

EXHIBITS

From Cambodia to Greensboro: Tracing the Journeys of New North Carolinians

Greensboro Historical Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina. Project manager: Jon Zachman; guest curator: Barbara Lau

December 7, 2003–December 31, 2005

It's like you are riding on a boat, two different boats. One leg is on the Cambodian one, one leg is on the American boat. One is going east, one's going west, you're going to fall in the middle. That's when you're trapped and don't know what to decide. Why don't you buy a third boat, which you could blend it all in together, and you'll be safe.

—Vandy Chhum, *From Cambodia to Greensboro*

In the past 25 years, refugees and immigrants from around the globe have contributed to Greensboro, North Carolina's growing cultural diversity. Asian populations, including Cambodians, represent the largest group among the area's newcomers. As the Cambodian community celebrated the 20th anniversary of the first resettlement in Greensboro, the Greensboro Historical Museum responded with the opening of an exhibit called *From Cambodia to Greensboro: Tracing the Journeys of New North Carolinians*.

Established in 1924, the Greensboro Historical Museum seeks to address the region's historical events and well-known people. The museum offers exhibits on Native Americans, decorative arts, and community life. In 2000, the museum initiated a five-year strategic plan to reach new audiences, including Greensboro's diverse population, and increase community involvement. The museum used the anniversary of the Cambodian community's arrival in North Carolina in January 1983 as an opportunity to unveil the first of several new exhibits with the new goal in mind.

From Cambodia to Greensboro addresses several questions. Who were the Cambodian (Khmer) people who first came to Greensboro? Why did they leave their country? Could they make new lives in America while retaining their culture, traditions, and beliefs? The exhibit answers these questions through historical research, oral history, and community involvement. The timelines, text, and material culture are organized around five themes: Historical Roots, War and Transition, Tradition and Change, Spirituality, and Community.

The exhibit begins its journey at the golden age of the Angkor Empire and Angkor Wat, an important cultural symbol to the Khmer people. It leads visitors to a discussion of Cambodia's role in the Vietnam War and the subsequent rule of the Khmer Rouge. The narrative examines the cost of the war to the Cambodian people in human lives (2-3 million lost) and in displacement (half a million forced to flee their homeland; over 150,000 to the United States). The story line then shifts to those who began new lives in Greensboro, aided by Lutheran Family Services and other social service organizations. *From Cambodia to Greensboro* high-



The Math Hai family was among the thousands of Cambodians who arrived in the United States after the Vietnam War. This official photograph was taken in 1983 when the family registered at Khao-I-Dang refugee camp in Laos. (Courtesy of the Math Hai family)



Every April, hundreds of Cambodian and Khmer people travel to Greensboro, NC, to participate in the Cambodian New Year festival. In 2001, Phal Sum and his young son walk in a Kathin procession at the Greensboro Buddhist Center. (Courtesy of Cedric N. Chatterley)

lights personal struggles with identity and the measures taken to retain cultural values, religious beliefs, and traditions. The exhibit ends with a discussion of the importance of maintaining old connections and creating new ones and suggests ways that visitors can learn more about Cambodian culture, including an invitation to join in the Cambodian New Year celebration at local temples.

In the book *The Presence of the Past*, historians Roy Rozenweig and David Thelen suggest that the past is personal and that people trust eyewitnesses to history, as well as the information presented in museums.¹ Responding to this idea, curator Barbara Lau and researchers Vandy Chhum and Ran Kong conducted numerous interviews with first- and second-generation Cambodian Americans. Quotes from the interviews supplement the curatorial narrative. The narrative is enlivened with photographs that trace the evolution of life from refugee camps to the United States. Official government identification photo-

graphs of melancholy newly arrived Cambodians are juxtaposed with recent images of the same people at joyous occasions, including a college graduation and the birth of a grandchild.

Objects and labels work together to reinforce the educational component of *From Cambodia to Greensboro*. One label asks the reader to imagine life as a refugee. What would you take with you if you had to leave your home tonight? One Cambodian family chose three items as they fled their country: a cooking pot, a spoon, and a piece of fabric, which are neatly arranged in a display case. A Buddhist altar and related objects offers insight into Buddhist beliefs.

In *From Cambodia to Greensboro*, gallery space is transformed into a cultural meeting place. Visitors are invited to remove their shoes upon entering the gallery. Exhibit labels are printed in English and Khmer. Exhibit design reflects a Cambodian aesthetic. The brightly-colored walls and banners, traditional music playing, and the flow of the exhibit celebrate diversity and foster understanding and respect. This exhibit contributes to fulfilling the Greensboro Historical Museum's desire to broaden the scope of its mission as a local history museum and its service as an educational and cultural institution.

Karmen Bisher

*National Conference of State Historic
Preservation Officers*

1. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America

New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Project director: James G. Basker; historian curator: Richard Brookhiser; guest curator: Mina Rieur Weiner; exhibit design: Ralph Appelbaum Associates Incorporated

September 10, 2004-February 28, 2005

Someone whose portrait is engraved on a billion and a half \$10 bills probably deserves a blockbuster biographical exhibit, and the New-York Historical Society has obliged handsomely. *Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America* portrays the life and times of a figure central to the creation of our nation, a man of strong appetites averse neither to deep thought nor drama. The society has matched the scale of an exhibit to the scale of its subject, and exhibit visitors are clearly thrilled with the results.

In the course of his life (1757-1804), Hamilton suffered regular vicissitudes and enjoyed regular successes, each a mix of his own doing and the influence of others. He lived under a persistent cloud of questions—beginning with his origins (“A bastard Brat of a Scotch peddler,” in the opinion of John Adams) and ending with his impulsive and fatal duel with Aaron Burr. At many points in between, he shone radiantly as one of the creators of the unprecedented United States of America.

So what is “modern” regarding Hamilton? His foresight resulted in many institutions within which we live today, including a federal system of shared authority among a central government and the states, central currency and banking, and an economy diversified far beyond agriculture. Hamilton’s vision on such matters was original, genius, and enduring.

The timeline and story may be familiar. Born on the West Indies island of Nevis, Hamilton emigrat-

ed alone to New York and entered King’s College (now Columbia University) in 1773, published his first political essays (“A Full Vindication” and “The Farmer Refuted”) in 1774 and 1775, joined a militia company of student volunteers in 1775, and became a captain of a New York artillery company, a colonel on General George Washington’s staff, and a commander of light infantry. In 1780 he married Elizabeth Schuyler, daughter of an old and comfortable upstate New York family. Hamilton then pursued a law, political, and business career. In 1782 Hamilton was elected delegate to the Constitutional Convention. In 1784 Hamilton was part of a group of investors who founded the Bank of New York (“He offered ideas, not money: he owned only one share of stock ...”¹).

In 1785 Hamilton and others founded the New York Manumission Society dedicated to ending slavery, a vision that was active but delayed for nearly 60 years. During 1787 and 1788 Hamilton and colleagues published the 85 essays known as the Federalist Papers towards persuading New York to ratify the proposed Constitution. While authorship is still disputed, most scholars accept that Hamilton wrote 52 of the essays, James Madison 28, and John Jay 5. The essays explained “the utility of the union to your political prosperity”² and why a federal union was the best choice for the United States. The Federalist Papers are considered “the one product of the American mind that is rightly counted among the classics of political theory.”³

In 1789 Hamilton was appointed Secretary of the Treasury in the newly constituted government and served until 1795. In 1790 Hamilton published his “Report on a National Bank” and “Report on Public Credit,” promoting the Federal Government’s fiscal responsibilities. In 1791 the Federal Government assumed the states’ Revolutionary War debts in exchange for centralizing major aspects of the national economy (and politics). In 1792 Hamilton led the formation of the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures to promote a

diversified national economy through skilled trades and industry: “When all the different kinds of industry obtain in a community, each individual can find his proper element, and can call into activity the whole vigor of his nature.”⁴ In 1798 the United States faced the possibility of war with France and Hamilton reentered military service with a commission from President Adams as Inspector General of the Army, second in command to President Washington.

In the 1800 presidential election, when Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied and the decision went to the House of Representatives, Hamilton fatefully urged Federalists—“In a choice of evils ...”—to choose Jefferson. In 1801 Hamilton founded the *New-York Evening Post*, today’s *New York Post*. In 1802 Hamilton began construction on the Grange, his rural retreat in upper Manhattan. In the summer of 1804, Hamilton and Burr dueled to settle an escalated series of political and personal slights. Hamilton shot high and wide. (“I have resolved... to *reserve* and *throw away* my first fire,” Hamilton wrote in a farewell letter to his wife.) Burr’s shot was fatal.

Later in 1804 Hamilton’s peers founded the New-York Historical Society. The Hamilton exhibit is a fitting bicentennial celebration of the society and a hometown favorite son. To bring the story alive, the New-York Historical Society draws on many collections, but primarily its own. The challenge for this exhibit: Hamilton’s archive legacy far outstrips his artifact legacy. Few clothes, little furniture, no artifacts as interesting as the fabled wooden teeth at Mount Vernon. But “Hamilton changed the world through writing”⁵ and, with substantial help from the designer’s craft, the exhibit appropriately and very successfully tells a dramatic story chiefly through dramatic documents.

The exhibit focuses on His World, His Vision, His Life, and The Duel, opening with two walls lined with portraits of prominent contemporaries and a film produced by the History Channel. The

portraits and film drive home both that it is who you know matters and that Hamilton was a star in the histories, comedies, and tragedies of the period. In His Vision, the core of the exhibit, unique period documents and small objects and contemporary videos tell the story of Hamilton’s ideas and accomplishments. His Life is a timeline relating Hamilton’s life—by turns solid and evanescent—to what was happening in the colonies, the United States, and the world, ending with a letter from Hamilton’s sister-in-law to her brother: “... General Hamilton was this morning wounded by the *wretch Burr*.” The Duel is a simple vignette of life-size bronzes of Hamilton and Burr standing poised to shoot, in front of an exhibit of the actual pistols.

The story continues throughout the society’s other exhibit spaces, with special labels for other Hamilton-related artifacts that further demonstrate Hamilton’s deep influence on the early and continuing history of the United States. The federal union was Hamilton’s seminal achievement, an opinion seconded with popular enthusiasm. In 1788, the Society of Pewterers carried a painted banner in a “Federal Procession” in New York with a verse that assented to the political innovation devised by Hamilton and his colleagues: “The Federal Plan Most Solid & Secure/American’s Their Freedom Will Endure/All Arts Shall Flourish in Columbia’s Land/And All her Sons Join as One Social Band.” Between 1787 and 1790, each of the former 13 colonies held processions to celebrate its ratification of the Constitution. The pewterers’ is the only procession banner known to survive. With the beautiful presentation of hundreds of rare and powerful objects such as this banner, *Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America* tells a compelling and comprehensive story of a man devoted indeed to the enduring and flourishing success of the United States.

The story of the exhibit is amplified in a tabloid-style exhibit catalog disguised as a special issue of the *New York Post*, complete with predictable

hyperbole and breathless telegraphic writing; in a website (www.alexanderhamiltonexhibition.org); and in a new play, “In Worlds Unknown: Alexander Hamilton and the Invention of America.” Notwithstanding the glow of exhibit and stage lighting, Hamilton and controversy will remain entwined. For other views of Hamilton and the exhibit, readers might begin with www.gotham-center.org/hamilton.

John Robbins
National Park Service

1. Exhibit text.
2. Federalist Papers, www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed01
3. Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (Reprint; New York: New American Library, 1961), vii.
4. Hamilton, “Report on Manufactures,” 1791.
5. Exhibit text.

Separate is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC. Curators: National Museum of American History, Behring Center, staff

May 2004-May 2005

Marching Towards Justice: The History of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Law Library, Howard University School of Law, Washington, DC. Exhibit director: Lawrence C. Mann

May 3-July 29, 2004

Museums commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board*

of Education face three significant challenges.

The first is the need to explain the larger context in which the fight to end segregated education occurred and the steps individuals and agencies took to resist desegregation. Covering Jim Crow, white supremacy, and the denial of constitutional provisions for equal protection is a lot to ask of the introduction to an exhibit. Second, the story leading up to *Brown* is legally complex and involves a national coalition, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that brought five cases to the federal court system. Finally, the story continues through the immediate aftermath of *Brown* and the unforeseen consequences of ending the Jim Crow caste system. Today, any celebration of the *Brown* decision is bittersweet, given mounting evidence of broad patterns of ethnic and economic resegregation within the nation’s public schools.

Separate is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education at the National Museum of American History provides an interesting mix of artifacts and furniture, original documents and reproductions of well known images, as well as archival television and film coverage. The historical context is provided in objects and documents that depict “Segregated America” ranging from a sign, “Japs Keep Moving;” to a campaign poster from Senator Strom Thurmond’s presidential bid in 1948. A period film depicts the unequal conditions found in segregated school systems. The legal campaign to combat segregation is portrayed in a series of alcoves that tell the story of the five cases brought together under *Brown*.

To underscore the landmark qualities of the *Brown* decision, the exhibit uses four photographically reproduced columns to form a triumphal arch through which the visitor approaches an imposing wooden form, meant to represent a judge’s bench. Almost lost in the background as reports of the decision flash on a vintage television, is a portion of the lunch counter and seats from the Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina, site of a major 1961



This image from an 1839 Boston Anti-Slavery Almanac illustrates the protests against segregation in public education before the 20th-century events leading up to *Brown*. (Courtesy of the National Museum of American History Collections)

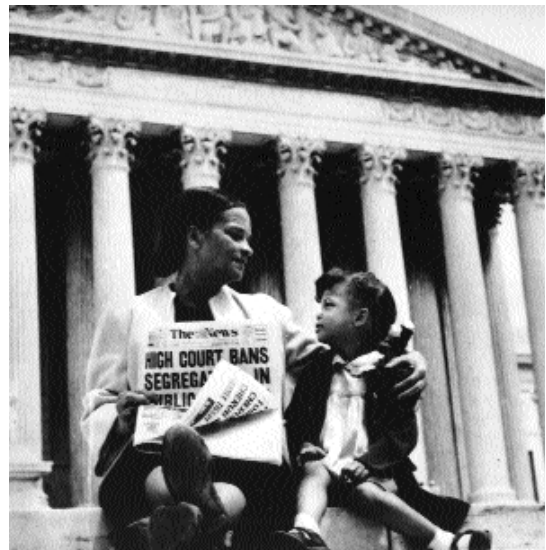
sit-in. Visitors are left to ponder the relationship between the judicial end of segregated school systems in the mid-1950s and the struggle to integrate public accommodations in the early 1960s. A brochure and the museum's website provide complementary interpretation.

Marching Towards Justice: The History of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides an interesting contrast to *Separate is Not Equal*. *Marching Towards Justice* is the first in a series of exhibits called *Brown @ 50: Fulfilling the Promise*. Sponsored by the Damon J. Keith Law Collection of African-American Legal History, Wayne State University Law School, the traveling exhibit has been displayed at over a dozen institutions and conferences. Installed in a curved, well-lit space at the law library at Howard University's School of Law, the exhibit uses a variety of familiar images with some audio supplements to tell the story.

The exhibit's "central focus is the courageous struggle of persons of African descent and their allies who, for several centuries, fought to achieve justice in this land." With such an expansive mandate, it must sketch the story of the 14th Amendment with broad strokes. *Marching Towards Justice* outlines the events prior to and following the ratification of the 14th Amendment—from the

arrival of Africans in America and the paradox of slavery, through the Dred Scott case to the establishment of equal protection during Reconstruction and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the promise denied during the Jim Crow era, leading up to *Brown*. The chronology is supported by drawings and photographs, as well as a historical narrative steeped in the social and cultural history of African Americans.

The exhibit concludes with the half-century civil rights struggle leading up to the *Brown* decision in the mid-1950s. The exhibit lays out the legal strategies and highlights the participants, including attorneys Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall, in the NAACP's attempt to achieve the Constitution's promise of equal access and opportunity. The exhibit's thesis, that the 14th Amendment "ultimately becomes the weapon of choice" [emphasis in text] during the 20th century for legal battles with institutionalized racism, is well illustrated. A companion booklet provides addi-



The widely disseminated image of Nettie Hunt, sitting on the steps of Supreme Court, explaining the meaning of the Supreme Court's decision banning segregation in public schools to her daughter Nikie, reflects the resolve and pride needed to win the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

tional context for the story as well as supplemental bibliographic resources for those interested in a more detailed discussion.

Both exhibits are worthy and successful, each within their own context, sponsorship, mission, and venue. *Separate is Not Equal* and *Marching Towards Justice* correctly highlight the contributions of individuals, especially Houston and Marshall, in championing school desegregation in the nation's schools. One can only imagine the bravery and anguish of countless, unrecognized parents who knowingly placed their children in harm's way and who risked their own lives and livelihoods to openly confront segregation. Looking back on *Brown*, as the story passes from active memory to museum installations and historic sites, we can hope that these important events receive the consideration and stewardship they deserve. For the preservation community, exhibits that commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* should serve to awaken us, as Thomas Jefferson noted, "like a fire-bell in the night," that the most important stories of the 20th century are often told not in architectural landmarks, but in common, seemingly unremarkable, places.

John H. Sprinkle, Jr.
National Park Service

Brooklyn Works: 400 Years of Making a Living in Brooklyn

Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, NY.
Curator: Ann Meyerson

Semipermanent

Visitors to New York City frequently overlook one of the region's most interesting communities, the borough of Brooklyn. From its agricultural beginnings to its commercial heyday, Brooklyn's

history is unique. The Brooklyn Historical Society's exhibit, *Brooklyn Works: 400 years of Making a Living in Brooklyn*, follows this history through the lens of the borough's ever-changing industries and workers. Theatrical backdrops, large format photography, audio presentations, artifacts, and hands-on exercises combine to give life to each era in Brooklyn's labor history.

The exhibit was developed over five years with help from a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. The far-reaching exhibit marks the reopening of the Brooklyn Historical Society after an extensive renovation of its historic home. Curator Ann Meyerson and the society's staff compiled artifacts from industries and the society's collection.

An opening video montage sets the theme by focusing on the people of Brooklyn, depicting their work, their diversity, and their vibrancy. The exhibit is divided in four sections, each chronicling a distinct wave of immigration and corresponding trends in labor. The exhibit immerses the visitor in each era, using stage sets that recreate the architecture, artifacts, and vistas of the time. A combination of well-written text, interactive activities, audio and video recordings, and photographs make this exhibit accessible and engaging for a variety of age groups. *Bounty and Bondage: King's County before 1820* depicts the region's agricultural heritage through narrations recreated from letters, diaries, and artifacts from the era.

The World Trades with Brooklyn: 1820–1880 documents the city's emerging role as a major shipping center in the 19th century. The completion of the Erie Canal transformed the Port of New York into one of the busiest in the world. By 1880, Brooklyn was the nation's third largest city. (Brooklyn was incorporated as a borough of New York City in 1898.) In one gallery, a map of the Brooklyn docks is paired with questionnaires and primary source documents, challenging visitors to take on the role of trade-goods inspector.



Brooklyn Works uses a neighborhood barbershop to interpret the difficulties that African Americans and other people of color had with obtaining work during the early part of the 20th century. A short film features five elderly African Americans along with still photographs, archival footage, and music. (Photograph by Mike Hanke, courtesy of the Brooklyn Historical Society)

The apex of Brooklyn's industrial might is addressed in *Brooklyn: A Powerhouse of Production 1880–1950*, which examines the period through the voices and artifacts of laborers. In one gallery, a barbershop becomes a peaceful place to view period photographs while listening to oral histories of African Americans' finding work and facing discrimination. Nearby, a gallery with steel plates, overhead catwalks, and industrial sounds, recreates the Dickensian world of a sugar refinery. A *Domino Sugar Company* movie from 1920 is paired with commentary on the quality of life for workers in the factory including descriptions of oppressive heat, occasional explosions, and poor air quality. A touch-screen computer lets visitors

try "making ends meet" on the salaries of waiters or longshoremen. The role of women is included, documenting long hours in garment factories with little pay and hazardous working conditions. After marriage, their daily work included keeping their homes, raising their children, and taking in piece-work for extra money.

A note of sadness underlies the last section of the exhibit, *Industry Shifts Gear, Brooklyn Today: 1950–2000*. A combination of factors shifted Brooklyn's labor market from an industrial to a service economy. The developing highway system reduced the need for nearby industry, product processing, and shipping facilities; governmental incentives lured businesses into the suburbs; and little room in inner cities was available for expansion. The borough's growth halted and then receded, and job losses mounted. The end of the era is punctuated by the departure of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Large demographic maps depict the ever-changing population of the borough. A full gallery is devoted to profiling the diversity of its workers ending the exhibit on a high note, leaving visitors with a sense of Brooklyn as a vital and thriving cultural center. Although the fruit of Brooklyn's labor, from rope to cotton to sugar, are well documented, the real story is the ebb and flow of people. A century ago, Brooklyn's population was surging with waves of immigration from Europe. Today, the percentage of foreign-born residents in Brooklyn is again about 40 percent, but the new immigrants hail from Asia, Africa, the West Indies, Central America, and Eastern Europe. *Brooklyn Works* provides preservationists a look at an area's ever-evolving industrial and ethnic heritage and how such diversity manifests itself over time.

Claire Kelly
New York, New York

The Museum of Communism
Prague, Czech Republic

The House of Terror
Budapest, Hungary

Permanent exhibits

The National Park Service and other cultural organizations struggle to tell the often-painful stories of injustices and the battle for civil rights. Empowered by the need to commemorate local landmarks and by a growing number of visitors to iconic sites like the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama, museums and civil rights interpretive trails are opening or are under development in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee. A recent *New York Times* article noted that a surge of visitation at sites important to the civil rights movement has forced communities in the American South to face a difficult past.¹

Similar desires to discuss difficult pasts have inspired interpretive efforts at Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in Montana, Civil War battlefields, and newer national parks that address the abuse of civil liberties, such as Manzanar National Historic Site. While these events remain difficult topics, time has lent some perspective and distance to our understanding of the events.

But what if these painful stories happened just 15 years ago? Today, Budapest, Hungary, and Prague, Czech Republic, are cities thronged with visitors and residents enjoying their architecture, music, cafes, and nightlife. But at the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Budapest and Prague were the capitals of grim Eastern Bloc countries.

Other than a few concrete behemoths and an occasional Trabant automobile stalling in an intersection, traces of the Soviet occupation have been largely erased from the landscapes of the two

cities. This year, the Czech Republic and Hungary were admitted to the European Union. Both countries have already made the transition to a capitalist economy; their streets are lined with name-brand stores and choked with traffic. Guidebooks and tours focus on the legacy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the glories of Art Nouveau architecture. Only synagogues converted into small museums remain to tell the tale of the Nazi pasts. In the interest of interpreting the more recent past, two museums have opened in Prague and Budapest to address these similar stories in divergent ways.²

The Museum of Communism in Prague offers a chronological review of the prewar tensions of the 1930s through the collapse of the Soviet Union. Modest in scale with no state-of-the-art trappings, it relies on photographs, topical groupings of art and artifacts, and extensive captioning in Czech, English, and German. One exhibit depicts the bare shelves and shoddy merchandise of Communist-period stores. The text notes that the Czechoslovakian economy was reduced to a system of bartering for goods and services. Other exhibits provide insight into the educational system and the role of organizations such as the Young Pioneers in indoctrinating the next generation. A mock up of a Committee for State Security (KGB) interrogation room is the single attempt to provide an immersion experience.

A videotape traces the role of public dissent and demonstrations from the failed efforts of the “Prague Spring” in 1968 to the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989. It offers a different experience from the typical history-museum film in the United States. The commentary is limited, allowing the action and 1990s pop music to tell the story. The museum is located around the corner from Wenceslas Square, the site of historic demonstrations, so visitors can experience the square after touring the museum.

The Museum of Communism was the brainchild

of American Glenn Spicker and Czech designer Jan Kaplan. It revels in the irony of its location between a McDonald's and a casino and has a strong anticommunism point of view. The museum's website offers electronic Soviet-period postcards with updated slogans that visitors can send to friends. The website's guestbook offers a fascinating glimpse into visitor perception of the museum's interpretation of the recent past. Responses range from enthusiasm that the story is being told to disparagement of the museum's biased viewpoint and desire for a more traditional interpretation.

The House of Terror in Budapest offers a very different experience. Located in a large fin-de-siecle mansion that successively housed the secret police headquarters of the Nazi Arrow Cross during World War II and the Hungarian Communist Party in the following decades, the museum is both a historic site and an exhibit experience. The experience begins before entering the building, as the shadow of the word "terror" from the signage is cast on its facade. Inside, the atmosphere is made oppressive with discordant music and galleries that are more performance art pieces than traditional history museum displays.

Every gallery is designed to tell one facet of the story to maximum effect. While exhibit labels are in Hungarian, headsets providing detailed narration in English are available. (The touch screen monitors and search aids in the galleries and on the museum's website are available only in Hungarian.) The intent and implementation differs greatly from the Museum of Communism. For example, one gallery features a period car resplendent in the symbols of Communist-Party privilege and power located behind a black curtain. In another, the floor is a map of Russia with projecting cones representing the gulags where Hungarians were sent into exile, noting that the last exile returned in 2001. A cross bursts through the floor surrounded by photographs of priests and ministers who were persecuted and killed by the Communist regime.

A slow elevator ride takes visitors to the basement used by both regimes for torture. A flat screen monitor plays an interview describing the execution process. Upon exiting the basement galleries, a wall of photographs titled "The Victimizers" notes each participant's name and position in the Nazi or Communist regimes. Back upstairs, another gallery lined with uniforms shows a videotape of members of the Arrow Cross changing into Communist garb.

The House of Terror was controversial from the outset. It opened in 2002 with the financial support of the Hungarian government, just prior to a national election. Opposing political parties claimed that the museum was an attempt to link the Hungarian Socialist parties with the earlier Communist regime. Jewish organizations expressed concern that the museum's interpretation was skewed towards the Soviet period with inadequate attention paid to Nazi era and the Holocaust. Whatever your views, the museum's impact on the visitor is visceral. It is an overwhelming experience, regardless of one's familiarity with the political situation or the language.

The Czech Republic and Hungary are not the only Eastern European countries reexamining and attempting to interpret a difficult past. Similar museums recently opened in Berlin and Riga, the capital city of Latvia, and are under development in Estonia. As the United States takes steps to interpret its own difficult histories, increased contact and awareness of how these challenges have been confronted in other countries can only aid in our interpretation of the past.

Brenda Barrett
National Park Service

1. Shaila K. Dewan, "Civil Rights Battlegrounds Enter World of Tourism," *New York Times*, August 10, 2004, <http://travel2.nytimes.com/mem/travel/article-page.html?res=9904EoDCiE3CF933A2575BCoA9629C8B63>; accessed October 20, 2004.

2. For more information on the museums, visit the websites at <http://www.museumofcommunism.com> and <http://www.houseofterror.hu>

Liquid Stone: New Architecture in Concrete

National Building Museum, Washington, DC.
Curator: Martin Moeller

June 19, 2004-April 17, 2005

The seminal modern architecture exhibit in the United States was *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1932. In a pamphlet prepared to raise funds for the exhibit, Philip Johnson pleaded his case: “At the turn of the century, Berlage in Holland, Behrens in Germany and Perret in France and above all Frank Lloyd Wright in America, made a definite stand for originality. Such progress laid the foundation for a complete revolution in building. The revolution was based on a full realization of the possibilities inherent in the new materials—steel and reinforced concrete.... All the discoveries made by the engineers while architecture had remained stagnant were now at the disposal of the architects.... A new style of architecture had been invented.”¹

Two decades later, in a book that accompanied an exhibit of post-World War II architecture, Johnson declared victory: “The battle of modern architecture has been won. Twenty years ago the Museum was in the thick of the fight, but now our exhibitions and catalogues take part in that unending campaign described by Alfred Barr as ‘simply the continuous, conscientious, resolute distinction of quality from mediocrity—the discovery and proclamation of excellence.’”²

Now 50-plus years later, *Liquid Stone: New Architecture in Concrete* proves an excellent contribution to the tradition of modern architecture exhibits in the United States that focus on “new” materials and design, and demonstrate that the battle for quality and excellence continues to be won.

Liquid Stone features 60 structures nearly evenly divided between “historical precedents” and new

projects. The precedents are selected from monuments in concrete built between the 1st century and nearing the end of the 20th century. The new projects were designed or built in the past five years. The exhibit beautifully integrates the historic and the contemporary with a message that what is old is often still new and what is new may be a hint of what is to come.³

The exhibit begins with an introduction to concrete construction and ends with a denouement on its future. Between are sections that focus on three characteristics of concrete: Structure, Surface, and Sculptural Form.

The exhibit media are beautifully produced photograph-and-text panels, vintage and new video footage, and models. The National Building Museum and its fine exhibits attract substantial visitation, and on my several visits to *Liquid Stone*, the diverse audience was enrapt. Audiences love architectural models, and the exhibit satisfies that desire with a wonderful range of old and new. An original model of Le Corbusier’s chapel at Ronchamp in burnished oak is a show-stopper.

The introductory text panel describes concrete’s ubiquity: “Concrete, produced at an estimated rate of five billion cubic yards per year, is the second most widely consumed substance on Earth, after water.” To carry it all, more than 700 million concrete delivery trucks would be queued end-to-end for over 4 million miles! Public works projects such as paving, jersey barriers, and sound attenuation walls consume most of the annual production. Comparatively little ends up as artfully arranged as the architecture on exhibit in *Liquid Stone*.

Liquid Stone begins with the Pantheon dome (ca. 126 A.D.) in Rome, and continues with the Eddystone lighthouse (Joseph Smeaton, 1756), cast concrete sculptures (James Aspdin, ca. 1850), and an apartment building at 25 bis, rue Franklin in Paris (Auguste Perret, 1902-1904), the world’s

first major nonindustrial reinforced concrete building.

Perret's success was well-known, and historical precedents in the Structure section demonstrate a succession of advances in the use of concrete for its structural qualities, emphasizing both massiveness (Thomas Edison's concrete houses, ca. 1910), and thinness and structural daring (Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, 1930; Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, 1937; and Louis I. Kahn's Salk Institute for Biological Sciences, 1965).

Contemporary structures follow history's lead, including the sublime White Temple in Japan (Takashi Yamaguchi & Associates, 2000) and the 1.5-mile Millau Viaduct in France (Foster and Partners, estimated completion 2005). Simmons Hall at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Steven Holl Architects, 2003), constructed with an innovative precast structural system, is also featured on the cover of the exhibit brochure.

Precedents in the Surface section focus on innovations in surface treatments such as early exposed exterior concrete at Wright's Unity Temple (1908), his "textile block" construction at the Ennis-Brown House (1924), and post-forming manipulation of the surface, such as Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture Building (1965). Some of the best contemporary buildings on exhibit have followed the artistic path of Wright's textile blocks. The Eberswalde Technical School Library in Germany (Herzog & de Meuron, 1999) is clad in large photo-engraved concrete panels. The Visiting Artists House in Geyserville, California (Jim Jennings, 2002), is a collaboration among the owner, the architect, and an artist who used concrete saws to inscribe the walls with grand gestural arcs.

Precedents in the Sculptural Form section focus on bold engineering or artistic uses of concrete to create previously impossible open spaces (Max Berg's Jahrhunderthalle [now Hala Ludowa], 1913), previously impossible expressionism

(Goetheanum, based on designs by Rudolph Steiner, 1928), and sculptural and structural tours de force (Robert Maillart's Salginatobel Bridge, 1930, and Utzon and Arup's Sydney Opera House, 1973).

The exhibit features superb examples of contemporary formal creativity, such as the Jubilee Church in Rome (Richard Meier & Partners, 2003) with its three "sails" constructed of 12-ton precast blocks, an origami-like private chapel in Almaden, Spain (Sancho-Madrirdejos Architecture Office, 2000), and the Museum of the 21st Century (Hariri & Hariri-Architecture, estimated completion 2007) near the site of the World Trade Center in New York.

The concluding section on the future of concrete features two new products that are manufactured by Lafarge, the exhibit's sponsor: self-consolidating concrete and a fiber-reinforced concrete capable of long, thin spans. Also featured are interesting new types of concrete that transmit light via embedded plastic or glass fibers.

The exhibit is aimed at a general audience—to help the public develop a greater appreciation for the history of concrete construction and concrete's high technical and artistic potential. For those well versed in historic structures, not much will be completely new, though the historical precedents allow fresh connections to be made. Some of the exhibit materials, especially vintage footage of the construction of the Hoover Dam (an unprecedented 4 million cubic yards of concrete placed between 1933 and 1935) and the immense parabolic airship hangars of Eugene Freyssinet at Orly airport outside of Paris (1921-1923), are worth the visit for even the previously initiated.

All aspects of the exhibit, curated by Martin Moeller and designed by the firm of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects, are a pleasure. What could have been a forced march through 60 projects is artfully managed in a sequence of spaces that

allows visitors to pace themselves and consider what they are seeing before forging ahead.

With so many buildings to choose from, Moeller must have agonized over the selection of historical precedents. One reinforced concrete monument's absence, however, is obvious even considering the several Wright buildings on exhibit, so I end with an unfortunately still-timely quote from 1952 regarding the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, completed seven years later: "But in respect of fantasy, no building even approaches the marvellous corkscrew Frank Lloyd Wright has planned for New York City's Museum of Non-Objective Art.... The building is to be executed in reinforced concrete and according to its architect it would, in the event of some aerially inflicted disaster, bounce like a spring but never collapse."⁴

John Robbins
National Park Service

1. As quoted in Philip Johnson, "Built to Live In" (March 1931), in *Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 29.

2. Philip C. Johnson, "Preface," in *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture*, ed. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 8.

3. The online version of the exhibit at www.nbm.org/liquid_stone/home.html includes details about most of the contemporary projects featured in the exhibit.

4. Arthur Drexler, "Post-war Architecture," in *Built in USA*, 26.

WEBSITES

What Exit? New Jersey and Its Turnpike
http://www.jerseyhistory.org/what_exit

New Jersey Historical Society; accessed on June 21-24, 2004.

"So, you're from New Jersey? What exit?" is a common opening line in conversations between new acquaintances who discover a shared New Jersey background. The "exit" referred to is an exit on the New Jersey Turnpike, a highway so embedded in

the state's culture that residents use its exit signs to describe where they are from and where they live.

The *What Exit? New Jersey and Its Turnpike* online exhibit explores the history of the New Jersey Turnpike from superhighway to cultural icon. Created by the New Jersey Historical Society in conjunction with the American Social History Project, the website is derived from an exhibit of the same title that opened at the society's Newark headquarters in 2001 and toured the state through 2003. Founded in 1845 and the state's oldest cultural institution, the society documents the history of New Jersey from the colonial era to the present.

What Exit? describes the experience of driving the highway and illustrates how this ribbon of asphalt is embedded in popular culture. Each of the three segments highlights the 1950s enthusiasm about the highway as well as more tempered contemporary reflections on it.

Building It discusses the history of the turnpike from its proposal by New Jersey Governor Alfred E. Driscoll in his 1947 inaugural address as a way to connect New York and Philadelphia, serve the state's industries and commercial hubs, and link the state's other major highways. Construction began in 1950 and the 118-mile road was completed in 2 years. To accomplish this extraordinary feat, work proceeded simultaneously on seven road segments. A New Jersey motorist paid the first toll on the new highway on November 5, 1951, and the last segment was opened January 1952. Upbeat press releases, brochures promising "118 miles of carefree driving" and video clips from gasoline and asphalt contractors illustrate the turnpike authority's efforts to promote the highway and elevate driver enthusiasm.

In sharp contrast to this exuberance was the early antihighway sentiments in the city of Elizabeth. The city failed in its efforts to reroute the road away from its residential areas. A postcard view shows the completed highway slashing through a

dense neighborhood of homes. While Elizabeth seems to have been alone in its opposition, in 1971 several communities opposed plans to widen the highway. Opponents did not prevent the widening, but they did succeed in forcing the turnpike authority to monitor pollution levels and to install sound barriers, concessions that have now become standard features of this and other major highways.

Driving It looks at the turnpike in the context of the American love affair with the car, with smooth roads optimized for speedy travel and services for autos and travelers. The exhibit provides background on the turnpike's predecessors, the 19th-century turnpikes and the early 20th-century "Good Roads" movement led by bicyclists and the first car owners. The automobile and highway culture began around 1900 in New Jersey and the rising number of car owners demanded better roads. Photographs from the 1910s show cars barely managing to navigate the rutted, muddy roads that were common in the countryside beyond towns and cities. In contrast, a graphic from the turnpike's 1951 annual report describes the smooth ride drivers would experience on the superhighway's new roadbed topped with a one-foot deep coating of asphalt.

Motorists driving the New Jersey Turnpike in its early days had limited access to food or fuel. Eventually, small owner-operated restaurants, groceries, and gas stations found along other roads were consolidated into "service areas" or "rest stops" run by large companies. A 1950s magazine advertisement for Howard Johnson's, the concessioner for the original nine lunchrooms along the turnpike, promised the same good food and ice cream at every location.

Telling It focuses on the people who run the highway, from 300 employees originally to over 2,000 employees today. Tales of humor and hazards and memorabilia such as photographs of a staff bowling league, a toll collector's uniform, and a poem by a toll collector, illustrate that the highway

became a community—albeit a very long one—similar to many other workplaces.

Each segment includes *Take a Detour*, which leads the visitor to an interesting anecdote; the most amusing challenges viewers to match musicians—Chuck Berry, Simon & Garfunkel, and Bruce Springsteen—with lyrics from their songs about the New Jersey Turnpike.

The exhibit incorporates only a fraction of the society's extensive turnpike collections, but each item has been carefully selected to highlight the turnpike story. Images range from historic photographs, to promotional brochures and movies, to souvenirs such as water glasses and a pennant. Personal accounts from current and past employees and travelers run the gamut from nostalgic to negative illustrating how the turnpike has become personal for many.

The website is easy to navigate, designed to fit a standard monitor screen, with a printer-friendly option. The graphics are colorful and eye-catching, and video and audio clips enhance the experience. Viewers who explore this site will find a thorough introduction to the history and culture of the New Jersey Turnpike. The website also offers an extensive bibliography of resources about the turnpike, the automobile in American life, the history of America's roads and highways, and materials for children and teachers. Links to other websites on these topics are also provided. *What Exit?* is the society's first venture into online exhibits, and the American Association of Museums award that the society received in 2003 for outstanding achievement in museum media is well deserved.

Rebecca A. Shiffer
National Park Service

MotorCities: Experience Everything Automotive
<http://www.experienceeverythingautomotive.org/>

MotorCities-Automobile National Heritage Area;
 accessed on June 20, 2004.

Since 1984, Congress has designated 24 national heritage areas to conserve, interpret, and promote regional historic resources. Although affiliated with the National Park Service, national heritage areas are consciously nonfederal. Most land and resources remain in private hands; local management entities direct and operate the heritage area; and tours, museums, and festivals are staffed primarily through voluntary efforts.

The MotorCities-Automobile National Heritage Area was authorized by Congress on November 6, 1998, to preserve, interpret, and promote Michigan's rich automotive and labor story¹ and the dramatic cultural impact of the automobile on American life. The heritage area comprises 8,139 square miles in southeastern Michigan, nearly 6 million people, 10 Congressional districts, and nearly 700 local government units. The heritage area's motto is "We Put the World on Wheels," and its new website slogan is "Experience Everything Automotive."

The homepage introduces the visitor to the heritage area and its resources with an easily navigated array of images and four links: Your Road Trip, Event Calendar, Members Area, and The Body Shop. The site takes advantage of web technology, displaying a rotating set of historic photographs each time the page loads. The organization and ease of navigation understate the website's rich and comprehensive content.

The website is tightly focused on the heritage area's cultural resources and helps the visitor to navigate a very large, unwieldy geographic area. Your Road Trip establishes a turn-of-the-century context with a series of historical and automobile-specific facts. From there, the visitor can select any of four tours

packaged by the American Travel Center through a partnership with MotorCities. The prepackaged tours, including hotels and visits to a variety of automobile-related sites, make it easy for heritage area visitors to take in as many attractions as possible with a minimum of fuss and planning. Featured destinations include the baronial mansions of Ford and Fischer, the Detroit Museum of Art, and the Henry Ford Museum.

This section also links visitors to the area's significant automobile-related historical websites that provide housing, admission costs, contact information, and a brief description of what the visitor can expect to find. A list of motor cities is also available as one links to independent tour companies. This single-minded attention to visitor needs in the heritage area makes the website invaluable in fulfilling one of the mandates of heritage areas: economic revitalization through heritage tourism.

The Body Shop is the preservation section of the site. Not content merely to state the case for preservation, it asks blatantly, "What can we do for you?" and follows with examples of revitalization projects throughout the United States and Europe, information on conferences, and how to take advantage of tax incentives. Two pages discuss extensive documentation efforts: one in partnership with the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey, and an ambitious GIS documentation of over 1,200 automobile heritage sites throughout southeastern Michigan. There is also a National Trust for Historic Preservation-like listing of the 11 most-endangered automobile heritage sites.

This website shows the value of a heritage area's investment in a website. As *experienceeverything-automotive.org* amply demonstrates, websites that connect visitors with resources—tours, historic sites, documentation, and revitalization

opportunities—are essential tools for presenting, exploring, and managing heritage areas.

Richard O'Connor
National Park Service

1. “MotorCities National Heritage Area,” at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/AREAS/AUTO.HTM>; maintained by MotorCities National Heritage Area; accessed September 22, 2004.

Rivers of Steel

<http://www.riversofsteel.com>

Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, Homestead, Pennsylvania; maintained by Levy MG; accessed on June 22-23 and August 30, 2004.

Since the 1970s, steelmaking in the Pittsburgh region has experienced a steady decline. In the late 1980s, the United States Steel Corporation began to demolish many of the company’s great structures, taking with them the physical reminders of over 125 years of a way of life in the Three Rivers area. Alarmed by these events, local activists urged Congress to establish a task force to look into ways to preserve parts of the steel industry’s heritage in Pennsylvania. Efforts by the Steel Heritage Task Force included preserving machinery such as the 48-inch rolling mill; compiling thousands of oral history interviews; creating collections of artifacts, photographs, and blueprints from workers; and multiple documentation projects of historic sites by the National Park Service’s Historic American Engineering Record. Subsequent to these efforts, the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area was established by Congress in 1996.

Rivers of Steel highlights some of the historical attractions, accomplishments, and ongoing initiatives related to the heritage area’s mission of historic preservation, cultural conservation, education, recreation, and resource development

within a seven-county area in southwestern Pennsylvania. The goal of the heritage area is to create a national historical park based in Homestead, which includes two remaining blast furnaces from the Carrie Furnace site across the Monongahela River, and the Pump House, the site of an infamous battle during the 1892 Homestead steelworkers strike.

Rivers of Steel offers an introduction to the steel industry and steel-making communities in western Pennsylvania. The heritage area and related endeavors are presented in a straight-forward fashion, with limited access to more in-depth research. The sections tie cultural and industrial heritage together. The Tradition Bearers radio series features voices of different cultural points of view within the heritage area, from African, Latin, and Native American mill workers, to church kitchen volunteers who discuss preparing local ethnic food favorites. Snippets of the interviews aired on local radio station WEDO are featured with supporting text and images. The All About Us section promotes *Reel Steel*, the latest exhibit at the Rivers of Steel headquarters, the restored Bost Building in Homestead. The exhibit features screenings of three historic steel-related movies, including a film from the 1950s when steel was king.

The most interesting section is Sites and Attractions. It begins with a map of the seven-county area divided into thematic regions. The section promotes *Rivers of Steel*-sponsored field trips, with links to a dozen local historical attractions and local heritage festivals. Each region has a name to entice visitors, such as “Big Steel” for the area centering on the city of Pittsburgh, “Mountains of Fire” for Connellsville Coke, “Mosaic of Industry” for the Allegheny Valley, “Fueling a Revolutionary Journey” for the Upper Monogohela River, and “Thunder of Protest” for the Ohio Valley.

Overall, *Rivers of Steel* offers a solid introduction to

the impact of the steel industry on the heritage of the Pittsburgh region. *Rivers of Steel* is also a good resource for those interested in effects of industrialization on cultural landscapes. It is attractive, easily navigable, and has great potential as a research and promotional tool for the heritage area and western Pennsylvania region.

Christopher H. Marston
National Park Service

Across the Generations: Exploring U.S. History Through Family Papers
<http://www.smith.edu/libraries/libs/ssc/atg/index.html>

Sophia Smith Collection; maintained by the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries; accessed June 30, 2004.

The Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College is an internationally recognized archive of women's history. Founded in 1942, the collection evolved from a body of works by women writers into a rich repository for the documentation of the broader, historical experiences of women. Today, the collection includes more than 7,500 linear feet of multiformat materials including manuscripts, photographs, periodicals, oral histories, and other primary sources. In addition to women's history, one of the other subject areas examined is the documentation of middle-class family life in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Across the Generations is an online presentation of 63 documents and images selected from the Sophia Smith Collection representing the everyday private and public lives of several generations of the Bodman, Dunham, Garrison, and Hale families. The main purpose of the website is to demonstrate how family papers can be used to study not only the lives of a single family,

but to examine the broader historical and cultural context in which these and other similar families lived.

In establishing this context, the website authors acknowledge one limitation: the families represented are all white and middle class, a characteristic of many archival collections. The featured families are of some social prominence, such as the Garrisons (descendants of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison) and the Hales (descendants of Revolutionary War patriot Nathan Hale and his entrepreneur son of the same name). The content presented goes beyond the successes of these individuals and focuses on the activities and accomplishments of family members across several generations.

The stories of the families are told through four subfields of social history: Family Life, Social Awareness, Arts and Leisure, and Work. Each historical theme is developed and interpreted through images of collection materials, such as photographs, letters, accounting books, journals, games, sketches, and other documents. Collection materials are accompanied by summaries of the broader historical context that help the viewer understand how documents are used as research tools.

Using the Bodman family account book under the Work section as an example, one can see the economic growth of the family from farming and cart rentals in the late 18th century, through their first payments of the new federal income tax in the early 20th century, to the losses suffered in the Depression of the 1930s. The Arts and Leisure section features a Hale family gift chart including colorful sketches of Christmas gifts given to various family members, accompanied by a paragraph indicating how children and others kept themselves entertained before mass-produced toys and other amusements. The accomplishments of women in these families are highlighted, such as the suffrage activities of Martha Coffin Wright

(sister of Lucretia Mott and mother of Ellen Wright Garrison), who encouraged civic and political interests in the women of the next generations.

For those interested in pursuing more in depth research, the site provides extensive family trees and detailed finding aids to each family's papers. A page on Additional Sources includes bibliographies and links to other websites and archives on the featured families, as well as links to general sources on family history, social history, and women's history collections. Also of interest is a link to several classroom lesson plans involving the use of primary documents in historical research.

The website is easily navigated through a drop-down list of categories (such as by family name or historic theme) and benefits from drop-down menus to other sections on each page. Enlarged sets of images are available as pop-up windows, providing a nice browsing tool for viewing collection materials. A site map provides a clear outline of the pages and helps in finding pages within the site.

The documents themselves are well presented. Typed transcripts of handwritten letters are provided, making it much easier to read the content. One drawback is that the layout of the pages requires a great deal of scrolling up and down to view the content, which could be minimized with a reduction of space between the headers, text, and images. Despite this minor design issue, overall the site is successful. The collection materials and informative text are an excellent lesson in using primary research documents. Additionally, the site will appeal to more experienced researchers wishing to probe deeper into the rich materials of the Sophia Smith Collection. Preservation professionals will find *Across the Generations* to be a rich store of archival materials.

Ann Hoog
Library of Congress

History Matters:

The U.S. Survey Course on the Web

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu>

City University of New York, American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning, and George Mason University, Center for History and New Media; maintained by American Social History Productions, Inc.; accessed September 10-19, 2004.

While the majority of people get their news and interpretations of history from the popular media, it is important for historians and, more importantly, history teachers to arm themselves with as many sources and methods as possible to pique the interests of their students. This is especially true when teaching one of the broadest history courses offered in high schools and colleges, the United States history survey. *History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web* provides a forum in which teachers, both new and experienced, can examine and improve their efforts to develop an effective course of instruction by reviewing the work of colleagues.

History Matters focuses primarily on the social and cultural history of the United States by providing access to "materials that focus on the lives of ordinary Americans." The site is divided into eight primary features, ranging from collections of primary source documents and general reference material to course syllabi and advice from history teachers working at several levels within the educational system. Included in these features is an element that strikes right at the heart of addressing the power of popular culture's influence on interpretations of history. In *Past Meets Present*, the *History Matters* staff compile articles and reviews from historians on popular issues within contemporary society. Several articles, including Michael Nelson's commentary on the movie *Thirteen Days*, help teachers to combat the poetic license taken by the movie industry in presenting the interpretation of an event while taking

painstaking efforts to make sure that the actors' costumes fit the period exactly. More importantly, for new teachers, the site suggests ways to incorporate even inaccurate dramatic history in productive ways to reach students in today's ever-increasingly television-driven society.

Perhaps the site's most beneficial aspect is the numerous links to other sites and documents. Site administrators have provided guided paths for visitors and a keyword search option to navigate resources. Despite some inactive links, *History Matters* is a valuable search engine for the vast history-related resources on the Internet. The site provides introductions to most links, which have been selected by individuals specializing in the field. This makes the site valuable not only to teachers, but also to researchers and students. As more primary documents are presented on the Internet, researchers and students gain increased access to materials that previously may have been available only through great expense of travel and time.

Another beneficial feature of the website is the collection of online forums in which topics in American history are discussed. The moderators for each forum are well-established and respected historians. Examples include Linda Gordon on family history and Eric Foner on Reconstruction. At the time of this review, the last posted messages were from late 2003, giving the impression that the forums are inactive at this time. However, visitors can still access them and benefit from discussions by their peers on topics ranging from new research to methods of teaching.

Another difficulty faced by history teachers and historians is bringing the past to life for their audiences. *History Matters* provides links to archival resources including original documents, maps, and photographs. The site could benefit from more historic preservation-related links that would provide additional visual interpretation of historic places for the casual visitor or teacher in search of resources.

While professional organizations and conferences provide similar opportunities as *History Matters*, the immediacy of a website increases teachers' abilities to find materials that respond to the needs of their students. This is especially valuable to teachers at community colleges and universities where students are new to history topics. *History Matters* can also keep high school and community college teachers abreast of new ideas and research.

History Matters provides a wealth of opportunity for U.S. history teachers to enrich the classroom experience for their students, themselves, and others in the field. Moreover, it offers those interested in heritage stewardship a place to research and discuss history and interpretation.

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1. "More About History Matters" at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/expansion.html>; maintained by American Social History Productions, Inc.; accessed September 10, 2004.