM's continuum of excellence; include a formal plan, emergency disaster plan and collections policy.

Jim is supportive that PHMC should have money available to support private museums around the commonwealth but stressed the need for PHMC to have that money separate from PHMC's operating budget. We should spend our time trying to develop a formula, research, a proposal, take it to the legislature and build a constituency.

### Executive Director's Report

Jim Vaughan provided a "Year in Review" for Commissioners and staff, focusing on change and progress. He reminded everyone that most of staff time and effort is spent on serving the people of Pennsylvania through an amazingly broad range of programs. Visitation at the historic sites and museums exceeded one million visitors making us the most popular museum complex in Pennsylvania except for the National Parks. In addition to the million visitors we had an additional 110,000 visitors to the Civil War Road Show. Programs for school students and preschoolers continue to be a priority at all of our historic sites and museums.

The Commission adopted a new strategic plan which establishes a vision of where we want to be in 2020 with specific strategies and goals through 2015. Critical priorities include gaining intellectual control over PHMC collections at all our historic sites and museums.

With the help from the legislature we were able to re-install a small onetime museum grants program. We are working this year to find a means to make this a permanent program.

Within the Capital Complex Facilities, contractors completed a \$6.5 million GESA project designed to reduce energy costs but it needs a lot of balancing and adjusting over the next year. An assessment of the limestone cladding was done on both the Museum and Archives buildings. A Spruce-up campaign was initiated last spring and has continued throughout the year with the work of several task forces, including Signage, Graphics, Exhibits and Collections working to improve the appearance of the building.

A second initiative has been the installation of mini exhibits that are timely and relevant with news media stories for example, Dick Clark, Made in PA Olympic Leotards, Election Day and mid-century Christmas toys for Christmas.

Jim Vaughan met with representatives from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Fish and Boat Commission to assist us with a number of Natural History exhibit changes planned for 2013 and now have seven additional state naturalists helping with our natural history collections and working out of our lab in the Keystone building.

The Building Committee is conducting a study of our facilities use needs and recently repurposed the former Birthday Party Room into the Susquehanna Room; a room that now displays items from our collections.

The State Archives opened the PA Birth and Death certificates to the public in February of 2012 and the demand has remained high. Ancestry.com began digitizing these records, a process that will continue for many months. The archives also completed Phase II of its current building renovation which provides greater security and a new meeting room. Jim Vaughan initiated a feasibility study for a new state archives which will determine space requirements and evaluate site options for a new facility. A report should be available for discussion at our next Commission meeting.

The Bureau for Historic Preservation accomplished a few long range goals including a new Economic Impact Study of Preservation in PA and *Building Better Communities: The Preservation of Place in Pennsylvania*. You can now access PA Historic Markers on your smart phones.

Projects at PHMC historic sites include the completion of the renovation of the visitor center at Washington Crossing Historic Park, a new visitor center/exhibit at Drake Well, the installation of Wi-Fi throughout the Railroad Museum and HVAC in Rolling Stock Hall made possible by geothermal wells under the parking lot. We received approval from the local planning board for the designs for the round house to shelter and display the rest of the rolling stock.

Jim Vaughan discussed needed changes in state laws and regulations to allow us to operate more efficiently. He will meet with legislators over the next few months to encourage support for these changes. If successful, this will increase our flexibility and efficiency in procurement and managing building projects.

Changes in personnel include the retirement of Steve Miller, Director of Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums. Brenda Reigle will serve as interim director until a replacement is found. Jean Cutler, Director of the Bureau for Historic Preservation announced her retirement in May of 2013. Chairman Masich thanked Jean for representing PHMC and her work in the historic preservation office.

**PHMC Budget** - Jim Vaughan reviewed with the Commission's the proposed budget and budget rational for FY 2013 - 2014 that was submitted to the Governor's Office.

In October 2010, the Department of Auditor General issued a very critical special performance audit of PHMC collections entitled "Accountability of Historic Artifacts." It resulted in three findings and 25 recommendations. They reported: "an environment of lax oversight and accountability"; "the inventory systems needs to be replaced by prevailing technology." "We recommend that the Commission immediately conduct a complete inventory"; "the Commission should continue to seek the release of capital project funding to improve environmental control".

The Commission spent substantial energy preparing a written response but at the end of November, 2011 no steps had been taken to address most of the problems. During Jim's first week with the Commission, he committed to initiating a pilot collections project. The collections inventory, catalogue and deaccessioning project is our number one priority.

The primary focus will be refilling curatorial and collection management positions for the collections inventory project, our number one responsibility and priority.

Tom Leonard reported an increase in GGO from \$17.8 to \$18.5 million and a slight increase in the Keystone Fund. Jim Vaughan will meet with staff to discuss key positions needed to be filled and how to reassign some responsibilities of existing staff.

**Historic Sites and Museums – Placed Properties** – Brenda Reigle reported that the following placed properties are moving along quickly through the process, Fort Lebouf, Judson House and Washington

Monument Park. We are working with DGS to draft appropriate legislation to move the placed properties out of our system to local management.

A local management group is interested in taking over management of the David Bradford House and two management groups interested in acquiring property at French Azilum and Old Mill Village only if they can acquire the mineral rights. Ms. Reigle noted that the Commonwealth doesn't own mineral rights of those properties and cannot transfer them to the management groups. We are also working with the local township to make arrangements for them to take over the property at Hope Lodge/Mather Mill.

Chairman Masich asked for a report that included: a recap of how many properties we have, how many properties we have deeded to other organizations and how many properties we currently have contracts with other organizations.

**Volunteer of the Year Resolutions** – Bill Lewis reported that this year's awards ceremony and luncheon is scheduled to be held Saturday, April 27, 2013 at the State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg.

The following nominees will receive a 2012 Volunteer of the Year Award:

Virginia Goodrich – Anthracite Heritage Museums  
Verne Weidman – Brandywine Battlefield  
William S. Poulton, Jr. – Bushy Run Battlefield  
Robert Morris – Conrad Weiser Homestead  
Tom Lehman – Cornwall Iron Furnace  
Diane Krueger – Daniel Boone Homestead  
Mary Sturgis – Drake Well Museum  
Kristen Bogash – Eckley Miners' Village  
David Koch – Ephrata Cloister  
Claudia Bankert – Erie Maritime Museum & Niagara  
Holly Niemeyer-Schorpp – Graeme Park  
Cheryl Snyder – Joseph Priestley House  
John Spear – Landis Valley Village and Farm Museum  
Patricia Leiphart – Old Economy Village  
Thomas Turner – Pennsbury Manor  
Chris Gastrock – Pennsylvania Lumber Museum  
Michael Williamson – Pennsylvania Military Museum  
Steve Kistler and Elvin Ressler – Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania  
Gary Burkett – Somerset Historical Center  
Tara Gallagher – Washington Crossing Historic Park  
Corrine Rebinski – State Museum of Pennsylvania

Outstanding Service Awards:

Pauline Wagner – The State Museum of Pennsylvania  
Ruth Eleanor McCorkill – Joseph Priestley House

Chairman Masich called for a motion to approve the 2012 Volunteer of the Year Award Nominations. On motion by Fred Powell, seconded by John Barbour, the Volunteer of the Year Award Nominations were approved unanimously.

Chairman Masich called for a motion to approve a retirement resolution for Steve Miller, Director of the Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums. On motion by Representative Scott Petri, seconded by Fred Powell, the retirement resolution for Mr. Miller was approved.

Chairman Masich called for a motion to approve a retirement resolution for Sharon Nelson, Head of the Archival Automation Section in the Digital Archives and Records Division. On motion by Fred Powell, seconded by Ann Moran, the retirement resolution for Ms. Nelson was approved.

**Historic Preservation – Historic Preservation Board Meeting** – Jean Cutler reported that the Historic Preservation Board met on Tuesday, February 5, 2013. The board recommended for approval the following sites to the National Register of Historic Places: Joe Frazier’s Gym, Philadelphia County; John Wilde & Brother, Inc., Philadelphia County; Idlewild, Delaware County; Mascot Roller Mills (Boundary Increase), Lancaster County; August Wilson House, Allegheny County; Pittsburgh Renaissance Historic District, Allegheny County; Penn-Liberty Historic District (Boundary Increase), Allegheny County; Pittsburgh Central Downtown Historic District (Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation), Allegheny County and Fourth Avenue Historic District (Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation), Allegheny County.

**Gettysburg Cyclorama Building** – Jim Vaughan reported to the Commission that staff recently visited the Cyclorama Building to see if they could rescue items before demolition. Staff identified Herman Miller furniture and brought it back to the museum. For ten years the National Park Service wanted to tear down the building to preserve the battlefield. Gettysburg and preservationists movement wanted to preserve the mid century building. Recently, the National Park Service officially announced the Cyclorama Building will be torn down.

**State Museum Collections Inventory Project** – Dave Dunn updated Commissioners on the progress of the State Museum Collections Inventory Project. The inventory of the Fine Arts Collection is complete; over 9, 500 objects were identified in the collection and 3,491 objects were found with no

identifying markers. The inventory team completed the inventory project at the Cornwall Iron Furnace; 989 objects were identified in the collection and 473 objects were found with no identifying markers. The team is currently inventorying the Political History Collection; 3000 objects are identified and 80 objects were found with no identifying markers. Once the Political History Collection is complete the team will begin to inventory the Community and Domestic Life collection and the collection at Washington Crossing Historic Park.

**Preservation Assessment Report** – Jim Vaughan reported the State Museum of PA is required to complete a Preservation Assessment Report in order to apply for an IMLS grant. This report is similar to the 2010 Audit Report.

The priority list is based on the opinions of the Preservation Team and in consultation with museum staff include: Gain intellectual control of the collections PART I – complete the inventory and deaccessioning process and Gain intellectual control of the collections PART II – Purchase and implement a comprehensive collections management and digital asset database. Currently, information is entered into excel spreadsheets; we are looking for a comprehensive computerized database that allows for online collection access.

**PA Civil War 150th** – Karen Dougherty Buchholz updated the Commissioners on the PA Civil War 150 initiatives. The PA Civil War 150th website had over 6200 visitors and 1700 followers on Twitter.

*The Civil War in Pennsylvania: A Photographic History* publication sold 1068 copies to date and in order to increase sales, 30 – 35 copies of the book was sent to publishers for review. On January 22, 2013 authors were featured during a broadcast by WITF: Radio Smart Talk. Events were held at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh and The Union League of Philadelphia where 57 books were sold and attended by many people. The book is not available at Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble.com because it is not cost effective for the Commission. Future book signings will take place in Scranton, Allentown, York, Lancaster, Erie, Reading and Gettysburg throughout the year.

*The Civil War in Pennsylvania: The African American Experience* will be printed and available for sale in May 2013 and *The Civil War in Pennsylvania: A Special Commemorative Edition* sponsored by the

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Heinz History Center and Historical Society of Pennsylvania will be available in June.

In honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the document was on display at The State Museum of Pennsylvania with a special presentation by Harold Holzer. Jim Vaughan mentioned the exhibit was very popular and that we now have a digital copy of the document on display.

The PA Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Road Show is now know as Stories from the Homefront; pieces from this exhibit will be installed at the State Museum of Pennsylvania. Opening date for Stories from the Homefront is September 2013. The Civil War Traveling exhibit continues to travel across the Commonwealth.

**Adjournment** - Chairman Masich adjourned the meeting at 12pm.