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Historical Society  
of Pennsylvania



Women campaign during the 1915 Women's Justice Bell tour to drum up support for a state constitutional amendment giving women the vote.

## A Letter from the Chairman of the Board



For the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), the 2015-2016 fiscal year witnessed the adoption of a new strategic plan that aims to broaden our audience by making creative use of our collections to reinforce connections between our history and our future. HSP also launched and concluded several initiatives across the institution, from conservation projects to new community collaborations. Each of these undertakings were consistent with this new strategic plan and share HSP's fundamental mission of making history accessible and relevant to all Americans. Some of these undertakings are briefly described below.

At the onset of spring, HSP staffers were hard at work identifying collections to be featured in "In Her Own Right," a National Endowment of the Humanities-supported digital resource exploring the early struggle for women's rights.

In the sweltering summer heat, the multi-year *An Artist Embedded* project came to a close. Supported by the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the project "embedded" Obie Award-winning playwright Ain Gordon at HSP as he researched the hidden history of pioneering LGBT activist Dr. John Fryer, whose 217-box collection we hold. A corresponding digital history exhibit was recently launched at [digitalhistory.hsp.org](http://digitalhistory.hsp.org)

As the leaves fell during the autumn, we wrapped up the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories project. As part of the Andrew Mellon Foundation-supported initiative, staff visited 172 small archives across the city to provide stewardship guidance and to increase the accessibility of their collections.

Throughout the year, the Digital Services Team bolstered resources available through HSP Encounters, a system of genealogical and biographical databases designed to connect researchers from around the world with their family histories.

During the school year, hundreds of students and educators from across the country visited HSP for a field trip, professional development, or to research in the collections. Our education commitment remains firm through the support of this year's National History Day.

These initiatives and collaborations have been made possible through the support of generous donors and members alike. We wish to thank you for your continued support as we embark on the new year.

Bruce Fenton  
Chairman, HSP Board of Councilors



The set of Ain Gordon's play *217 Boxes of Dr. Henry Anonymous*, created as part of a multi-year project at HSP.





Historian Eric Foner (left), former HSP President & CEO Page Talbott, and civic entrepreneur Sam Katz during the 2016 Founder's Award.

## Founders

On May 5, 2016, HSP honored Columbia University Professor Eric Foner, beneficiary of the 2016 Founder's Award for Exemplary Service to History, and Philadelphia civic leader Sam Katz, recipient of the Heritage Award. With over 250 guests in attendance, celebrating history's champions resulted in a highly successful evening.



Young Friends members celebrate the Creepy Collections and Collections program in November 2015.

## Young Friends of HSP Board

Throughout the year, the Class of 2015 continued to uphold the Young Friends of HSP mission of making history fun, relevant, and available to young people across the Greater Philadelphia region. These 32 young professionals plan and execute events and networking opportunities to raise awareness about the importance of HSP's rich collections and raise funds for its preservation for generations to come. Through board gifts and special events, the Young Friends raised over \$11,000 over the past year, with proceeds going toward the adoption of the Matthew Carey diaries and the William Still digitization project.



Page Talbott, HSP's President and CEO from 2013-2016, during the 2015 Visionaries filming.

## Page Talbott

In 2014, HSP embarked on a strategic planning process, funded by the William Penn Foundation and assisted by TDC consultants from Boston. The plan was approved by HSP's Board of Councilors in summer 2016, and HSP has embarked on a major transformation to match its reimagined strategic vision. Having been an integral part of the planning process and having guided HSP during the transition, Dr. Page Talbott stepped down from her position of President & CEO in June 2016, in order to resume her consultancy, Talbott Exhibits and Planning. Talbott served HSP for nearly twenty years as a board member and, then, as President and CEO since 2013.

Violet Oakley takes a break from her work in this undated photograph. From the Philadelphia Record photograph morgue [V07]



## Library and Archive

To serve scholars, genealogists, and students in Philadelphia and beyond, HSP took significant steps over the past year to make collections more accessible to the public both on-site and online.

HSP's collection of over 21 million items continued to grow as the Library and Archive Team accessioned, processed, and made available **thousands of new materials** – from 18th-century volumes of Berks County's Charming Forge to Virginia Trosino's cartoons and lantern slides depicting African Americans. When not processing collections, creating finding aids and subject guides, or paging materials, the Library and Archive Team fielded more than 11,000 reference requests by over 3,600 on-site researchers.

In order to ensure our collections last for generations to come, the Conservation Team – and a dedicated cadre of volunteers and interns – was hard at work this year caring for several large and significant collections, with treatments ranging from minor paper mends to rebinding entire books. In November 2015, 311 items were conserved from the collection of pioneering female artist **Violet Oakley**, including her sketchbooks, photographs, and parade float sketches. The Wells Fargo-supported **Bank of North America project** concluded in June 2016, with the Conservation Team treating 671 items tracing the development of the first de-facto central bank in the U.S.

Through a planning grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, HSP's archivists have begun to identify materials for **In Her Own Right**, a new digital history project documenting the early struggle for women's rights, highlighting such issues as the woman's suffrage movement, work-related rights and professional opportunities, education, and civic activism. The project, which spans the collections of libraries and archives across the region, will result in an online resource for students, teachers, and scholars.

Work concluded recently on HSP's **Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories**. In partnership with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the goal of the project was to make better known and more accessible to researchers the often hidden collections held by small, primarily volunteer-run archival repositories in the Philadelphia area. The project began in July 2011 and wrapped up in September 2016, during which project staff surveyed 172 small repositories and created finding aids to nearly 1,500 individual archival collections.



Women campaign for the right to vote during the Women's Liberty Bell Tour of 1915. From the League of Women Voters records [2095]



"At The Foot of South St.," an undated painting by Frank Taylor. From the Historical Society of Pennsylvania large graphics collection [V65]



Over the past year, HSP's Digital Services and Genealogical Database Teams added new databases to **HSP Encounters**, a new digital resource comprised of an ever-growing number of genealogical and biographical databases. *HSP Encounters* is an ongoing project in which records and materials deemed of high research value are transcribed and made available online, in searchable form. A new record source, the **Names Database**, was added to HSP's online *Discover* catalog. Containing more than 258,000 names extracted from *HSP Encounters* and other digital collections, the Names Database is a boon for genealogists and family historians especially, many of whom often begin their research with little more than a family member's name.

Additionally, the department collaborated with external partners on digital initiatives such as Digital Paxton and the PACSCL's Diaries project. Lastly, Digital Services provided 300 images of prominent Philadelphians to the Hotel Logan (Philadelphia, PA), that incorporated over a 100 of these images into a chandelier featured in its main lobby.

*To learn more about HSP's collections, visit [hsp.org/Collections](http://hsp.org/Collections)*



Revenue stamps in a ledger from the Bank of North America records [1543].



HCI-PSAR Project Director Jack McCarthy.



Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Crew ca. 1920s.  
From the Wuanda M. T. Walls family papers [3532]

## Programs and Services

To serve all those wishing to make history theirs, HSP's Programs and Services Team embarked on collaborations with new community partners, created educational opportunities for teachers and students, and produced topical publications highlighting hidden histories.

The May 2016 premiere of *217 Boxes of Dr. Anonymous*, the latest play from Obie Award-winning writer/director Ain Gordon, explored the hidden history of Dr. John Fryer. Donning a mask and utilizing a voice changer, Fryer assumed the mantle of "Dr. Henry Anonymous" and led the 1972 push to have homosexuality declassified as a mental illness. The play – and the five public programs preceding its premiere – were part of the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage-supported **An Artist Embedded project**. Over the past two years, Gordon combed through Fryer's 217-box archive housed at HSP and led discussions with artists, filmmakers, and scholars about lending a voice to individuals and groups sidelined by conventional historiography.

In September 2015, HSP joined with professional genealogist Sydney F. Cruice Dixon to host **Foundations of Genealogy: Getting Started and Doing it Right the First Time**, HSP's first 8-week course designed to help family historians become more effective and efficient researchers. In addition to its educational content, the course offered a social opportunity for students to learn and develop as researchers with other family historians. Owing to the course's sold-out success, 2017 will mark the introduction of an advanced continuation course, **Foundations of Genealogy II**.

Alfred Gross, played by Derek Lucci, in the world premiere of *217 Boxes of Dr. Henry Anonymous*. Photograph by Paula Court.



On the eve of commencement, graduates of the *Foundations of Genealogy* course pose for a class portrait.

Open hearth furnaces at the Bethlehem Steel Company ca. 1900.





To mark the World Meeting of Families and Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia, **Pennsylvania Legacies** – HSP's semi-annual illustrated history magazine – explored the stories of Pennsylvania's Catholics, with articles ranging from the essential work of Catholic women religious and the activism of African American Catholics, to the important role of Catholic parishes in supporting immigrant communities. Coinciding with LGBT Pride Month In June 2016, *Legacies* explored the Commonwealth's deep-rooted and diverse LGBT history, encompassing the experiences of elites, celebrities, and leaders in arts and politics as well as those of the poor and marginalized.

Amid tumult surrounding the issue of hydraulic fracturing, the **Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography** – HSP's scholarly journal published since 1877 – explored the legacies of energy production and mineral extraction in the commonwealth, from the anthracite and bituminous coal fields of the northeast and southwest corners of the state, to the natural gas trapped in the Marcellus Shale formation.

In June and July 2015, HSP and its partners organized **Cultures of Independence**, a workshop for educators to raise awareness of Independence Hall's enduring involvement in the creation of the United States and its civic life. Made possible through the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Cultures of Independence welcomed more than 70 educators from across the country. Over the past year, HSP's Education Team also set a new record for **field trips and classroom visits**, putting primary sources into the hands of students across the region. HSP's commitment to **National History Day** remained as strong as ever, hosting the city-wide NHD *Philly* Kick-Off for the fifth year in a row and resuming its free Student Mentors service.

*To learn more about HSP's programs and publications, visit [hsp.org/Calendar](http://hsp.org/Calendar) and [hsp.org/Publications](http://hsp.org/Publications)*



Members of the Accolade Chamber Choir gather before performing as part of HSP's Catholic Philadelphia program.



Educators take a break from the *Cultures of Independence* workshop to pose for a group portrait.

## With A Little Help From Our Friends

Philadelphia boasts a storied history of volunteerism. Civic concern and community solidarity were responsible for many of the city's first hospitals, orphanages, and other public institutions. HSP itself is the result of such voluntary associations, and its most recent interns, volunteers, and grant-supported personnel continue to embody this spirit of service. HSP is forever grateful for the time and energy of these incredible individuals.



### Olivia

During my interview for the position, I was shown Martha Washington's *Booke of Cookery* and I quickly became emotional holding it in my hands. In this one item, two of my interests coalesced: my academic focus on Colonial America and my most prominent hobby, cooking. After combing through HSP's collections guided by my love of all things culinary, I learned far more about the lifestyles and personalities of those living in the early United States than I would have ever imagined, inside the kitchen and out.

-Olivia D'Aiutolo, HSP's 2015 communications intern and author of *A Pinch of History: Culinary Commotion at HSP*, is now a national contributor at Spoon University.



### Grace

During my time as an intern at HSP, I got to collaborate on the Digital Paxton project - imaging and examining pamphlets and graphics related to the 1763 Conestoga Massacre. While researching and learning more about this significant historical event, I became interested in the way race and gender were conveyed through the documents I was helping to digitize. Coming into this project, my knowledge of late colonial America was limited. However, I soon discovered that my background in sociology and queer history could help me interpret the themes and patterns that emerged from the materials, and I organized a document display in the hope that other people can view and interpret these materials and "make history theirs" too.

-GVGK Tang is a senior honors student at Temple University, majoring in history and sociology with a minor in LGBT studies. An aspiring public historian, Tang is interested in making queer history accessible to everyone



### Megan

While working on the Howard Lewis Project at HSP, I had the opportunity to work very closely with some truly wonderful collections. As an archivist still in the early stages of her career, collections like the Gibbon family correspondence were quite formative for me and a joy as a history-lover. What struck me the most about the collection was the richness and completeness of these materials as well as their intimate nature. Archivists strive for objectivity in arranging and describing the archival collections under their care but, like fond parents, we all have secret favorites that stay with us long after the work is over. And for me, one of the best parts of my job is being able to share my enthusiasm for these favorite "children" with others.

-Megan Sheffer Evans, who personally processed dozens of HSP's collections, is currently an archivist at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg.

To learn more about intern and volunteer opportunities at HSP, visit [hsp.org/Opportunities](http://hsp.org/Opportunities)



Mrs. Kenney Ferry 25<sup>th</sup> Decemr 1796

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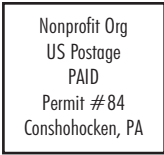
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