

FAIR REPRESENTATION: MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE  
1876 CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION, HISTORIC SITES, MUSEUMS, AND  
DIGITAL RESOURCES

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## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: FAIR REPRESENTATION: MODERN  
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DIGITAL RESOURCES

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Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition was an important historical event that highlighted inventions and innovations of technology and applied science. The former fairgrounds and surviving historic structures hold significant architectural and cultural importance. While it is important to save, restore, and rehabilitate these physical sites and cultural resources, it is also important to interpret the history of all the people and events connected with the sites. The contributions of certain ethnic minority cultures are not presented in the current exhibits at these sites; this action leaves portions of the Centennial's history untold.

This thesis examines the preservation practices and interpretation approaches utilized by historic sites, museums, and digital resources in the representation of ethnic

minority cultures at the Centennial. It probes these questions: What are the most effective interpretive methods to incorporate when presenting the contributions of ethnic minorities to the Centennial Exhibition? What audiences should be the focus of interpretive programming? How is their awareness of the contributions of ethnic minority cultures being raised?

An analysis of Centennial history, and the representation of ethnic minority groups that participated in the event, introduces the research. The examination details three case studies of historic sites, museums, and digital resources in Philadelphia that currently exhibit the history of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. Through the examination of the interpretive principles and processes, and the guidelines of preservation scholars and cultural organizations, an understanding is offered regarding how interpretation approaches are used to depict the exhibition's ethnic groups in the case studies.

My findings demonstrate that the historic sites, museums, and digital resources in Philadelphia that currently exhibit the Centennial require more interpretive programming, community support, and funding programs to effectively present the history of ethnic minority cultures involved in the event. The interpretation and inclusion of ethnic groups will ensure their contributions and stories are recognized as significant history worthy of preservation.

Tags: 1876 Centennial Exhibition, Centennial, Philadelphia, world's fair, interpretation, interpretive, historic sites, museums, digital resources, ethnic minority cultures, Black Americans, Native Americans, Japanese, Chinese, preservation, preservation practices



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Margo D. Jackson

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Goucher College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Historic Preservation

2016

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I am confident that this thesis will raise awareness about the importance interpretation in the field of historic preservation and through the interpretative process the history of the Centennial's ethnic minority cultures will be told and preserved for future generations.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Many Philadelphians are aware that a world's fair was hosted in the city's sprawling Fairmount Park and still more have traveled through or paid a visit to the former fairgrounds and its surviving historic structures, but most are unaware of how the event's ethnic minority participants fared. The International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mine, held from May 10<sup>th</sup> to November 10<sup>th</sup> in 1876, took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Nearly ten million visitors and thirty-seven nations participated in the event, commonly known as the Centennial Exhibition, which served as a catalyst for a shifting national and international marketplace and a developing consumer culture.<sup>1</sup> The *Evening Bulletin* acknowledged the city's sense of accomplishment: "the Centennial was altogether a lesson of self-respect for the city [*sic*] it showed its present greatness and its potentialities."<sup>2</sup> The Centennial was deemed America's first major successful world's fair, preceded only by New York's 1853 exhibition. The event was an impressive display of the progress of inventions and innovations of technology and applied science, but after further examination of the event's history, issues of diversity involving the lack participation of various ethnic groups were also identified.<sup>3</sup>

## Research Questions

When administrators, staff, and technical professionals of Centennial-related sites and institutions develop effective interpretive programs for Philadelphia's historic sites and museums, the history of the Centennial should incorporate references to ethnic minority cultures, since to omit their contribution leaves portions of the Centennial's history and its exhibits untold. The representation of minority cultures is a topic that historic sites and museums, the Please Touch Museum and other children's museums should present and more fully incorporate in an effort to further understand contentious historical perspectives that involve the nation's journey from the past to the present. In consideration of these concerns, the proposed central questions of this thesis are: What are the most effective interpretive methods to incorporate when presenting the contributions of ethnic minorities to the Centennial Exhibition? What audiences should be the focus of interpretive programming? How is their awareness of the contributions of ethnic minority cultures being raised?

In the United States, historic sites and museums have traditionally highlighted the endeavors of white European groups or people, but over the past fifty years ethnic cultural education has increased within these institutions.<sup>4</sup> However, while the interpretive programs and contemporary exhibition practices utilized by many of the historic sites and museums exhibiting the Centennial underscore the progress and positive merits of the event, they marginalize or misinterpret the experiences of ethnic minorities at the Centennial.

Preserving the history and/or cultural resources of ethnic minority cultures differs from the preservation of material resources. History can be interpreted through various

means, including but not limited to material resources comprised of buildings and artifacts. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties underline historic preservation principles that primarily focus on four types of treatment for historic sites and buildings: preservation, restoration, reconstruction, and rehabilitation (adaptive use).<sup>5</sup> How does interpretation relate to the Standards' historic preservation principles? For purposes of definition, interpretation is an educational function that involves how historic sites and museums communicate their messages to visitors. The methods and principles of interpretation will be examined in Chapter III. While the preservation of material resources is important, the role of interpretation is also a vital component in the preservation of history. Interpretation permits individuals to link with the past and to understand that the past encompasses real people and experiences. Interpretation permits the public to learn about the values associated with historic sites and museums, which motivates their support for the preservation efforts of such institutions. Effective interpretive programs help to educate visitors about local cultural or national history.<sup>6</sup> Interpretive programs supporting ethnic minority cultures have been developed by national, state, local, and private organizations. These programs increase awareness and efforts to preserve the history of ethnic groups and this helps to substantiate that historic preservation is a movement of broad appeal.<sup>7</sup>

### Methods and Data Collection

The research for this thesis consisted of three phases. The first phase involved data collected from interviews and review of 1876 Centennial Exhibition interpretative programs and exhibits. The next step involved analyzing and evaluating the data from

the interviews and review. The final phase of research involved interpreting the data to establish recommendations.

Collecting data regarding the 1876 Centennial Exhibition and its representation of minority cultures was the first phase in this research. Before choosing the historic site or museum that would be researched, an overall survey of possible Centennial historic sites and museums in the Philadelphia and surrounding areas was undertaken. After completing the preliminary survey, four resources were selected as case studies: the *Memorial Hall* historic site, located in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park; the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit at Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum; the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* from the Free Library of Philadelphia; and the fourth, the *Centennial Exhibit* from the Library Company of Philadelphia.

There are extensive archives, published sources, and digital resources on the 1876 Centennial Exhibition history to be found nationwide. There are a limited number of institutions that exhibit the Centennial in Pennsylvania and the tri-state area. The selected case studies were made based on their potential to illustrate Centennial interpretive programs through both traditional vehicles, such as historic sites and museums, and non-traditional vehicles like digital resources.

The *Centennial Exploration* exhibit at the Please Touch Museum (PTM) is located in Memorial Hall, the only major building remaining from the Exhibition with Centennial collections and interpretive programs. Memorial Hall is both a historic site and a museum. The *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* from the Free Library of Philadelphia and the *Centennial Exhibit* from the Library Company of Philadelphia are examples of comprehensive digital resources. A number of digital resources were

excluded from the survey because of limited Centennial collections and interpretative programming.

Following the resource selection process, interviews were scheduled with staff members responsible for the Centennial exhibits and tours at the Please Touch Museum and the digital resources at the Free Library of Philadelphia and The Library Company of Philadelphia. After the interviews were completed, the Centennial interpretive program was observed at the Please Touch Museum and the online Centennial exhibits were examined. The analysis of data provides information on the state of current Centennial exhibits and their interpretive methods or the lack thereof. The historical accuracy of the Centennial exhibits is evaluated; this accuracy strengthens the exhibit's message and prevents aspects of history from being omitted.<sup>8</sup> Through the analysis of data derived from the case studies, it will be argued that the representations of ethnic minorities should be preserved and incorporated in Centennial exhibits.

Qualitative data was also collected, during the analysis of the case studies, from various historic preservation and museum studies books, professional journal articles, and historic photographs. Information was also acquired through the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, the Philadelphia Centennial District, the National Park Service, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Smithsonian Institution Archives, and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

### Interpretation Evaluation

This research analyzes and evaluates the interpretive methods that selected historic sites and museums use in conveying the representations of minority cultures in Centennial history. A number of interpretive principles generally associated with the

interpretation of historic sites and museums will be presented to recognize the approaches toward interpretive planning. The exhibition models, mission statements, and philosophies of historic sites and museums exhibiting the Centennial were also studied to determine their interpretive goals. Digital resources were studied to understand the appropriate approaches for the interpretation of ethnic minority Centennial history in a computer-generated environment. The benefits digital resources offer and the challenges they create will also be studied.

### Organization

Chapter II sets the stage for the balance of the thesis by presenting an analysis of the history of former Centennial exhibits and representations of ethnic minorities.

Chapter III examines the interpretative programs of historic sites, historic preservation practices, and interpretative principles formulated by a number of experts in order to provide a source for defining and understanding the interpretive methods used and the data collected in the case studies.

Chapter IV examines the exhibition methods and specific characteristics of museums. The case study for this chapter is the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit at Memorial Hall's Please Touch Museum. The architectural history, preservation efforts, exhibition models, and the mission statement of the museum are examined to determine how they interpret the experiences of ethnic minority cultures at the Centennial. An analysis of the interpretive methods utilized at this site is also established.

Chapter V describes the history and types of digital technology currently active within the field of historic preservation, historic sites, and museums. The value and integrity of digital resources, including online databases and multimedia, are discussed.

The websites of the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* from the Free Library of Philadelphia and the *Centennial Exhibit* from the Library Company of Philadelphia are examined to determine their interpretive methods and objectives.

In Chapter VI, specific findings, recommendations, and conclusions are presented to address the issues of ethnic minority representations that were determined in the data collection and evaluation phases. The results aim to support future preservation initiatives regarding representations of minority cultures in the Centennial exhibits and to prompt further discussions about the issues of race relations in American history.

## CHAPTER II ANALYSIS OF HISTORY

Before efforts are made to understand current interpretations of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, the event must be examined within a broader context. To understand the historic sites, museums, and digital resources examined in this thesis, the issue of ethnic minority representation must be examined through an analysis of the Exhibition's history, coinciding historical movements, and former exhibits. This analysis of the Centennial's history exposes important issues of racism and classism involving the event. While white ethnic groups made favorable contributions to the Centennial, it was far more challenging for Asians, Native Americans, Africans, and Black Americans to establish a significant role in the event's history, since their participation was both restricted and discriminative.

### Management and Organization

From the onset, the exhibition exposed conditions of racial hierarchy and social class. In March of 1871, the U. S. Congress established a Centennial Commission to plan the exhibition. A commissioner and alternate from each state and territory in the Union were appointed by President Grant, after nomination by the governors. The Commission had only nine meetings due to travel distances and expenses. Therefore, most of the planning duties were completed by the all-male Centennial Executive Committee. The thirteen-member group was headed by elected president Joseph R. Hawley of

Connecticut, a former lawyer, newspaper editor, major general, and governor. He was considered to lack certain management credentials for the position and was criticized for closing the exhibition on Sundays because of his devout religious convictions. Alfred T. Goshorn of Ohio served as director general. A former lawyer and manufacturer, Goshorn was perhaps one of the more qualified commissioners to serve. He had worked for, and studied, prior national and international exhibitions. Both Hawley and Goshorn relocated to Philadelphia.<sup>9</sup>

Prior European exhibitions were primarily financed and supported by their host governments. However, the United States government was reluctant to finance the Centennial and Congress ultimately passed a bill to provide for the exhibition.<sup>10</sup> Congress formed the Centennial Board of Finance to raise capital through stock transactions. The Board was headed by wealthy entrepreneur John Welsh of Philadelphia, who directed the sale of stock to many affluent locals. Local financiers also served on the board, including John Wanamaker, a renowned retail merchant and civic leader. The nation's economic collapse following the Panic of 1873, the devastation of the Civil War, and the Reconstruction process all affected funding efforts, which led the board to solicit nationally from affluent citizens and locally from small businesses and working class citizens.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, the Centennial was dominated by a small group of prominent business and civic leaders who set the ideological tone of exclusiveness for the exhibition and managed and controlled the pavilions.<sup>12</sup>

#### Pavilion Plan

The pavilion plans designated for international exhibitions utilized a classification system that affected how race and nationality was perceived. The international

exhibitions of the mid-nineteenth century were suitably small so that most of the exhibits could be held within one large building. The concerns associated with the need for an exhibition's overall plan were nearly non-existent since a building design would generally only include a massive hall with several floors for galleries. Prior exhibitions in London (1851 and 1862), Paris (1855 and 1867), and Vienna (1873) all utilized one large exhibition building. The exhibitions of the late nineteenth century increased considerably in size and therefore required additional buildings and larger open areas.<sup>13</sup>

The 1876 Centennial was considered the first American International Exhibition to utilize the separate Pavilion Plan, a well-organized plan of large and small pavilions.<sup>14</sup> The fairgrounds were separated into four sections and the buildings were numbered systematically according to section and classification. Color-coded banners were assigned to all buildings: blue for centennial commission buildings, red for state buildings, white for foreign buildings, yellow for restaurant concessions and amusement sites, and green for miscellaneous buildings. The fairgrounds had five major buildings: the Main Exhibition Building, Memorial Hall (the Art Gallery), Machinery Hall, Agricultural Hall, and Horticultural Hall. In addition, 249 smaller buildings and structures were built by the states, countries, and businesses for additional amenities and displays (figs. 1-2).<sup>15</sup>

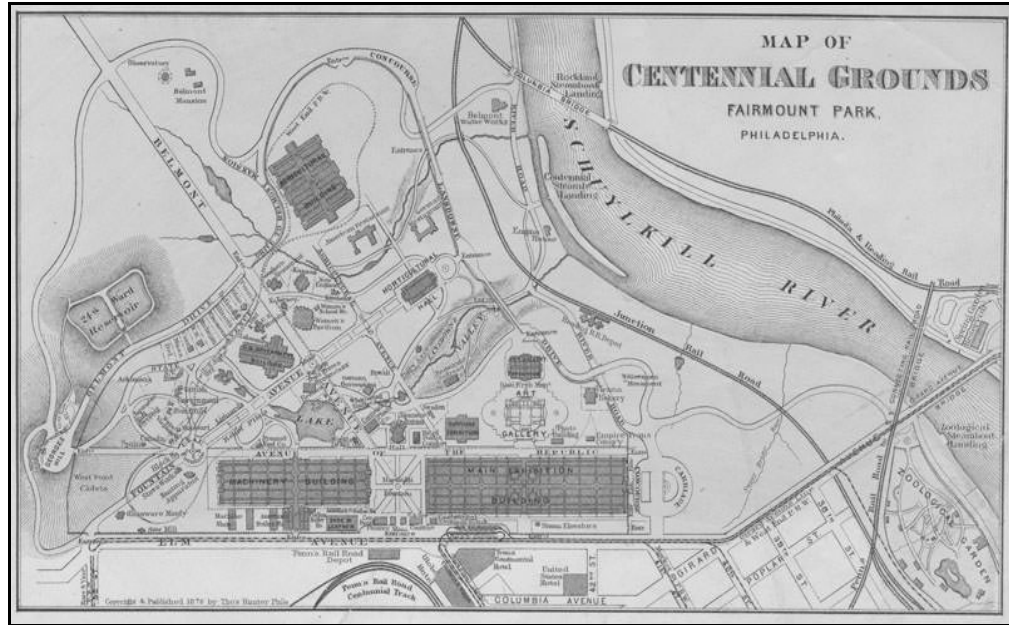


Figure 1: The International Exhibition, Centennial Ground Plan. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 2: Centennial Exhibition from the Observatory on Georges Hill. The aerial view of the exhibition grounds shows various pavilions. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

### Exhibit Classification

The Centennial Committee on Classification, directed by William P. Blake, utilized a scheme of organization for the exhibits, wherein each display item was organized according to type and source (i.e., country of origin). The intricate numbering system classified all exhibits for display and competition according to departments, ten in total, ranging from raw materials to fine arts.<sup>16</sup> The numbering scheme became the basis for Melvil Dewey's library classification, known as the Dewey Decimal System, which is currently used in public libraries. Some of Dewey's initial concepts for book classification originated from the taxonomies for exhibits at the Centennial.

Much debate surrounded the origins of the classification scheme. In 1873, Blake was credited with publishing the system. It is alleged that the system was sent to Amherst College, where Dewey was creating his own classification ideas and where he was influenced by a number of librarians and scholars, including Blake. In addition to the significance of its source of origin is the concept that Blake's classification had a strong influence on western epistemology. Classification systems of the late nineteenth century were important components of American international exhibitions. They conveyed an order that began from the epistemological authority of the scientist and social authorities who designed the exhibits and exhibitions which were reflected in the hierarchy of American culture outside the fairgrounds.<sup>17</sup>

The Centennial exhibition's overflow of exhibits required additional buildings and this led the committee to alter the exhibition's classification scheme, which led to some disorder in the arrangement of the exhibits. However, the committee organized the Main Exhibition Building according to what they identified as national groups and race.

The organization of the exhibits did not incorporate all of the participating nations according to their appropriate geographic location (fig. 3). The Americas and European countries were placed in prime exhibit locations, while countries in South America, Africa, and Asia were clustered and relegated to the western corner of the exhibit hall, isolated from the dominant nations.<sup>18</sup> In the western corner of the exhibit hall, fairgoers could observe ethnographic collections from Peru, South Africa's Orange Free State, West Africa's Gold Coast, Tunisia, Egypt, China, and Japan (figs. 5-11). The images in figures 5-11 provide a glimpse of the exhibits and exhibitors from nations that are seldom discussed in the history of the Centennial Exhibition. It can also be argued, based on the ground plan, that Memorial Hall's Annex art exhibits were organized according to nationality. Latin America and South America were relegated to the Annex building located behind Memorial Hall. The ground plan of the art galleries placed Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil in the east corner. The overall arrangement of nations was inconsistent with their geographic location (fig. 4).

Bruno Giberti, in his book *Designing the Centennial*, notes the correlation the Committee on Classification made about the Centennial's notational scheme (a series of symbols used to represent a subject area) and the scheme of classification, comparing it to the plan of the city of Philadelphia, wherein the numbers of a house address indicate its location according to a street. In comparison, Giberti claims the organization of the main exhibition hall was based on a typological or typical method.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, World's Fair scholar Robert Rydell contends in his book, *All the World's a Fair*, that the exhibit organization was based on nationalism and race.<sup>20</sup>

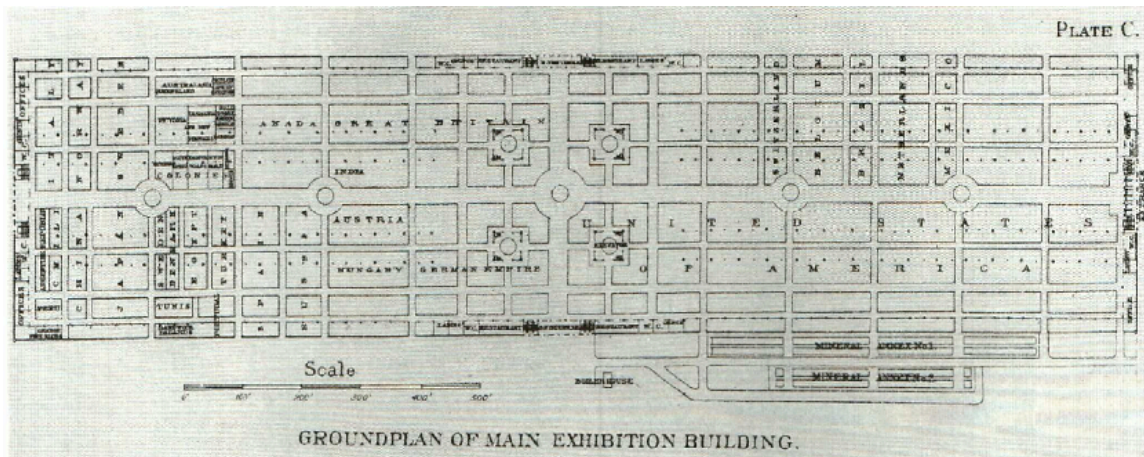


Figure 3: Ground Plan of the Main Exhibition Building. [Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1876.]

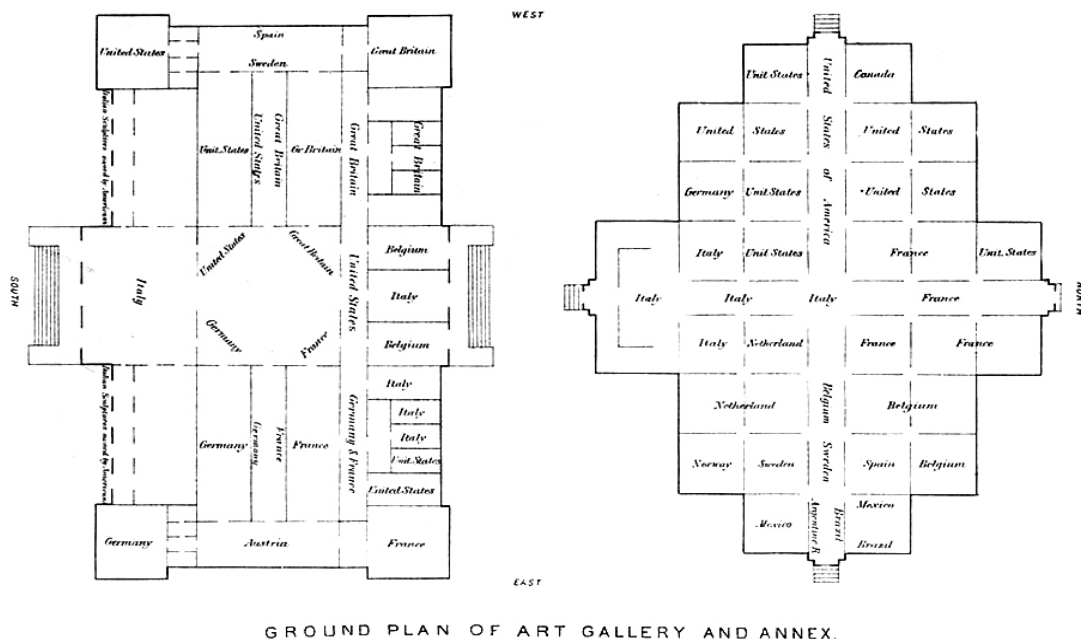


Figure 4: Ground Plan of Memorial Hall (the Art Gallery) and Annex. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

Jennifer Pittman explains in *China's Presence at the Centennial Exhibition*

*Philadelphia* that the participation of Asian nations in international exhibitions prior to 1873 was unsanctioned, backed only by Western dealers and officials. China's input in the Centennial's planning was limited; no Chinese Commissioners were appointed, and instead western customs and traders managed their exhibits. Chinese merchants did

attend the exhibition and Chinese carpenters built the displays, and their traditional attire drew added attention to their exhibit. The anti-Chinese view of California's state government at the time, involving Americans who resented Chinese immigrant laborers for the competition they presented for jobs, seemed to have had a limited effect on the Asian exhibitors. Instead, the Asian nations were considered temporary exhibitors, removed from the labor issues of American workforces.<sup>21</sup>

Pittman further asserts that China and Japan stood out from other exhibitors. China and Japan were placed together in the main building and thus they were often considered to be one exhibit. Japan's eventual exhibit space totaled 17,831 square feet with 284 exhibitors and China's totaled 6,628 square feet with 80 exhibitors. Japan assigned planning details to the Japanese Home Ministry, hired consultants who proposed goods favorable to Western visitors, and increased their initial space provisions. They also constructed two buildings on the fairgrounds.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese Dwelling housed Japan's official delegation, including its twenty-five Commissioners, the largest of any nation (fig. 13). The Japanese Bazaar and Garden marketed souvenirs (fig. 12). The style and construction of the Japanese buildings were more ornate in comparison to most other temporary buildings on the fairgrounds, which made them popular attractions and also introduced fairgoers to Asia's influence on American architecture.<sup>23</sup>

While many visitors celebrated the exhibits, others were intolerant and cruel to the exhibitors. Various cartoons and caricatures criticized foreign exhibitors for their language and customs. One newspaper report noted a visitor's attempt to tear the robe of a Chinese exhibitor, and that many Asian exhibitors switched to Western attire to avoid confrontations.<sup>24</sup> According to the *New York Times*, Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, and

Turkish exhibitors were unfairly followed and mocked.<sup>25</sup> The traditional attire and language of the Asian exhibitors enticed visitors, who entered the exhibits specifically to see Chinese and Japanese people. However, Asian exhibitors did not intend to be the exhibit; instead they sought to present goods for display and sale, but most visitors viewed them as interesting ethnological components of the exhibition, so by default they became live displays.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, China and Japan clearly demonstrated the art, industry, and commercialism of their respective nations. They presented displays that were packed with decorative arts and fine furniture, many of which were considered elaborate and exotic and among the top exhibits in the main building. They recognized the exhibition's importance to American visitors that some nations ignored. However, the organizers of the Centennial were somewhat more committed to the contributions of the Chinese and Japanese exhibitors than they were to the involvement of other ethnic groups.

For example, unlike the Chinese and Japanese, Native Americans were primarily represented by ethnological displays designed for the exhibition. Spencer F. Baird, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian, controlled the procurement and classification of the ethnological and archaeological collections for *The Exhibit of the American Indian* at the Centennial. The exhibit was a joint venture between the Department of the Interior and the Smithsonian Institution and the collections became the property of the Smithsonian and the National Museum after the exhibition. The United States government, while unwilling to finance the Centennial, did sponsor the exhibit, which was housed in the United States Government Building; the building's plan later became the foundation for the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building in Washington, D.C.

The American Indian exhibit held 20,600 square feet of display space. This extensive exhibit presented



Figure 5: Peru Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Peruvian mummy and pottery displays. Shelves filled with skulls, skeletons, and ceramics. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 6: South Africa's Orange Free State Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Showcases display butterflies, tusks, birds, and sculptures. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

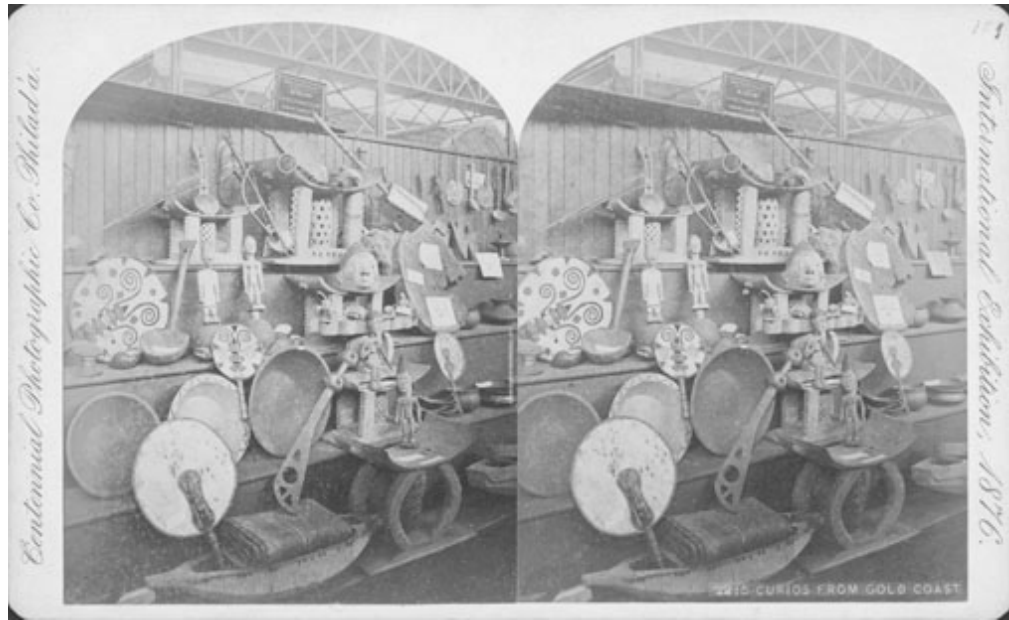


Figure 7: West Africa's Gold Coast Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Curiosities display of musical instruments, carved figures, ladles, slippers, stools, and bowls. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 8: Tunisia Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Tunisian man seated amongst a collection of rugs, tapestries, textiles, and urns. A display of weapons, rifles, daggers, axes, and shields are shown on the right. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 9: Egypt Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Columns and sphinx busts adorn the entrance of the Egyptian exhibit. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 10: China Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Displays of ornate vases and furniture. An arch and ceiling flags mark the section. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 11: Japan's Shippokuwaisha's Exhibit, Main Exhibition Building. Displays of vases, urns, and bronze sculptures. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

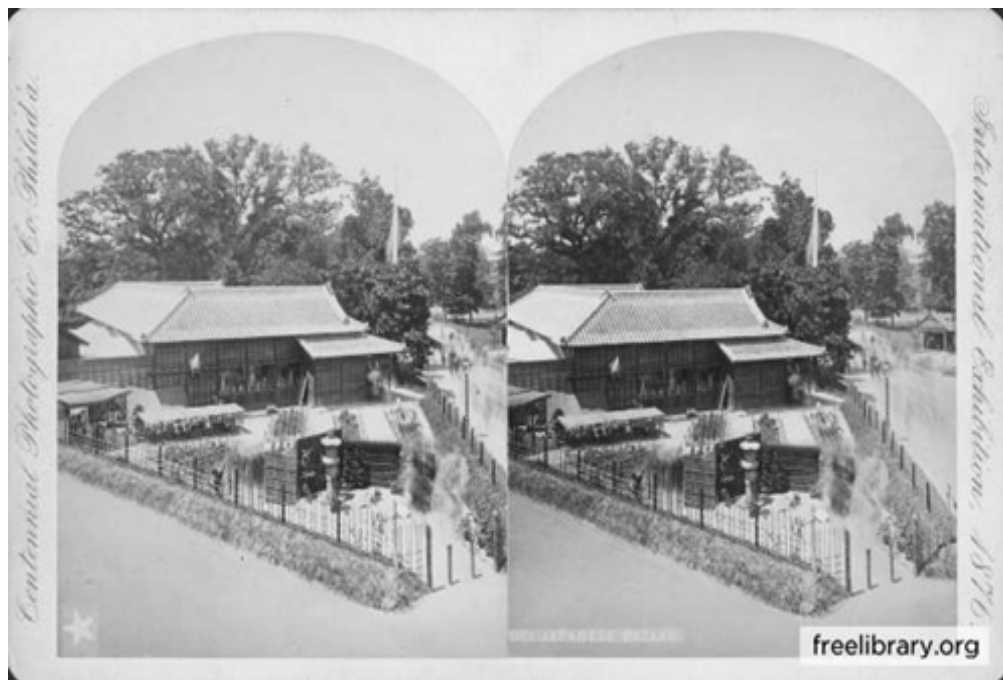


Figure 12: Japanese Bazaar and Garden, Centennial Fairgrounds. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

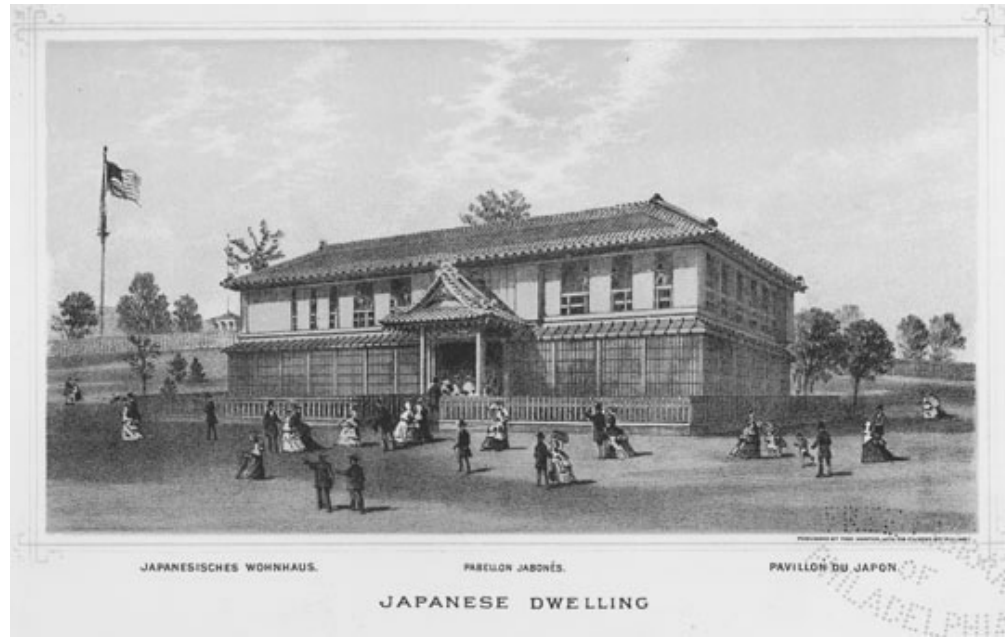


Figure 13: Japanese Dwelling, Centennial Fairgrounds. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

life-sized dioramas of over twenty Native Americans tribes, and incorporated baskets, buckskin garments, implements, pottery, painted canoes, dog sleds, snow shoes, tepees, totem poles, weapons, and other items (fig. 14).<sup>27</sup> This image indicates the type of dioramas displayed at the Centennial while Native American tribes were prohibited from participating in the exhibition. During the late nineteenth century and the period imperialism and colonialism, museums of natural history and anthropology acquired objects for study and exhibition. The popularity of World's Fairs and their use of dioramas meant that museums of the period adapted these techniques for their exhibit halls to entertain and educate.<sup>28</sup>

Robert Trennert notes that as the United States celebrated its own independence from Britain in 1876, “the country was ruthlessly extinguishing the independence of the Native American people.”<sup>29</sup> He further explains that “the role the Indian played in the Centennial is illustrative of the contemporary public image of Indian America and of the

utter incapacity of the nation to see more than curiosity value in native culture.”<sup>30</sup> Gary Nash’s similar viewpoint establishes that the exhibition’s ethnological and archaeological displays demonstrated idealized representations of Native Americans as indigenous tribal cultures of the past that were nearing extinction.<sup>31</sup>

Various Native American tribes expressed interest in attending the Centennial with the expectation and opportunity to present and protect their traditional customs and culture. Yet most Native Americans at the time were being forced to abandon their traditional customs for required routines on government reservations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs planned to organize living Native American displays for the exhibit, but Congress refused funding and considered the idea of live displays an indecent act. Eventually a small number of Native Americans attended the exhibition and set up a camp site on the fairgrounds. However, the Native American presence at the exhibition was a sensitive issue because of the Sioux people’s victory over Colonel George Custer and his troops at Little Big Horn. The victory, which happened during the Centennial, made Custer a martyr and drove white settlers and the government to continue to battle Native American peoples. The U. S. government was determined to conquer Native Americans and their lands and this power was impressively demonstrated at the exhibition. Native Americans were also portrayed by costumed impersonators who performed in tribal attire at a torch lighting parade on July 4, 1876. The parade is an example of a kind of mummery that was becoming popular in the city of Philadelphia (fig. 15).<sup>32</sup>

The Centennial coincided with the start of decades of heightened repression of Native American populations. The Centennial exhibit reinforced views that Native

American tribes were inferior to American society by exploiting their culture commercially for public enjoyment. Emily Carr shares a similar viewpoint as she writes in *Unsettling Encounters*: “colonial peoples and Native North Americans were shown as objects of scientific curiosity and of an imperial, mastering gaze ... the world’s fairs contributed significantly to the production of the popular stereotypes and representations ... the first was the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876.”<sup>33</sup>



Figure 14: Mannequin dressed as Indian Chief Shinomen (tribe affiliation unknown). [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 15: The Centennial Celebration of American Independence. An Indian Carnival on the Night of the Fourth of July. [Source: Illustrated London News, July 29, 1876, Library Company of Philadelphia.]

While Native Americans had little control over the exhibits that represented them, the opportunities for Black Americans to present their culture and history was limited, but there were some notable exceptions of participation, including symbolic art displays, visiting spectators, and menial employment opportunities. Mabel O. Wilson, in her book *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums*, notes one such exception and significant achievement. The Missouri State Building displayed the *Lincoln Institute* book in an education exhibit (fig. 16). The 500 page volume catalogued the progress of students from the Lincoln Institute (which later became the Lincoln University of Missouri). The school was founded in 1866 in Jefferson, Missouri by veterans of the United States Colored Troops to provide education for Black Americans of all ages, most of whom were emancipated slaves.<sup>34</sup>

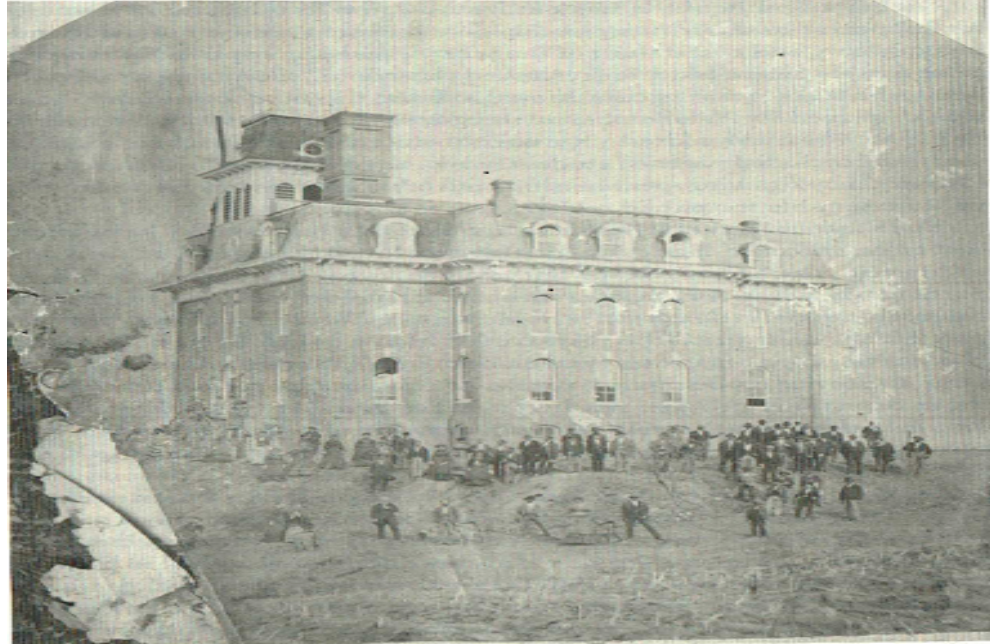


Figure 16: Missouri State Building Education Exhibit. A featured photo of students and teachers gathered on the lawn at Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Missouri, 1875. [Source: Mabel O. Wilson, *Negro Building*.]

Memorial Hall's Art Museum displayed the medal-winning work of professional sculptor Mary Edmonia Lewis in the American gallery. Lewis was an American expatriate of Black American and Ojibwa Native American descent who lived and worked in Rome. Her neoclassical, two-ton marble statue *The Death of Cleopatra* (now at the Smithsonian American Art Museum), was a provocative piece since it was known to be the first sculpture of that period to portray a dying Cleopatra.<sup>35</sup> One of the most famous paintings of the exhibition was submitted by Black American artist Edmund M. Bannister. He was the first Black American to accept a bronze medal prize for his painting, *Under the Oaks* (current location unknown). Bannister was nearly refused by judges who were later informed of his race after the prize was announced, but white participants insisted he keep the award.

The Austrian gallery housed a large bronze sculpture, *The Freed Slave* (now at the Civico Museo, Revoltena Trieste, Italy). It was submitted by Austrian-Italian artist Francesco Pezzicar, and depicts a freed slave victoriously holding the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation (fig. 17).<sup>36</sup> Pezzicar's sculpture was originally entitled *Abolition of Slavery* (l'Abolizione della schiavitù); this is a subtle but significant difference in meaning from the title, *The Freed Slave*, that is listed in *Frank Leslie's Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition* (fig. 18). *Leslie's* degrades the sense of Pezzicar's initial title.



Figure 17 (Left): Abolition of Slavery (l'Abolizione della schiavitù). [Source: Civico Museo, Revoltena Trieste, Italy, 2010.]



Figure 18 (Right): The Freed Slave. [Source: Frank Leslie's Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition, 1877.]

It could be disputed that Frank Leslie's illustration of Black Americans viewing the statue suggests that emancipation had been achieved when in many ways it was delayed. For example, the increase of Jim Crow racial segregation after the Civil War and in the Reconstruction era deferred the achievement of full citizenship and civil rights

by former slaves following emancipation. Discrimination practices denied blacks voting rights, elected office, and employment opportunities, and the intentional exclusion from the exhibition by exhibition builders and organizers.<sup>37</sup> Mabel O. Wilson further contends in *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* that

It is important to ... consider how the fairgrounds... built for the Centennial Exhibition ...constructed racialized social hierarchies. This social order was evident in the exhibition content, in pavilion placement, and in the plans of the fairgrounds themselves. It also influenced admissions policies and who could move freely around the grounds and within the exhibition halls. Such organizational strategies initiated new practices and reinforced emerging patterns of racial segregation in northern and southern cities where these grand events were staged and, likewise, the complex sphere inside the fairgrounds and halls was tethered to events and places outside of the exposition's gates.<sup>38</sup>

Mitch Kachun discusses the early efforts of Black American leaders and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in promoting black participation in the Centennial, including their submission of a twenty-two foot high marble bust of Richard Allen (now at the Richard Allen Museum AME Church). Allen was the founder and bishop of Philadelphia's Mother Bethel, the first African American Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>39</sup> Black American sculptor Alfred White created the bust and Mary Edmonia Lewis was credited with the design for the base and pedestal. The bust was briefly displayed outside the U.S. Government Building, but was not accepted as a permanent installation to Fairmount Park, in contrast with other sculptures that were.<sup>40</sup>

There are also indications that Black Americans in attendance came to the Centennial as patrons. A photograph view of a horse-drawn carriage traveling on George's Hill, the main thoroughfare of the Centennial, appears to show a black family being transported to the exhibition (fig. 19). A man who appears to be a Black American (in the far right foreground wearing long coat tails and a top hat), stands among other

spectators who are observing the fairgrounds, with the *Colossal Hand and Torch* in the background view (fig. 20). The hand and torch was a promotional exhibit, used as a fundraiser for the construction of the Statue of Liberty.<sup>41</sup> The statue would ultimately

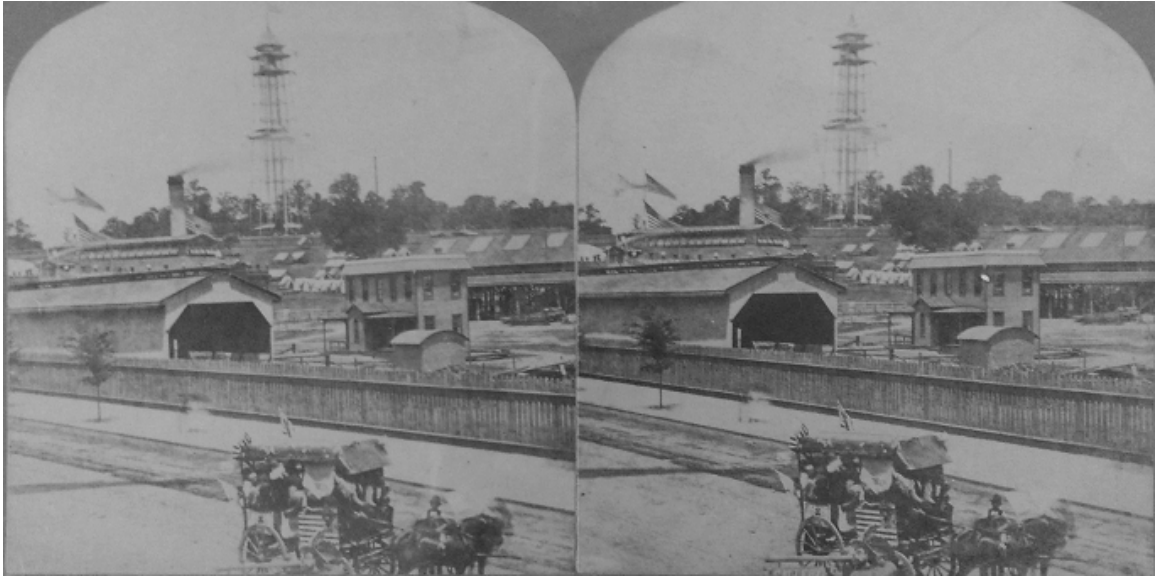


Figure 19: George's Hill, Site of the Centennial. Black American family traveling to the exhibition in a horse drawn carriage. [Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1876.]



Figure 20: Colossal Hand and Torch. Black American spectator (in the far right foreground wearing long coat tails and a top hat) stands with other spectators. [Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1876.]

become one of America's iconic symbols of liberty and freedom.

At the time of the exhibition, one third of Philadelphia's black adults were unemployed, but few were offered work at the exhibition.<sup>42</sup> As was typical for Black American employment in Philadelphia and more generally in the period, those who were hired worked mainly in unskilled jobs, including waiters who wore plantation costumes at the white-owned Southern Restaurant concession (fig. 21).<sup>43</sup> Black Americans also served as stable hands at the livestock exhibit, as shoe shiners, and as food concessioners (figs. 22-23). These images indicate the type of employment opportunities available to Black Americans at the time.



Figure 21: The Southern Restaurant. The exterior façade of the concession building shows patrons standing at the entrance. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, 1876.]



Figure 22: International Livestock Exhibit, Centennial Fairgrounds. Black American stable hand stands next to the cattle (on the far right) and a Black American spectator wearing a top hat stands behind the cattle (on the left).  
[Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1876.]

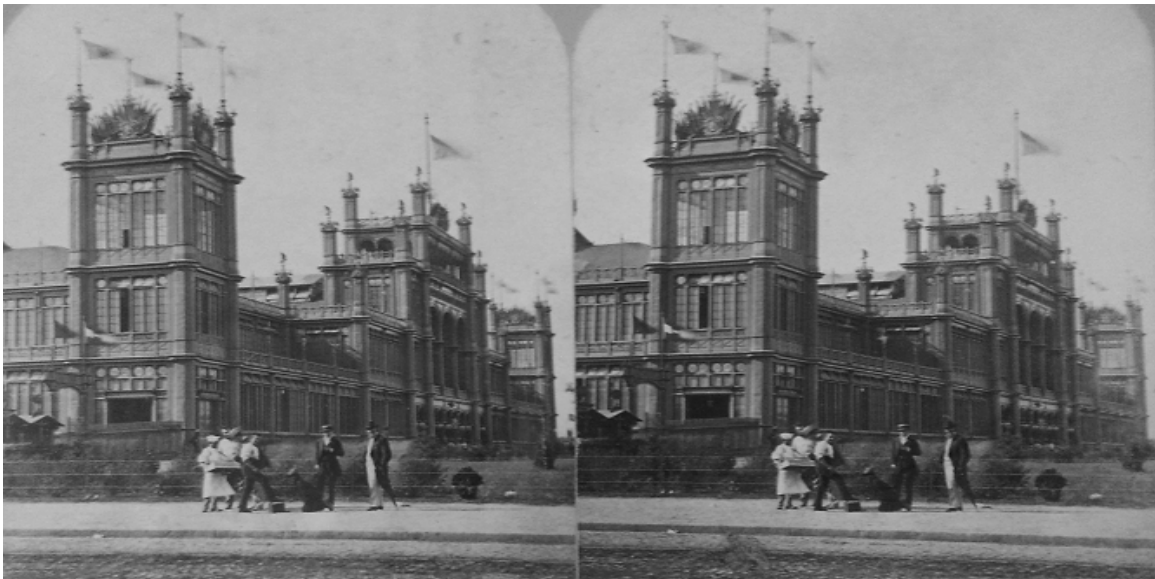


Figure 23: East Front of Main Exhibition Building. Black American food concessionaire (holding box) and black American shoe shiner (kneeling), solicit patrons. [Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1876.]

There is also notable evidence that Black Americans who attended the exhibition were depicted in demeaning roles. Thomas Worth promoted negative stereotypes about Black Americans in his well-known Currier & Ives lithograph color prints for the *Darktown* comic series.<sup>44</sup> In the fair guide, *Going to the Centennial*, author Bricktop and illustrator Thomas Worth presented a mocking minstrel skit and a racist block print about *The Freed Slave*. The vignette reads:

In one of the halls stands the bronze statue of Emancipation, representing a negro dancing, and holding aloft the Emancipation Proclamation. It is a rare work of art, and must be seen to be appreciated. But I could not help laughing, as a pair of colored visitors came along and viewed it. They evidently did not know what it represented, and seeing its bronze nudity they were shocked, or at least she was, and my artist friend sketched them at the moment. "Who dat, Charles?" she asked, glancing at it and then turning away. "Dat? Dat am some great colored man; Fred Douglass, I guess," replied her escort. "Pshaw! who eber hearn tell ob Fred Douglass cuttin' up dat way wid no clothes on?" and she pulled him away to something less allegorical (fig. 24).<sup>45</sup>



STATUE OF EMANCIPATION.

Figure 24: Statue of Emancipation. [Source: *Going to the Centennial a Guy [sic] to the Exhibition*, New York, N.Y.: Collin & Small, 1876.]

In addition to denigrating black Centennial goers, this vignette also mocks Frederick Douglass by suggesting that he is the subject portrayed in *The Freed Slave*. Douglass was in fact a former slave, but he became an author and renowned orator, the leader of the abolitionist movement, and one of the most important black leaders of the nineteenth century. Despite his standing, and his efforts to promote black participation in the Centennial, Douglass merely served a token role at the exhibition. He was granted an official invitation to the exhibition's opening ceremonies, but was not allowed to address the fairgoers. In fact, he was almost kept from entering the stage by the authorities, but he was eventually permitted to sit on stage with other prominent leaders, including Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil, who ran the world's leading slave regime.<sup>46</sup>

During the Centennial period national publications, such as the *Atlantic Monthly*, circulated negative information about ethnic minorities attending the exhibition. In an article in *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race & Culture* from 1978, Philip S. Foner writes that "in the preparations for the Exhibition and at the event itself, blacks were discriminated against and kept from making their contributions."<sup>47</sup> *Atlantic Monthly* editor William Dean Howells wrote a number of articles regarding the Centennial Exhibition for the July, 1876 issue in which he harshly criticized *The Freed Slave*, and Black American, Asian, and Native American participants. Illustrator Solomon Eytinge, of *Harper's Weekly*, also produced racist satire portraying Black Americans at the Centennial for its *Blackville* comic series. One such illustration is *The Centennial Visit of the Small Breed Family*; this negative caricature indicates how blacks were perceived and demeaned in national publications (fig. 25).<sup>48</sup>



Figure 25: Solomon Eytinge, “The Centennial Visit of the Small Breed Family.”  
[Source: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs, *Harper's Weekly*, 1876.]

The treatment of Asians, Native Americans, Africans, and Black Americans at the Centennial are indicative of the political and social issues facing American society during that period; however, their roles in the fair and their unique experiences all helped to shape the history of the event. The interpretation and preservation of their history is necessary to give them a voice and to ensure that their contributions are acknowledged for future generations.

## CHAPTER III INTERPRETATION OF HISTORIC SITES

This chapter examines the interpretation of historic sites associated with the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. An overview of historic preservation practices and how interpretation relates to these practices is provided. Memorial Hall is selected as a case study because it is the only major historic building that remains from the exhibition and the only site currently interpreting the Centennial to the public through programs and exhibition of collections. Historic preservation principles, architectural history, and preservation treatments are examined to understand the history and development of the site. Interpretive approaches and interpretive programs are examined to understand the site's interpretation and its depiction of the exhibition's ethnic groups. Some of the exhibition's historic sites were not considered in this study, including smaller structures which remain in Fairmount Park and other structures that were moved to alternate locations after the exhibition closed. These sites are important cultural resources and exhibition memorials, but they do not currently have any Centennial interpretive programming or collections.

### Historic Preservation Practices

The historic preservation movement in the United States was shaped by several founding organizations. The National Park Service (NPS), established in 1916, became the federal government's primary entity for preserving the nation's cultural heritage, fifty

years after its founding. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 established policy to preserve historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for public use. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and its 1980 and 1992 amendments extended preservation policy to include American Indian Tribes and other cultural groups. Prior to the act, preservation efforts and programs were concentrated at the federal level and were primarily committed to the restoration of individual sites or objects. Once the act was established, the focus shifted to the preservation of historic sites of local and state significance and entire historic districts. The U. S. National Register of Historic Places, the U. S. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Federal Preservation Offices (FPOs), State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs) were established on the basis of the Preservation Act.<sup>49</sup>

In 1976, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, also known as the *Standards*, were issued by NPS. In 1992, the *Standards* were revised to accommodate all National Register historic resource types - sites, structures, buildings, objects, districts, and landscapes. The *Standards* are historic preservation principles which are intended to support historic preservation best practices and safeguard cultural resources. The *Standard* for each category of treatment - preservation, restoration, reconstruction, and rehabilitation (adaptive use) - includes guidelines for the appropriate treatments for sites and other resource types.<sup>50</sup>

Preservation involves no substantial alteration to the current condition of a site. The original features of a site remain untouched and consistent maintenance is required. Restoration emphasizes returning a site back to a former condition at a particular time period. This treatment is effective when parts of a site's historic components are gone or

when its prominence during a certain historic era is particularly significant.

Reconstruction requires the rebuilding of a site with new materials. This treatment entails rebuilding for contextual purposes, when a site no longer exists. Rehabilitation focuses on a new compatible use for a property and returning a property to a state of usefulness or code compatible. It may also require repairs and alterations, but it retains key features of a site's historic fabric.<sup>51</sup> Two or more of the *Standards* are often required for the preservation and management of a historic site or cultural resource. The NPS defines cultural resource types as both physical (architecture, archaeology, art, and objects) and intangible (folklore, rituals, languages, and multiculturalism).<sup>52</sup>

What is interpretation? Interpretation examines an event, subject, or person from a number of viewpoints and probes a range of questions. William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low define interpretation in their book *Interpretation of Historic Sites*: “Interpretation is both a program and an activity. The program establishes a set of objectives for the things we want our visitors to understand; the activity has to do with the skills and techniques by which that understanding is created.”<sup>53</sup> William J. Lewis states in *Interpreting for Park Visitors*: “interpretation has to help the visitor understand the interrelations among as many aspects of what is being observed as is possible.”<sup>54</sup> Freeman Tilden, renowned interpretation educator of the NPS, contends that interpretation is more than presenting facts - it is an educational activity that attempts to uncover meaning by the use of objects, experience, props and other media.<sup>55</sup> The common idea among these definitions is achieving understanding.

How does interpretation relate to historic preservation practices? Interpretation is essential to preservation practices as it conveys the significance of cultural resources. At

public historic sites, staff and trustees work to manage, appropriately restore, and truthfully interpret these sites with the obligation of saving them for future generations, but those obligations are not met simply by saving and restoring the physical site. The importance of the site and the people and events linked with it must be conveyed to visitors to ensure those obligations are met.<sup>56</sup> This chapter examines the Centennial's historic sites, their history and interpretation, and their restoration and rehabilitation.

### Interpretive Approaches

The selected criteria for the evaluation of the Centennial sites and museum exhibits are based on the following guidelines: the *NPS National Register Bulletin for Planning Effective Interpretive Programs*; Freeman Tilden's principles of interpretive planning; and William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low's historic site interpretive categories.<sup>57</sup> The *National Register Bulletin for Planning Effective Interpretive Programs* identifies two interpretative tool categories: personal interpretation and non-personal interpretation. Personal interpretation is communication provided directly by people and its techniques include talks and tours, curriculum-based field studies, living history, drama, special events, workshops, seminars, discussions, and debates. Non-personal interpretation is an impersonal self-service form of communication and its techniques include publications, newspapers and magazines, educational materials, indoor exhibits (artifacts, art, dioramas, text, and three-dimensional maps), exterior exhibits and signs, audio-visual materials, and electronic media.<sup>58</sup> The *National Register Bulletin* emphasizes that interpretative goals for historic sites can be achieved through initial planning and effective interpretation, which involves thought and study, and before interpretative tools are determined these important question require consideration:

1. What is the property you want to interpret? What stories does it have to tell? “People are always at the center of the stories of historic places. It is particularly important that all the people whose lives are intertwined around a historic place be included, not just the social elite that has so often been the focus of traditional history.” Do not avoid controversial issues. Interpretation that avoids difficult topics presents unrealistic views of the past.
2. Which of these stories should be the focus of interpretation? What are the interpretive themes? The research conducted on a historic site will uncover many stories. “Never forget that information and facts, construction dates and architects are the raw materials. Patterns and themes, connections and meaning are the interpretation.”
3. What audience(s) do you hope to reach? Determine who is most probable to be interested in your historic site. Consider the demographics of your patrons - age, gender, place of residence, etc.
4. What do you want interpretation to achieve? The interpretation of historic sites ultimately aims to assist visitors in understanding the importance of a site and to create a link between the past and the present, which will further foster a sense of stewardship. Determine your sites goals and how interpretation can address them.
5. Where can you find the money, people, and space to support an interpretation program? Your site should determine a budget to cover costs because funding is essential for the interpretation of historic sites as is assistance from diverse and knowledgeable professionals.
6. What interpretive techniques make the most sense for your property? Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each interpretative tool category before making selections regarding the most effective techniques for a historic site.
7. Can you actually accomplish what you are hoping to do? Is the plan that is evolving really practical? Effective interpretive programs often start with limited options, like an oral history project or a special event.
8. How do you ensure that your plan is carried out? Make an action plan. Interpretive plans do not need to be complicated.<sup>59</sup>

In his publication, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Tilden designates six key principles of interpretive planning which provide important planning direction for historic sites and museums:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.<sup>60</sup>

Alderson and Low consolidate historic site interpretation into three categories: documentary, representative, and aesthetic. These categories refer to an order of priorities for the restoration and interpretation of a historic site; they do not refer to an exclusive purpose for a site. The “documentary” historic site’s objective is to document a significant historic event, person, or family. Sagamore Hill, Theodore Roosevelt’s home, is identified by Alderson and Low as a documentary site for its relationship to Roosevelt. The “representative” historic site’s objective is to educate the visitor about a period of time in history or a way of life. The site does not have to be linked to a historic event or person. Van Cortlandt Manor in New York is referred to as an example of a representative site. The “aesthetic” historic site supports expertise in interior and architectural design, not in historic events. The Cheekwood Botanical Garden and

Museum of Art in Tennessee is given as an example of an aesthetic site.<sup>61</sup> Historic sites often fit within two or more interpretative categories, just as historic sites often require two or more of the treatment *Standards*; therefore a clear objective should be determined for a site's interpretation and preservation.<sup>62</sup>

### Memorial Hall Historic Site

Memorial Hall is the largest of only a few surviving Centennial Exhibition buildings. Memorial Hall, also known as the Art Gallery, was constructed by the State of Pennsylvania as a permanent art museum. The Romanesque style building was one of the first public art museums in Philadelphia and in the United States. Its architectural style was imitated in the construction of art museums and civic buildings of the era.<sup>63</sup> In 1976, Memorial Hall was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and to the U. S. National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure to the Fairmount Park Historic District. In 1978, it was designated a U. S. National Historic Landmark.<sup>64</sup> For these reasons, it is important to examine the site's history, preservation and interpretation.

### Centennial Architectural History

The Centennial buildings and fairgrounds occupied 236 acres in the natural landscape of Fairmount Park, located in West Philadelphia, on an elevated plateau on the west bank of the Schuylkill River. It was the world's fourth largest urban park system and the largest in United States, covering nearly 3,000 acres (fig. 26).<sup>65</sup> Of the Centennial's five major buildings, the Main Exhibition Building, Memorial Hall (the Art Gallery), Machinery Hall, Horticultural Hall, and Agricultural Hall, plus the other 249 smaller buildings, only Memorial Hall and the Ohio State Building remain in Fairmount

Park.<sup>66</sup> Memorial Hall and Horticultural Hall were planned as permanent monuments of the Centennial that would remain in Fairmount Park, dedicated for civic use after the exhibition. The concept of permanent structures is attributed to prior exhibitions. The Crystal Palace (the London Great Exhibition, 1851) was dismantled and reconstructed in Sydenham where it became a permanent structure from the first universal exhibition, until fire destroyed it in 1936. The Hall for the Exhibition of Fine Arts (the Vienna International Exhibition, 1873) is a permanent art gallery.<sup>67</sup>

An Art Annex was built directly behind Memorial Hall to display the overflow of art from various nations. Memorial Hall set a precedent for future American exhibitions, including Chicago in 1893, St. Louis in 1904, and San Francisco in 1915. A permanent art gallery was constructed for these exhibitions, some were in the Romanesque style of architecture, which was utilized in the nineteenth-century as a model for art museums. The Palace of Fine Arts at the World's Columbian Exposition is now the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. The Art Building at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition was converted to the City Art Museum of St. Louis. The Rotunda of the Palace of Fine Arts at the Panama Pacific Exposition is now an art gallery and a San Francisco landmark.<sup>68</sup>

Horticultural Hall fell into disrepair and in 1953 the central conservatory was closed. After damage from Hurricane Hazel in 1954, the building was demolished the following year. The Horticulture Center and Centennial Arboretum was built in 1973 on the original site of Horticultural Hall. Two small brick buildings that were used as public comfort stations during the Centennial also remained on the site. They have since

undergone renovations and rehabilitation and are renamed the Sakura Pavilion and are utilized by the Shofuso Japanese House and Garden as education and event facilities.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the larger buildings were demolished after the exhibition, but many of the smaller temporary pavilions were auctioned off and relocated. The Ohio State Building (the Ohio House), is the only temporary exhibition pavilion that remains in Fairmount Park; its heavy sandstone facades made removal too difficult. The building served as residence for park personnel after the exhibition and as a park information center during the city's 1976 bicentennial celebration.<sup>70</sup> In 1976, the Ohio House was added to Philadelphia Register of Historic Places and it is considered a contributing resource within the Fairmount Park Historic District.<sup>71</sup> In 2007, the building underwent rehabilitation to serve as a café and event venue.<sup>72</sup>

### Building Design and Materials

Hermann J. Schwarzmann, the chief engineer and architect of the exhibition and its buildings, along with builder R. J. Dobbins, designed and constructed thirty four structures, including Memorial Hall and Horticultural Hall. Memorial Hall is adjacent to the Schuylkill River. The building is smaller than other Centennial buildings, but it is still massive, with a footprint an acre-and-a-half in size. The opulent building consists of a main floor (first) and an elevated basement, plus two small spaces forming a mezzanine floor (directly above first floor) on each side of the midpoint of the building, at the rear side (north). The building consists of a central pavilion with a large dome, flanked by four smaller corner pavilions. The central pavilion's front façade contains three arched entrances; the entry was formerly an open arcade that was later enclosed. The roofs are

flat with balustrade parapets. The central pavilion and dome are topped with allegorical sculptures (fig. 27).<sup>73</sup>

The interior structure was designed around a central gallery space that included miles of floor space and wall space with displays for over 2,500 paintings and sculptures. The interior galleries were decorated with marble and ornamental plaster (fig. 28). The Great Hall (first floor) and the Centennial Room (basement) were later preserved and restored without extensive alteration. Most art museums of the period had similar floor plans – they were built on a symmetrical plan, with center and corner pavilions, triple portals, coupled columns, niches, and a dome.<sup>74</sup>



Figure 26: Memorial Hall, South Entrance Façade. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

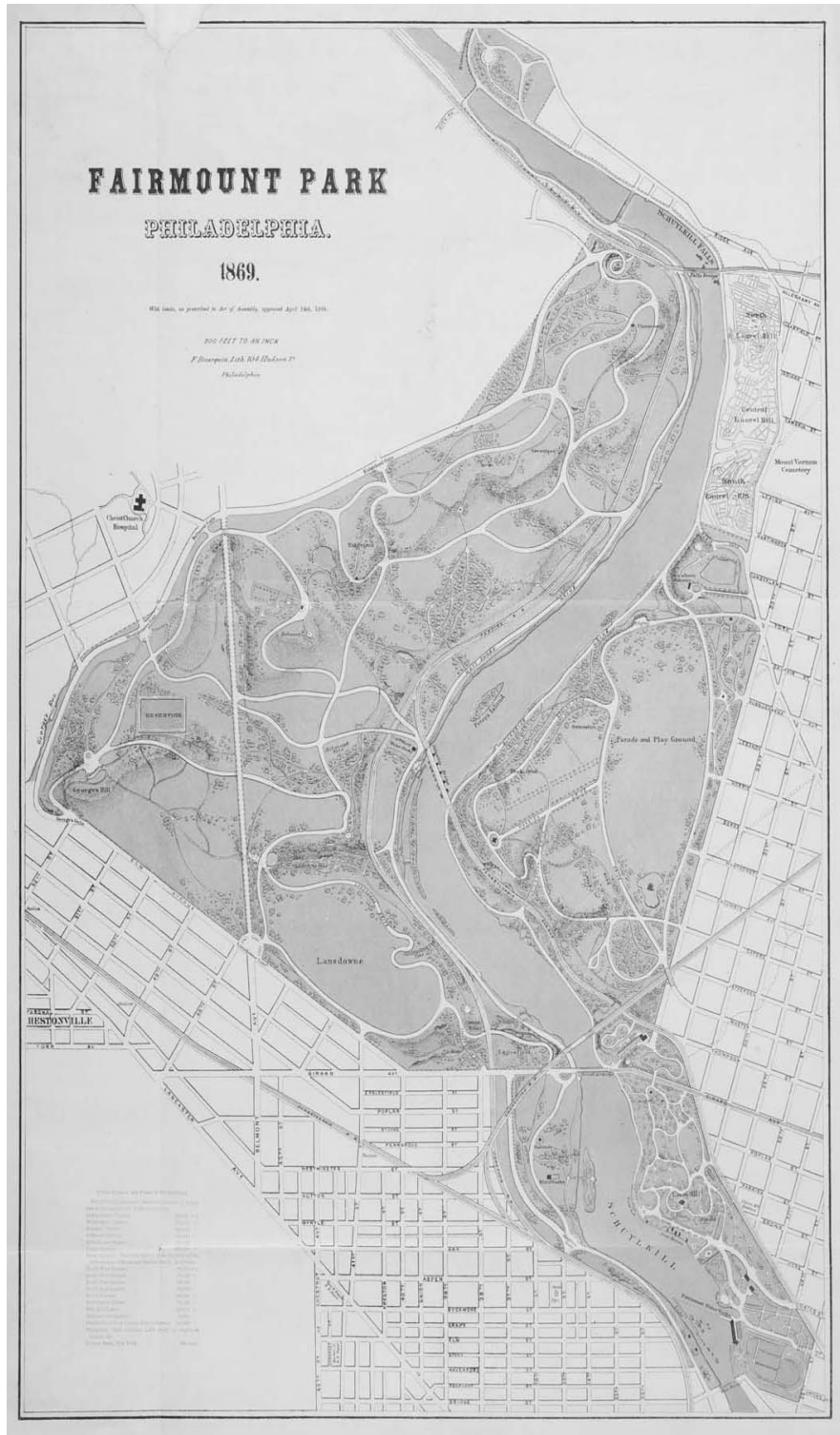


Figure 27: Map of Fairmount Park. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Print and Picture Collection, 1869.]



Figure 28: Memorial Hall, Interior Gallery. [Source: Free Library of Philadelphia Centennial Digital Collection, 1876.]

#### Permanent Art Museum, 1877 - 1952

In 1877, Memorial Hall was occupied by the Pennsylvania Museum and then the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts, where art from the Centennial was displayed. In 1928, the museum relocated, along with most of the art, to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in East Fairmount Park near the former fairgrounds. Memorial Hall then became a museum annex and continued to house a limited art collection until 1952.<sup>75</sup>

The museum collections included the room-size Centennial Exhibition Model, one of Philadelphia's significant artifacts and a long-forgotten treasure. The 20' x 40', 1:192 scale model of the Centennial fairgrounds is intricately constructed of wood, brass, ivory, and isinglass. The making of the commemorative miniatures model was managed by John Baird, of the Centennial Board of Finance. It was initially displayed at Spring

Garden Institute. In 1889, it was given to the City of Philadelphia by Baird. From 1890 to 1894 it was displayed at City Hall, then stored. In 1901, it was relocated to Memorial Hall's basement where it remained sequestered for decades, damaged and neglected, and virtually unknown to the public.<sup>76</sup> The model is now the focus of the Please Touch Museum's *Centennial Exploration* exhibit. The exhibit will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

#### Preservation Treatments: Fairmount Park Commission, 1954 - 1969

In 1954, Memorial Hall closed, the remaining collections were auctioned off to the public, and the site was turned over to the Fairmount Park Commission (now the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation "PPR"). In 1958, several firms were commissioned to develop *A Plan for the Adaptation of Memorial Hall*. The plan specified new administrative and recreational uses for the building. The project was completed over a ten-year period and the building was rededicated in 1969.<sup>77</sup>

The building was determined to be structurally sound, with the exception of the roof, dome, and skylights that sustained damage from a prior hurricane. The exterior of the building was left undisturbed, with the exception of the repairs to the roof, dome, and skylights. The interior of the building, in the major areas, underwent minimal changes to the existing walls and partitions. The other interior spaces were left undisturbed. The existing flooring and ceilings were repaired where possible. The new construction was designed to match as closely as possible any existing areas of space. The mechanical and electrical components were replaced.<sup>78</sup>

The Memorial Hall plan focused on five major categories: the Park Administration, the Park Guard Headquarters, Recreational Facilities, the Great Hall, and

the Centennial Room (the basement Centennial Exhibition Model room). The smaller rooms on the first and mezzanine levels were converted to offices for the Park Administration. The southwest areas of the first floor and basement were converted for the Park Guard Headquarters. Recreational Facilities were installed on the first floor in the east and west gallery. The east gallery was converted to an indoor swimming pool. The west gallery was converted to several recreation spaces – a basketball court, a boxing ring, a volleyball court, a table tennis court, and a trophy room. The Great Hall's wood trim and plaster finishes were repaired and restored. The Centennial Room was cleaned and ventilated. The Great Hall and the Centennial Room underwent changes without structural or widespread alterations; the changes included new lighting and heating components.<sup>79</sup>

The 1958 adaptation plan defined the preservation treatments as follows: the site should be preserved as an ornament and communal facility and adapted to uses, which would benefit the City. The plan precedes the site's 1976 National Register listing and the 1987 National Landmark listing. These listings may have prevented adverse alterations like the indoor pool addition. A National Register listing does not ensure that a property will be protected from inappropriate alterations or demolition unless federal funds are involved.<sup>80</sup> In the decades that followed, Memorial Hall hosted civic events during the city's 1976 Bicentennial celebrations. During the 1980s, the building served as the home for the Philadelphia Police Department's accident investigation unit and as a recording studio for the Philadelphia Orchestra. During the 1990s, the site endured periods of vacancy and neglect.<sup>81</sup>

### Preservation Treatment: Please Touch Museum, 2003 - 2008

In 2003, the Please Touch Museum was granted a lease to renovate and occupy Memorial Hall. In 2008, the museum reopened after a five year restoration project led by several firms. According to the firms' assessments, Memorial Hall's historic fabric deteriorated after the adaptation in 1958. The metal roofing was corroded above the indoor pool, and wall moldings and columns were damaged or removed for the installation of partitions. The caryatid supports below the central dome were cracked and damaged from water permeation. The renovation firms determined, however, that there were no extensive renovations and no systemic structural issues for over a century of the building's history.<sup>82</sup>

The preservation treatments for Memorial Hall are based on the *Standards*. Memorial Hall's period of significance is 1876 to 1928 - from the period of the Centennial to the time of the Pennsylvania Museum & School of Industrial Arts move to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The exterior of the building was rehabilitated to reflect its condition in 1928 (fig. 29). The building's granite exterior and its zinc ornament was

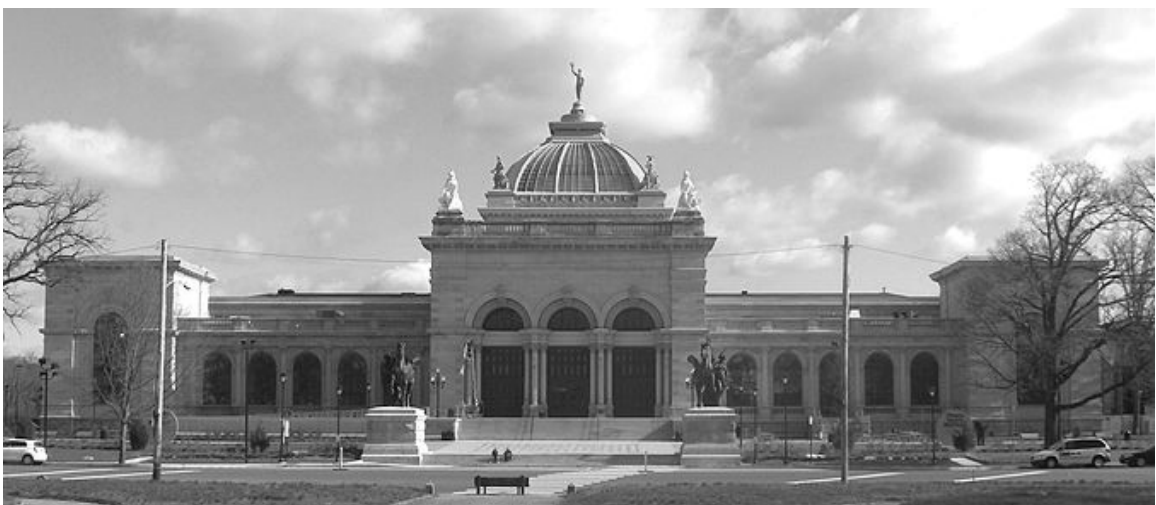


Figure 29: Memorial Hall, South Entrance Facade. [Source: Please Touch Museum, 2008.]

restored, pointed and cleaned. New roofing and flashing were installed and repairs were made to the rainwater conductors. Several allegorical sculptures from the exterior central dome were removed and replicas were installed. Entries put in in the 1960s were removed and filled with matching granite. New emergency exits were placed in less conspicuous locations. The windows in the arcade and pavilions were replaced with new replica windows. The south entrance was converted to serve as the original entrance again. The lower fixed wood panels in the east and west arches were replaced with glass panels. The most substantial exterior change was a glass and steel addition on the east side that houses a 1908 carousel. The historic integrity of the east elevation and its exterior space was previously comprised by fire damage and the installation of an outdoor public pool.<sup>83</sup> Extensive landscaping and grounds works was completed, including new trees and gardens, parking lots, and an outdoor eating area (fig. 30).



Figure 30: Memorial Hall, Aerial View. [Source: Please Touch Museum, 2008.]

The preservation treatments for the interior of Memorial Hall were restoration, preservation, and rehabilitation. Four areas of treatment were determined based on the

state of the site's historic integrity and order of importance in each room (fig. 31). The treatments varied from preservation of existing materials to minimizing modern materials and altering or removing existing materials where required. New HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) and electrical systems were installed.<sup>84</sup>

Area One includes the five major rooms - the Great Hall, the South Vestibule, the East and West Reception Rooms, and the North Vestibule. Area One rooms retained the greatest historic integrity and best demonstrated the building's period of significance. The treatment for these rooms was preservation. Area Two included the North Hall, the Pavilions, and Arcades. Area Two rooms retained ample historical integrity, but were the lesser in order of importance. The treatment for these rooms was rehabilitation. Area Three included the North Offices (on the first floor and mezzanine). The treatment for these rooms was rehabilitation. Administrative needs also dictated the treatment for these rooms. Area Four included the small galleries, large galleries, courtyards, and the basement. In these rooms preservation was of least importance. These rooms retained limited or no historic integrity and the rooms were previously converted to offices and recreation areas. The existing spatial integrity and building materials were retained.<sup>85</sup>

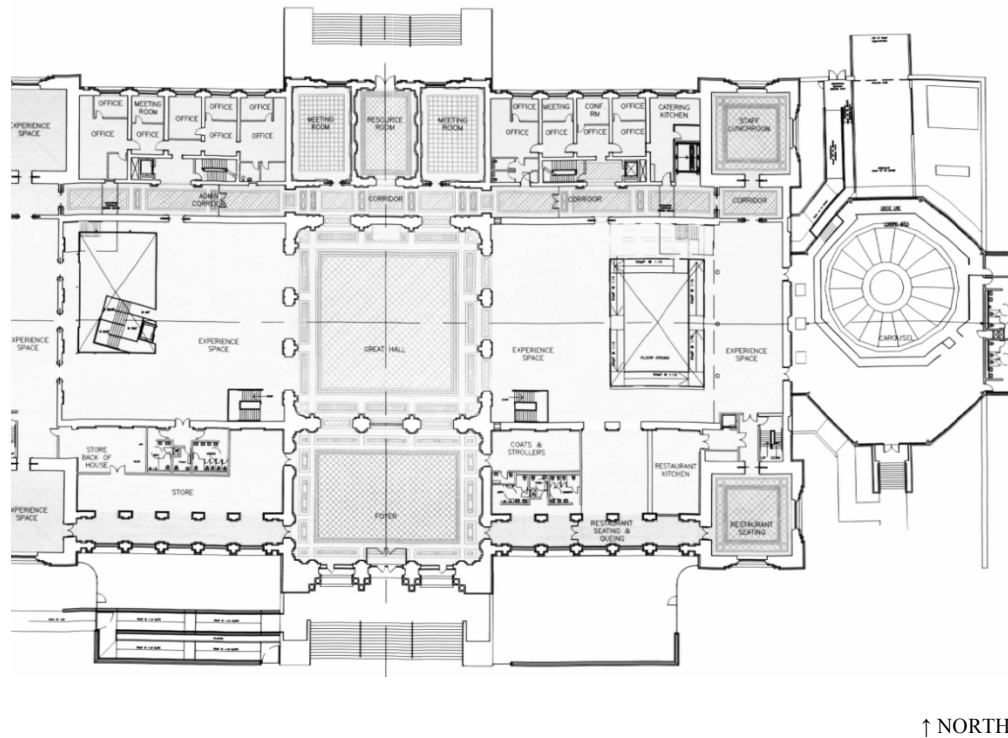


Figure 31: Memorial Hall Floor Plan. [Source: Floor Plan Preservation Zones, Kise Straw & Kolodner Architects, 2004.]

### The Centennial District Master Plan

The Centennial District Master Plan is a twenty-year strategic plan that concludes in 2026, America's 250th independence anniversary. The objectives include land use, community development, transportation, and signage for existing and proposed cultural and historic venues in the Fairmount Park System and neighboring West Philadelphia. The Centennial Commons, former site of the Centennial's two major exhibition buildings, is cited as a development area (figs. 32-33). Several design principles for physical improvements are also cited, including Principle One - strengthen or make evident the important historical remnants of the Centennial Exhibition.<sup>86</sup> *Philadelphia 2035* is the City of Philadelphia's comprehensive plan that proposes historic preservation

goals for the city's architectural, historic, and cultural resources, including resources in the West Park District and Centennial District.<sup>87</sup>

The City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, and the Please Touch Museum are dedicated to the preservation of the Centennial's cultural resources. This is evident through the Centennial District Master Plan, Philadelphia's 2035 comprehensive plan, and the restoration and rehabilitation of Memorial Hall. However the preservation of the Centennial's cultural resources in Fairmount Park primarily focuses on the physical sites, from the surviving buildings to the remaining road axes and landscapes. Efforts should be made to preserve more of the Centennial's intangible cultural resources by interpreting the folklore and the multiculturalism of all persons involved in the event.

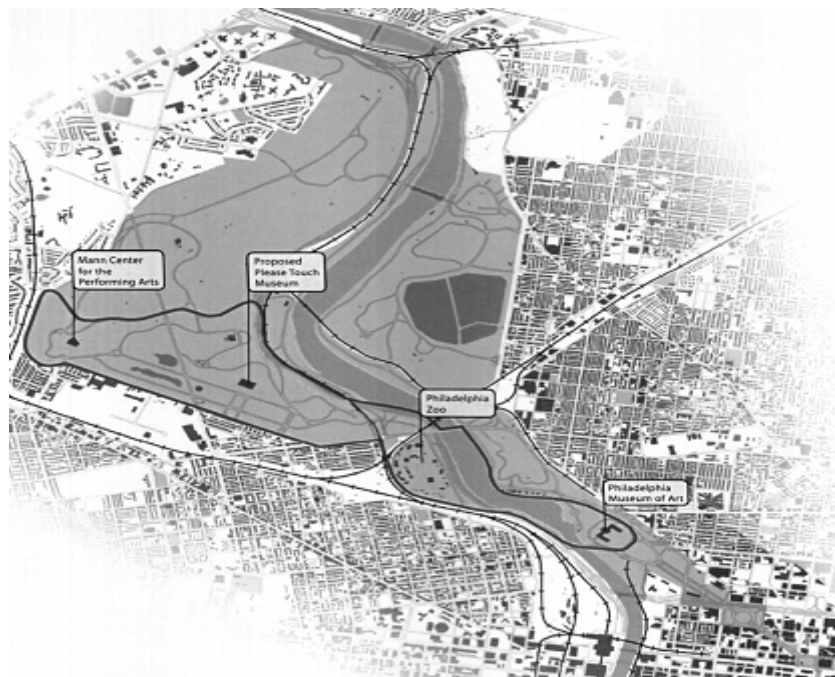


Figure 32: Centennial District, West Fairmount Park. [Source: Strategic Plan MGA Partners, 2005.]

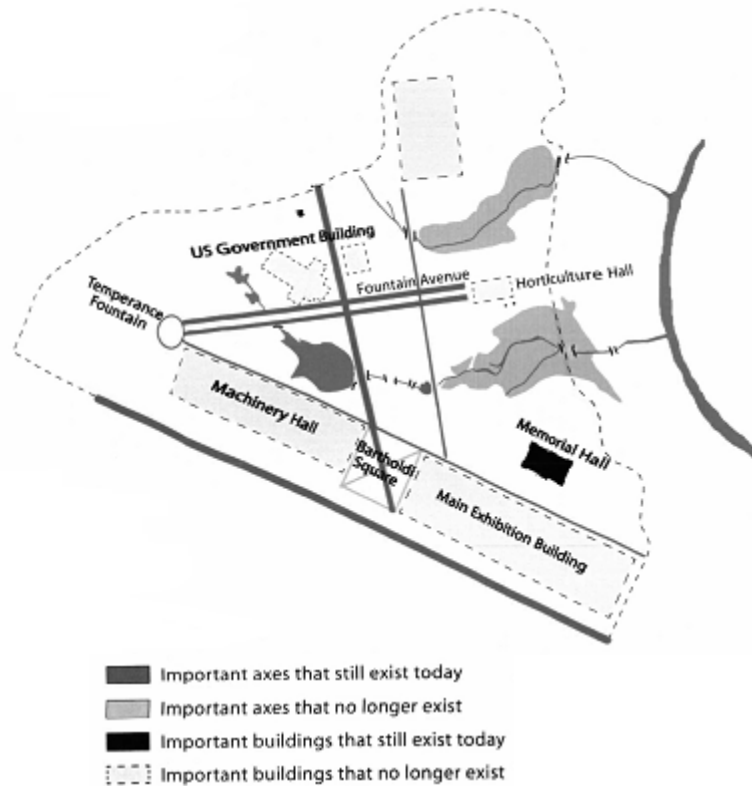


Figure 33: Analysis Map of the Centennial Landscape.  
[Source: Strategic Plan MGA Partners, 2005.]

### Site Interpretation

Memorial Hall is both a historic site and a children's museum. The interpretation regarding the building site is discussed in this chapter, while the interpretation regarding the museum exhibits are discussed in the next chapter. Memorial Hall draws over 550,000 visitors a year and the site has become an icon of the Centennial Exhibition. The site's interpretation seeks to uphold the event's historic and architectural integrity and to promote learning opportunities, primarily through site tours.

When visitors approach the south entrance they encounter directional and instructive signage about Memorial Hall, The Please Touch Museum, and The Centennial District. Once inside the building, visitors can begin guided tours in the opulent Great Hall. The glass and iron dome ascends to eighty-five feet. The ornate plastered walls are

painted in hues of peach and gold, the building's original color scheme. The columns and pilasters are original, topped with lotus leaf and pine cone motifs. The wood casework is massive - fifteen-foot high pocket doors and two-foot high baseboards. The checker-board patterned marble floors, although fissured, still remain. To introduce visitors to the site's history and architectural features and mimic the path fairgoers took through the former art galleries, the museum's curator and its education coordinators determined the Great Hall would best illustrate this interpretative goal.<sup>88</sup>

The guided tours are designed for adult audiences interested in learning about the site's history and architecture. The tours cover the history of Memorial Hall and the Centennial Exhibition. The architect, architectural style, and features of the building are discussed. The development of the building site is also discussed, from its initial use as an art gallery and museum during and after the Centennial, to its time as a recreation and police department facility. The Centennial fairgrounds and Fairmount Park, the events exhibits and displays, and the fair's inventions and concessions are all discussed. The guided tours also appeal to adults who grew up in the local area, because childhood memorabilia specific to Philadelphia is included in the tour. The Captain Noah and his Magical Ark Television Show, the Rocket Express monorail from the city's former John Wanamaker's (Centennial Contributor) department store, and the Enchanted Colonial Village from the city's former Lit Brothers' department store are all featured exhibits included in the tour.

Self-guided tours are also offered for adults to see the building and the surrounding landscape with interpretive maps. Lunch and Learn Series tours for adults include illustrated history discussions and behind the scenes tours of the site.<sup>89</sup> Other

interpretative tools utilized include pamphlets and literature regarding the site's history, site photographs, and signage.

### Analysis

After examination of Memorial Hall's Centennial history, preservation treatments, and tour experiences, evidence suggests that interpretive methods express the site's historic integrity and introduce certain aspects of Centennial history. However, the interpretation does not include the history of ethnic minority cultures in any aspect of the current site tour experiences.

In reference to the interpretive methods and tools discussed in previous sections, several are relevant. With regard to the *National Register's Bulletin for Planning Effective Interpretive Programs*, both personal interpretation and non-personal interpretation tools are utilized in the site tour experiences at Memorial Hall. The site highlights this through talks, tours, discussions, signage, maps, and educational materials. The National Register's Bulletin identifies important questions to consider prior to determining specific interpretative tools: What is the property you want to interpret? What stories does it have to tell? The *Bulletin* proposes that people are always the focus of a historic site's stories and that it is important that all of the people who are woven into a historic site's history be included.<sup>90</sup> The Centennial's architect, organizers, inventions, and inventors are all discussed, but stories of the ethnic minority participants are not incorporated. Freeman Tilden's interpretation principle, "interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase," also recommends the inclusion of all participants in a historical narrative. Tilden's provocation principle, "the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but

provocation,” is significant since certain images of Black Americans in Centennial related publications illustrate negative stereotypes (fig. 24-25). These images and the associated language should be utilized to provoke and interpret the contentious history.<sup>91</sup> Placing the site into interpretive categories, as proposed by Alderson and Low, Memorial Hall would most likely be considered a documentary site, since the significant historic event of the Centennial Exhibition took place there.<sup>92</sup> Further examination of site’s exhibits from the Please Touch Museum will determine interpretive programming that includes such narratives.

### Recommendations

The Memorial Hall historic site could incorporate several interpretive approaches within its site tour experiences to include ethnic groups. The previously mentioned principles and guidelines propose the inclusion of ethnic groups and intangible cultural resources in site interpretation to develop effective interpretative approaches and programs.<sup>93</sup> The probable interpretive approaches for Memorial Hall will be discussed in Chapter IV, since they are also applicable to the site’s museum exhibits.

However, it is important to discuss why the interpretation of historic sites and museums often lack the narratives of ethnic groups. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation In The Twenty-First Century*, an important preservation publication, features Antoinette Lee’s essay, “The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Historic Preservation.” Lee explains that the structure of the historic preservation field in the twenty-first century is primarily European-American. The field lacks diversity in cultural programming, in attendance and supporters, and in professional staffing. As a result, many ethnic groups believe their cultural heritage is undervalued by preservation

professionals. Minority presence in the field is also limited, since few minority students enroll in undergraduate and graduate historic preservation programs.<sup>94</sup>

Lee also discusses that the NPS manages over 380 cultural sites, but many of their interpretative programs are developed for and adapted to white, middle-class Americans merely for ongoing traditional method that has remained unquestioned. Over the past decade, the NPS has made efforts to diversify, but change is often slow and contentious.<sup>95</sup> For example, Philadelphia's Liberty Bell Center, the focus of the NPS's Independence Hall and Independence National Historical Park, was tangled in a controversy regarding the Liberty Bell Pavilion, which was undergoing a new construction plan. At issue was that part of the site of a house used by George Washington lay beneath what would become the new Liberty Bell Pavilion. Visitors entering the pavilion would have to walk directly over the former slave quarters of the house. Initial plans excluded any discussion of the slave quarters. In 2011, the site was dedicated after eight years of conflict between the NPS, the City of Philadelphia, local historians and grass roots organizations over the site's interpretation and design, its link to slavery, and its significance to Black Americans. The site now incorporates narratives regarding the site's slave presence and emancipation through videos, interpretive panels, and a small shrine.<sup>96</sup>

Margaret Hall, former Director of Development for the Memorial Hall's Please Touch Museum, remarks that historic sites and museums are apt to embrace change by presenting exhibits that extend to diverse sectors of the community. She adds that, "museums try to promote cultural understanding of minority populations whose stories have heretofore been given short shrift."<sup>97</sup> However, public museums often face the predicament of whether to provide idealized and fictional representations of history that

visitors and tourist at large prefer. But ultimately it is the museum programmers who are serious about their educational responsibilities and aim to accurately depict a community's cultural history.<sup>98</sup>

## CHAPTER IV INTERPRETATION OF MUSEUMS

This chapter examines museums associated with the interpretation of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. An overview of the evolution and educational role of museums and how historic preservation practices relate to these institutions is discussed. The features of children's and ethnic museums, along with exhibition development and interpretive planning, are examined as they provide context for understanding the case study and the depiction of the Centennial Exhibition's ethnic groups. Memorial Hall's Please Touch Museum is selected as a case study because it is the only museum in Philadelphia, original site of the event, which currently interprets and exhibits Centennial collections. But the museum's presentation of the Centennial lacks cultural diversity.

### Historic Preservation and Museums

While historic sites are often recognized for their built environments, museums are recognized for their collections and exhibits. The practice of historic preservation is fundamentally connected to the business of museums and other cultural institutions. Max Page and Randall Mason, in their book *Giving Preservation A History*, write that, "historic preservation cannot be seen in isolation. It is one part of a larger 'history industry' that includes museums, monuments and memorials, collecting and other historical undertakings."<sup>99</sup> Page and Mason further add that "if the goal of preservationists is to preserve elements of the past and make their beauty and meaning

available to the public, then preservationists will have to more thoughtfully and aggressively engage with other history industries. Implicitly, this also means that preservationist will have to think far more rigorously about interpretation as part of their job. Focusing exclusively on saving the historic resource, preservationists have failed to talk about the essential need for interpretation of historic places.”<sup>100</sup>

I agree with Page and Mason that the link between preservation and the history industry is significant to the interpretation process. The Please Touch Museum has successfully saved and restored Memorial Hall as a memorial to the Centennial, but many aspects of the ethnic groups associated with the site’s history have yet to be presented in the museum’s current exhibits.

George Ellis Burcaw, author of *Introduction to Museum Work*, writes that “for a building to be worthy of preservation it must be capable of being shown to the public- interpreted-as an example of something important,” and essentially “the historic preservation must not simply be something; it must be for something. Interpretation must be the intermediate aim, and education (or aesthetics) the ultimate.”<sup>101</sup> Historic preservation must have an educational significance to the public, not just an entertainment or sentimental purpose. Burcaw recognizes Kenneth Chorley’s four principles of historic preservation:

1. To be valid, a historic preservation must center upon a building, object, site, or environment of historical or cultural importance.
2. The life blood of historic preservation is research. A great amount of study is necessary to a good job of preservation and interpretation.
3. A historic preservation project, like any other museum, must be clear in its purpose, its possibilities, and its limitations.

4. The value of any historic preservation project is determined by the quality of its presentation and interpretation. The greatest collection has no real value unless it can lead to the enrichment of human lives. A perfectly preserved building accomplishes nothing until it is presented and interpreted to the public so that it benefits visitors.<sup>102</sup>

I agree with Burcaw and Chorley that the preservation of a physical site also requires interpretation to educate the public and improve visitor experiences. Once again, the Please Touch Museum has demonstrated this but the interpretive approaches for the Centennial exhibits do not include topics of diversity.

### History of Museums

The ancient museums of the Greeks and Romans were founded in the early third century BCE. Among their collections were paintings, statutes, and bullion that were displayed in temples and open air museums, and were often subjected to seizure by wealthy aristocrats for personal use or for religious and ritual offerings. European museum galleries and curio collections of the sixteenth century were primarily private, seldom seen by the public, and they often reflected and served the interests of the cultural elite. Europe's first public museums were established in England during the late seventeenth century.<sup>103</sup>

In 1786, one of the first public museums in the United States was founded by Charles Willson Peale in Philadelphia, known as the Peale or Philadelphia Museum.<sup>104</sup> The museum's mission sought to educate the community at large, through its collections as well as its scientific lectures, special exhibits, and music performances. The museum was open to the general public and its nominal admission fee could accommodate most visitors. Peale's museum grew first from his early collections of portraits to more natural specimens and ethnographic items, which included life-size dioramas of the Races of

Mankind, a grouping of races from North and South America, the Sandwich Islands, Otaheite, and China. The preservation and representation of indigenous populations and cultures all served as museum attractions during the colonial period. Peale arranged his natural history collections according to a scientific method of organizing specimens known as Linnaean classification. This system of classification led to Peale's museum becoming the exhibit model used for natural history museums in the United States.<sup>105</sup>

### Ethnic Museums

Although many of the collections and exhibits of American museums are ingrained in colonial prototypes which limit the importance of these collections and exhibits to a number of cultural and ethnic groups, these institutions are now experiencing change regarding how they relate to the ethnic and minority cultures represented in their collections. Important changes in museum practices can be attributed to the social and political issues of the recent decades: the Civil Rights movement, demographic changes such as rural and urban population shifts, and changes in immigration patterns. Cultural diversity has become a key issue among curators and museum professionals. Efforts have been made to address criticisms and initiate practices, which involve interpretive planning, community involvement, and the review of traditional museum roles.<sup>106</sup>

Ethnic museums, tribal museums, and culture-specific historic sites have increased in numbers over the past fifty years in the United States. These culturally specific museums initially evolved because of the flow of European immigrants to the United States prior to World War II and their actions to preserve their cultural heritage. Ethnic museums also developed because the views of traditional museums were often

perceived as discounting the experiences of specific ethnic and cultural groups. Artifacts, items, and histories relating to these groups were not collected and/or exhibited.

Ethnic museums are often concentrated within local communities and are initiated by various ethnic groups. Their objectives support basic values: the preservation of the past and the education of future generations. Their exhibitions and interpretative approaches support specific groups and cultures and preserve ethnic history, traditions and pride; plus they pursue progressive recognition for ethnic groups. A number of museum professionals consider the exclusion or distortion of the history of ethnic groups as a motivating factor in the initial development of ethnic museums.<sup>107</sup> While the Please Touch Museum is a children's museum, not an ethnic museum, like other children's museums today it features the history and culture of ethnic groups in its exhibitions and programs.

### Children's Museums

Children's museums are unique institutions. They differ from other museums because their name indicates their audience type, not the type of their collections. Children's museums, science museums, and science centers are some of the fastest developing museum types globally. In 1899, the Brooklyn Children's Museum opened in New York, the first of its type in the world. Children's museums are generally orientated to science and technology, natural or cultural history, ethnology, or art. Their exhibitions are expected to cultivate learning, exploration, and creativity. Their permanent collections often include an array of items, from rare relics and everyday objects to live animals. Collections are acquired, not because of the rarity of an item, but for an item's effectiveness in interpretation or education for children.<sup>108</sup> To further cultivate learning

children's museums have introduced hands-on and interactive learning activities and spaces for early childhood programs (birth to three years). Museum programming has also advanced to include community based programs and partnerships for families and educators and ways to explore multicultural and international subjects and activities.<sup>109</sup>

### Exhibition Development

Both ethnic and children's museums require exhibition development for the presentation of their exhibit collections. The exhibition development process is generally used from concept to completion of a project. It can be utilized for any exhibit type, from small, temporary exhibitions that are budget conscious to large million dollar exhibitions for permanent collections. In their publication, *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, Barry Lord and Maria Piacente designate that the exhibition development process involves three phases:

1. The development phase - when the exhibition concept or story line is determined.
2. The design phase - where the interpretive plan and the research are converted into creative three dimensional spaces.
3. The implementation phase - involves the building and installation of the exhibition.<sup>110</sup>

Interpretive planning is a unique discipline and vital to the exhibition development process. It involves a decision process by museum staff and various professionals to determine effective methods to communicate information and specific messages to visitors. Some museums hire interpretive planners for their exhibit and programming departments, while other museums have interpretive planning departments.

Interpretive planning is often project-specific, but it can also be used for other museum functions, like institutional master plans, site master plans, and educational plans. For example, the National Park Service has interpretive master plans that use interpretive planning principles for an entire site or property, not for an individual exhibit or historic feature.<sup>111</sup>

There is an increasing value in interpretive planning for exhibitions. First, most visitors are not curators, historians or even scientists, so museums are required to develop more relevant, meaningful, and relatable ways to convey complex and unfamiliar concepts. Next, museum settings are visitor-centered around various groups and themes, so the ages, ethnicities, and educational levels of visitors vary. The learning experiences of these visitor groups are dissimilar, so museums must fulfill varied curriculum requirements and provide for diverse exhibit experiences. Finally, interpretive planning establishes a directive for the exhibition development process.<sup>112</sup>

Lord and Piacente, categorize specific exhibition experiences and guidelines for children's museums:

1. playful discovery
2. hands-on interactivity
3. creativity through the arts
4. stimulating and engaging experiences that spark curiosity and discovery
5. exposure to diversity - new ideas, new people, new ways of being
6. learning about community needs and issues
7. facilitation of quality family time<sup>113</sup>

They also specify that concepts for children's exhibition spaces are infinite, yet almost all involve interactive components:

1. low-tech - relying on such activities as storytelling, role-playing, dress-up, directed seeing, and puzzle-solving; facility demands might include low

dividing walls surrounding a play area or special floor surfaces, but these are generally manageable within most building types.

2. medium-tech - which might involve working with clay, printmaking, or butter-churning; such as activities may demand water supply and drainage, food storage, animal care, and clean up facilities.
3. high-tech - using technology such as scientific apparatus or multimedia that may be as demanding of a “smart” exhibition space as any sophisticated black box exhibition.<sup>114</sup>

The Please Touch Museum’s mission supports many of Lord and Piacente’s guidelines, including creating learning opportunities through play and positive family interactions. The Centennial model is the focus point of the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit but it is not an interactive component of the exhibit. However, the exhibit’s Centennial Depot and Model Room specifically incorporate components and guidelines for playful discovery and hands-on interactivity.

The Centennial exhibit lacks exposure to diversity, in contrast to Lord and Piacente’s guidelines. According to them, the development phase is where the interpretive plan is determined and therefore where topics of diversity should be introduced in the exhibition process. While the museum’s programming incorporates a number of community programs and culturally diverse activities for various ethnic groups, this does not extend to the Centennial exhibit. The museum’s exhibition development and the interpretive process should include more narratives about the ethnic groups involved in the Centennial. It should also include more ethnic community engagement with the Centennial exhibits.

The Centennial exhibit includes primarily low-tech interactive components that involve role-playing and puzzle-solving exercises. More low-tech interactive

components like storytelling and dress-up should be incorporated in the exhibit and the interpretive planning process to help address the lack of diversity. A number of low-tech to medium-tech interactive components for activities are discussed in the Exhibit Interpretation and Recommendations sections of this chapter.

High-tech components are not necessarily recommended for the existing Centennial exhibit because of the costs involved to incorporate them and the overall appropriateness for very young children, but for older children multimedia components like audio guides and interactive touch screen monitors are discussed in the subsequent sections and chapters.

### Please Touch Museum

The Please Touch Museum is considered one of the nation's first museums committed to serving families with children ages seven and younger. The museum's mission is "to enrich the lives of children by creating learning opportunities through play and positive parent/child interactions."<sup>115</sup> This experience is created through hands-on interactive exhibits, collections, and programs that introduce children to art, history, literature, music, theatre, dance, math, and science. The mission is supported by the museum's seven core values: caring and collaborative, playful and fun, creative and innovative, learning and educational, child-centered and family-focused, safe and clean, respectful and diverse.<sup>116</sup>

### History

The Please Touch Museum has long been recognized, both nationally and internationally, as a groundbreaking institution for its creative learning experiences and programs. The museum originally opened in 1976 during Philadelphia's celebration of

the Bicentennial. It was initially an experimental venture with the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, with limited space, staff, and budget. In 1978, due to its increasing popularity, the museum relocated to a new building. Over the next four years, the museum integrated more educational exhibits and cultural diverse programs. In 1983, the museum relocated again to a facility in the museum district of Philadelphia. Over the next decade, the museum underwent a period of rapid growth. It was accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), and its collections, exhibits, educational programs and community programs increased significantly. By 1998, visitor attendance had surged, requiring yet another new facility space. In 2005, the museum agreed to an eighty-year lease for Memorial Hall with the City of Philadelphia and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. The use of Memorial Hall provided an opportunity to rehabilitate a historic landmark, triple the museums galleries and exhibit spaces, and link the museum to nearby family attractions including the Philadelphia Zoo, the Mann Music Center, the Shofuso Japanese House and Garden, historic house museums in Fairmount Park, the Centennial District, as well as communities of Parkside and West Philadelphia.<sup>117</sup>

### Exhibit Model

The Please Touch Museums programs and services are available to children and families of all socioeconomic backgrounds and/or learning ability levels. The museum offers educational programs, culturally diverse programs, community programs, school group vouchers, reduced and waived entry fees, and services for children with disabilities. While the museum is dedicated to educating young children, there are also exhibits and programming developed for older children, teens, and adults. The museum's collections feature over 25,000 child-related items and objects that include historic and

contemporary artifacts - toys, props, art, books, and photographs. The collections are a fundamental part of the museum experience, as they are utilized in gallery exhibits and educational programs to interpret the history of American childhood. Various collection items are acquired for exhibition and program requirements, or are used as templates for reproduction.<sup>118</sup>

The Please Touch Museum operates with fifty-one full-time and part-time staff and a board of directors. The exhibition development process and interpretive planning is primarily driven by the museum's curator of collections, its exhibit designers, and education coordinators. Occasionally artists and designers are commissioned, and academics consulted. The staff decides on exhibit themes and design; they conduct research, assist with the installation process, manage budgets and timelines, and conduct evaluations. The museum features multiple exhibits with various themes relating to the history and culture of children and play. Its exhibit types vary, including permanent, pop-up, temporary, and traveling.<sup>119</sup>

### Exhibit Interpretation

One of the museum's many permanent exhibits is the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit. It is the foundation for and primary exhibit dedicated to interpreting concepts of the history of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, Memorial Hall, and daily life during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>120</sup> The extensive exhibit occupies much of the basement level of Memorial Hall. The interactive exhibit is intended for children aged two years to adults. The exhibit includes two areas: the Centennial Depot and the Model Room (figs. 34-35).



Figure 34: Centennial Exploration Exhibit, Depot. [Source: Please Touch Museum, 2008.]



Figure 35: Centennial Model. [Source: Please Touch Museum, 2008.]

The Centennial Depot serves as the entrance point to the exhibit and the 1876-inspired train station represents the main mode of transportation to and from the Centennial. Children and families are encouraged to drive and ride the train, operate the

schedule board, and man the ticket booth. The exhibit interprets the technological innovation of train travel and it transports visitors into the past, but it also demonstrates the similarities between past and present transportation in everyday life.<sup>121</sup>

The museum's exhibits and programs are designed with an educational emphasis on history, math, science, social studies, music, or the arts. Its exhibit themes focus on collections, history, children's literature, natural and physical sciences, practical life, and transportation, and learning opportunities and exploration in role-playing and creative expression are included.<sup>122</sup> These elements are conveyed in the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit, where visitors learn positive concepts about the Centennial's history and experience role-playing exercises that include practical life and transportation modes.

The Model Room contains the immense 20' x 40' foot replica of the Centennial. The model, its perimeter protected by glass panels, displays the layout of the fairgrounds, and its buildings and trees, the steamboat ferry, and even the people, all rendered in miniature. The model's layout presents a snapshot of the fair's festivities and life during the Victorian era. The Model Room contains objects for visitors to discover that were first presented at the Centennial, such as Charles Hires Root Beer, Froebel Blocks, and the Remington Typewriter. Other interactive items for discovery include the vendor puzzle, the stereoscopes with Centennial images, and the kindergarten display with audio components. The room contains large wall images of Fairmount Park and the Centennial fairgrounds, which help to link visitors to the fairgoers who once strolled through the park and pavilions.<sup>123</sup>

According to the museum's programming, young children learn best in integrated environments that mimic real world experiences. The exhibit designs foster opportunities

for object-based learning. The museum's collections include objects that are developmentally suitable for children and they provide tangible methods for interpreting history and culture.<sup>124</sup> Children learn through listening, doing, touching, and personal examination.<sup>125</sup> The Model Room uses everyday items as part of the exhibit, and to educate and inform visitors. By providing tangible objects to find and feel, visitors become involved and the history of the Centennial becomes more real.

The Please Touch Museum's Education and Family Learning Department also provides supplementary curriculum materials for interpreting concepts about the Centennial Exploration exhibit. The teacher resource materials are provided for use prior to and after museum visits, to help prepare students for the exhibit's concepts and follow up classroom activities for lessons learned.<sup>126</sup>

The Exhibit One Sheet for the Centennial Exploration exhibit highlights the exhibit's goals, educational objectives, book lists, state standards, and in-museum and classroom activities. One suggested activity is Creative Dramatics, wherein role-play is performed to interpret historical people who attended the Centennial, such as Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, among others. The Art activity interprets artists who exhibited work in Memorial Hall's Art Gallery during the Centennial, including Thomas Eakins and Margaret Foley. The Music activity introduces sheet music and listening sessions for the Centennial March and other period music from the 1876 Centennial.<sup>127</sup>

### Analysis

Memorial Hall serves a dual purpose as a Centennial site and a children's museum; therefore the Centennial exhibits and programs are essential to educational roles and interpretative development of both the site and the museum. Yet the museum's

primary focus is its overall mission - to create learning opportunities through play - followed by its general exhibits and programs. The Centennial exhibit and programs collectively convey positive historical narratives. The low-tech exhibit uses hands-on activity and playful discovery to help interpret the stories of the Centennial and to help visitors understand and identify with the event. Interactive components include role-playing and puzzling solving in addition to traditional interpretive components of collection objects, visual images, photographs, and exhibit signage.<sup>128</sup> The exhibit explains why the interactive items and collection objects are displayed, such as Charles Hires Root Beer and Froebel.

Similar to the site tour-related experiences discussed in Chapter III, the Please Touch Museum's Centennial exhibit and programs lack adequate concepts of history that preserve and interpret the experiences of ethnic minority cultures. However the museum's mission and its educational and public programming do support cultural diversity. As a case in point, the museum's educational programs offer bilingual musical performances and bilingual story times in Spanish. Other examples include an original interpretation of traditional Vietnamese folk tales featuring traditional Vietnamese clothing and masks. Further, the museum offers public programs and cultural activities, such as Fiesta Day (that celebrates Latino culture), International Day or Dia Del Nino that celebrates children from around the globe, Ugandan's African Kids Choir performances, and the Odunde Festival Performers (an African dance and drum ensemble), who represent the West African countries of Guinea, Senegal, Mali, and Ghana.<sup>129</sup>

Kate Darian-Smith and Carla Pascoe advocate for diversity in museum programs in their book *Children, Childhood and Cultural Heritage*. They point out that museums engaged in representing children's history are forced to contend with funding limitations and issues of political correctness. Museum curators are further faced with the task of appealing to the views of diverse populations. Museums have a social responsibility to challenge stereotypes and make certain that various cultures and experiences are well represented within their institutions.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, Freeman Tilden's principles for interpretive planning should be considered when analyzing the Centennial exhibit and programs. Principle six is "interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program."<sup>131</sup> This principle is applicable, since unfamiliar or challenging topics and/or content should be presented, not avoided; if not, an opportunity is missed to inform and inspire curiosity in children. Granted, interpretive programs for children require careful development, but institutions that strive to tell history will do well, based on how they manage to interpret for children.<sup>132</sup> Lord and Piacente's exhibition guidelines are also applicable when analyzing the Centennial exhibit and programs in terms of diversity. For example, guideline number five supports, "exposure to diversity - new ideas, new people, new ways of being."<sup>133</sup>

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on Centennial historical scholarship, professional scholar's recommendations, museum exhibition development, and interpretive planning guidelines.

First, Discovery Rooms should be incorporated. They are spaces that generally contain portable hands-on carts, small rolling puppet stages, open corners in the exhibit space, or drawers under exhibit display cases.<sup>134</sup> Discovery rooms should be utilized to introduce more of the objects once displayed at the Centennial's main exhibition hall, particularly from vendors and nations that are not included in the current exhibit. For example, Tunisia displayed rugs, tapestries, and urns, and West Africa's Gold Coast displayed small musical instruments, stools, ladles, and bowls (figs. 7-8). These items, or more likely replicas of them, could be displayed on a portable cart or stored under existing exhibit displays along with accompanying small geographic maps for visitors to identify and locate the countries.

Discovery Rooms are most suitable when they incorporate trained live interpreters to oversee the activities and offer interaction and learning techniques that support more extensive concepts and messages about the exhibit. They use interpretive approaches commonly used in children's and science museums. One advantage of this approach is that they renew stagnant exhibits by adding to existing themes and messages.<sup>135</sup> Live interpreters in Discovery Rooms should be utilized to introduce vendors from various ethnic groups and foreign nations at the Centennial that are not included in the museum's current exhibit.

Second, Museum Theatre programs can be integrated. Such programs vary from performances in exhibit halls to touring one-person shows or impromptu shows created by children. This first-person-interpretation utilizes actors who appear in character and costume in exhibit halls for staged performances or one-to-one interaction with visitors, with audience participation that incorporates story-telling and role-playing.<sup>136</sup> Children's museums place emphasis on human-facilitated exhibition experiences, since the literacy levels of young children restrict the use of text panels and other written communication media.<sup>137</sup>

The Science Museum of Minnesota's *Titanic* is an example of a museum theatre program and a touring exhibit geared toward children. This building was not initially designed for performances. To substitute for the lack of space, actors are used to represent the crew members from the ship. The actors interact within the exhibit with visitors who have been given mock boarding passes of actual Titanic passengers.<sup>138</sup> This example would be suitable for Memorial Hall, since it also was not designed for performances. In a similar way, actors could interact within the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit with visitors who have been given entrance tickets of actual Centennial fairgoers, like Frederick Douglass, Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil, and other representatives from South America, Asia, and Africa. Role playing and storytelling would provide an opportunity to incorporate and interpret history about the Centennial's ethnic groups.

The National Museum of American History's *Join The Student Sit-Ins* is an example of a museum theatre program that is retrofitted, where interpretation is added to an existing exhibit. This example expands on one of the museums existing displays - the all-white lunch counter from the F.W. Woolworth Company store in Greensboro, North

Carolina. Visitors are cast to sit-in and participate in the non-violent protests, similar to the one that occurred there during the civil rights movement. This exhibit not only utilizes an existing display, it also addresses challenging topics about race and discrimination. This exhibit is designed for children, families, and school groups.<sup>139</sup> A museum theatre program that utilizes an existing museum exhibit and addresses topics of diversity could serve as a similar idea for the Please Touch Museum to incorporate, for example the existing train depot could also be utilized to show how various nations were transported to the Centennial Exhibition.

Third, Audio-Visual Programs can be included (film, video, and audio). Such programs are often used as exhibit components themselves or in an audio-visual room as an orientation to an exhibit.<sup>140</sup> The Centennial exhibits and programs do not incorporate any audio-visual programs. By including them, historical narratives regarding ethnic minority presence as visitors and exhibitors at the Centennial could be introduced. For example, video clip images of China and Japan, its commissioners, exhibits, and pavilions, would document their overall presence at the Centennial. In addition, hand-held audio tour devices could be offered at the entrance to the museum to help supplement the existing self-guided tour materials.

Fourth, Special Event Programs could be combined with any of the aforementioned programs or with other museum programming. A special event is planned at various times during an exhibit's duration to renew marketing and media efforts. Interests in exhibits diminish after initial openings, so museums employ on-going media efforts to attract visitors. A special event should have adequate activities. Events are limited to a day or weekend event, but historic sites often schedule full calendars of

activities to commemorate anniversaries of historical events or persons associated with the site.<sup>141</sup>

A special event could be scheduled for Black History Month to interpret the history of Black Americans at the Centennial. This event could help to target audiences from the museums surrounding communities of Parkside and West Philadelphia, which are predominately Black American. The Centennial's exhibiting black artists, incidents of discrimination, and historical movements, such as Jim Crow racial segregation, could all be highlighted. The efforts of Philadelphia's African Methodist Episcopal Church to promote black participation in the Centennial could be discussed. The marble bust of Richard Allen (bishop and founder of the AME) that was once denied a permanent memorial in Fairmount Park could be reintroduced. Black artists could also be recognized for their contributions to industrial arts and design. It is prototypical of ethnic museums' programming and interpretation to support specific cultures and interpret the history of ethnic groups.<sup>142</sup>

Fifth, curriculum and teacher resource materials, previously discussed, are educational programming areas where challenging and/or unfamiliar concepts could be interpreted for older children. Historical incidents from the Centennial involving Native American narratives and their exclusion from the event and the exhibits that represented them could be interpreted. It is important to note the creative dramatics activity from the teacher resource materials, where Frederick Douglass is included in role-play, appears to be the only instance where diversity is discussed. The art activity discusses artists that exhibited work in Memorial Hall during the Centennial; Black American artists and other ethnic groups that exhibited work should also be incorporated in the activity. The music

activity involves listening to the Centennial March and other period music from the Centennial. Other music selections could be added, like the *Song of the Centennial* by Joaquin Miller.<sup>143</sup>

The Please Touch Museum's collections, exhibits, and educational programming all reflect significant historical narratives regarding the events of 1876 Centennial Exhibition. The museum is also committed to the preservation of Memorial Hall, its historical context and architectural presence. Diversity is reflected in the museum's mission and public programming. Ultimately however, more interpretation is required to address and specifically define the contributions and experiences of minority cultures that have been overlooked in the exhibition development process and subsequently omitted from the exhibits. The absence of history regarding ethnic groups at the event weakens the presentation of the Centennial exhibit and collections.

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES

The two previous chapters examined cultural resources and how the history of the Centennial's ethnic minority cultures are preserved and interpreted through historic preservation principles, interpretive processes, and within the traditional settings of historic sites and museums. This chapter examines digital resources: what they are and how they are used by cultural institutions to exhibit and interpret the history of the Centennial Exhibition and support historic preservation. Digital resources were selected because they serve as another component to effectively interpret the Centennial and the ethnic minorities who participated in the event. In addition, the use of digital resources targets online audiences who can gain knowledge without having to physically visit historic sites or museums.

The two digital collections that were selected as case studies are the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* at the Free Library of Philadelphia and the *Online Centennial Exhibition* at the Library Company of Philadelphia. The case studies are first examined to determine their online interpretive approaches and objectives with regards to the roles of ethnic cultures at the Centennial Exhibition. The targeted audiences for these online resources are discussed. They are also examined to determine how digital technology supports historic preservation, and how the use of digital resources helps preserve elements of the Centennial Exhibition. The case studies are selected because each library and archival repository has an online Centennial exhibit, as well as extensive

Centennial holdings that are accessed through their respective libraries. Other libraries and archival repositories exist within the Philadelphia area with Centennial Exhibition holdings, but they do not offer online Centennial exhibits.<sup>144</sup>

### Historic Preservation and Digital Resources

Digital resources are materials (data or programs) encoded or manipulated by computerized devices.<sup>145</sup> Digital resources differ categorically from non-digital resources, particularly when interpreting and planning spaces for tangible cultural resources, like historic sites and museums. Digital resources are electronically reproduced media objects such as audio, videos, images, maps, simulations, and text. They are facilitated through various communication systems or modes: internet access, networking, data storage, database compilation and manipulation, geographical information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), computer imaging, computer assisted design (CAD), and virtual reality.<sup>146</sup> These systems help to support historic preservation practices, programming development for cultural institutions, and interpretation planning and processes.

In 1968, one of the earliest organizations committed to supporting technology for conserving historic sites and other cultural resources was established, the Association for Preservation Technology International (APTI). During the 1990s certain digital resources were integrated with historic preservation practices at the national and state levels, while others began to be established during the 2000s. The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) was established by the 1992 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) amendments. Their activities include cultural resource management, advancing preservation training and education, and advancing

communication technologies.<sup>147</sup> In 1989, the National Park Service introduced the Cultural Resources Geographic Information Systems (CRGIS). This technology system operates with global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS) to map, record, and document historic and archeological sites.<sup>148</sup> At the time, nearly half of all states did not have computer databases to store mounting resource inventories and over 80 percent of all states were utilizing paper maps, not GIS systems. The growth of the internet and electronic mail systems (email) also created database-related issues.

In 1999, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) collaborated to create an electronic database and website of state historic preservation regulations. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic structures database was also established during this period.<sup>149</sup> In 2000, the Library of Congress established the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP).<sup>150</sup>

Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones suggest in their book, *Museum Informatics: People, Information, and Technology in Museums*, that the digitization of cultural collections produces resources that can be utilized for various purposes. One such use is for teaching assistance within formal and informal educational institutions and learning environments. They note that cultural institutions are especially fit for inspiring creativity and independent learning. Digital resources can help to assist with these educational activities, through an institution's collections, on-site, or by remote internet activity. Moreover, digital technology can also help to promote an interdisciplinary approach to learning that extends beyond institutional confines and in-turn could

motivate other cultural institutions, such as museums, libraries, archives, and schools to work in partnership.<sup>151</sup>

Online exhibitions from museums, libraries, and archives began to surface on the internet in the early 1990s. The Library of Congress made the text files and images from several exhibitions accessible on a file transfer protocol website starting in 1992 that included: *1492: An Ongoing Voyage*; *Scrolls from the Dead Sea: The Ancient Library Qumran and Modern Scholarship*; and *Revelations from the Russian Archives*. These early exhibitions permitted the download of parts of the exhibitions; this is much different from the interactive experiences of today's online users. Internet activity and online users increased significantly by 1996, as did the number of online exhibitions offered by museums, libraries, and archives. Cultural institutions now offer online exhibitions as part of their standard programming.<sup>152</sup>

### Benefits of Digital Resources in Online Interpretation

There are a number of advantages and specific characteristics of digital resources, many of which consist of:<sup>153</sup>

1. Digital resources are more accessible since they can be presented to and examined by vast groups of people worldwide.
2. Digitizing resources increases the number of available materials and archives from more institutions, including those collections that customarily in storage, on loan, or undergoing conservation.
3. For educational or interpretive approaches, digital resources can be adapted to accommodate various learning styles or visitor requirements, like providing for the use of different languages.
4. Rare and fragile archival materials can be distributed without the restrictions of curated context or damage liabilities for original materials.

5. Digital resources are easier to manipulate, they are searchable, and they are flexible, like providing zoom options to view fine details of original materials.
6. Digital resources promote the development of social networks, which permits the public to share backgrounds, interests, and activities.
7. The use of digital resources encourages creativity and independent learning and promotes an interdisciplinary approach to learning that eliminates institutional restrictions and motivates museums, libraries, archives, and schools to coexist.<sup>154</sup>

### Challenges of Digital Resources in Online Interpretation

Although there are many benefits of digital resources through the internet and other means, various challenges exist they include:<sup>155</sup>

1. Archival experts are not relied on as exclusive interpreters of documents or collections, when archives and archival practices are unrestricted and website users contribute to the management of historical documents and content that can be determined by any contributing user regardless of their legitimacy.
2. The authority of museums and other history institutions is often compromised since website users cannot always decipher reliable sources and content.
3. Digital photos and images of objects can easily be removed from archival context and become filtered through a website users search constraints.
4. It is more difficult to locate original archival objects because information pertaining to the original content is accessible elsewhere on the internet.
5. Digitizing cultural collections is a labor intensive task due to the volume of materials and the variety of mediums.
6. Archive and museum collections are being decontextualized and over oversimplified because website user filtering separates digital information from an institution's appointed meaning or context, thus requiring a user to determine meaning for cultural or historical objects or events.<sup>156</sup>

Increased accessibility, extensive information databases, broad public appeal, and collective learning opportunities are some of the advances attributed to the use of digital

resources. These advances, however, compel museums, cultural institutions, and preservationists to contend with the Digital Age. Digitization should not simply be incorporated because it is popular, but because the means by which information is stored and retrieved has changed and therefore the workflow and interpretation process within cultural institutions and preservation organizations should also change. The two case studies in this chapter outline many of the benefits and challenges of these digital resources.

#### The Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection - Free Library of Philadelphia

The Free Library of Philadelphia's *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* exhibits substantial materials about the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. The website contains digitized images of over 1,500 photographs, lithographs, trade cards, sheet music, books, and other materials. The images are generated from the library's Print and Picture Collection, Business Science and Industry Department, and Music Department. The website was initiated in 1998 by the Free Library's staff and other technical professionals. It served as a prototype for upcoming digitization projects for the library and other institutions.<sup>157</sup>

The goal of the website is to offer access to the collection's digital images and provide background information about the Centennial's history and experiences for a broad online audience. The collection is a visual survey of various aspects of the Centennial that delivers both imagery and content. The volume of images, the accompanying contextual information, and all other materials were determined and interpreted by the library staff. Prior to the website's development, access to the

Centennial's archival collections was difficult to search and availability to specific materials was limited.<sup>158</sup>

### Analysis

The collection's website is well-developed, with interactive site maps, images, photographs, timelines, graphs, period testimonies, and book references, all of which exhibit some aspect of the Centennial Exhibition's history. The website is organized into general categories that contain broad historical context and supporting subcategories that contain more specific information. The categories and subcategories are easy to navigate. The general categories are: overview, exhibition facts, tours, centennial schoolhouse, and a search option. The overview category contains several subcategories: website launch, photograph holdings, technical aspects of digital conversions and image creations for the photographs and other print materials, grant and funding contributors, and an image reproduction request option.<sup>159</sup>

One advantage of this collection is its accessibility, as it was examined via remote computer, without travel to the library and its departments. A large number of available images and materials, including rare items were reviewed and researched. As previously discussed, remote internet accessibility, access to large volumes of available materials, and access to rare or fragile archives are some of the advantages of digital resources.

The exhibition facts category presents the Centennial through several subcategories: organization, timeline, foreign countries, music, significance, period testimony, and further readings. The exhibition facts category contains the most textual information about the event. It also contains links to photographs and other images, and provides graphs, photographs of the grounds and concessions, images of trade cards

advertisements, and scrapbook renderings. The organization subcategory contains textual information about the fair: attendance, fares, transportation, food and concessions, public safety, grounds, awards, statistics, and management.

The online exhibition facts category presents the most materials about the participation of ethnic minorities in the Centennial, but overall the online collection is very limited in history about their involvement. In order to locate specific information about ethnic cultures at the Centennial a detailed search is necessary. It is important to enter key words and phrases that include but are not limited to: Black American, Native American, Native American Tribes, Japanese Bazaar and Garden, or China Exhibit.

There are some examples of materials about ethnic minorities. First, a photograph of the Restaurant of the South is exhibited in the organization subcategory, under food and concessions. The accompanying text is limited to accession numbers and titles; it does not indicate this was a white-owned concession staffed by black waiters who wore plantation costumes. Second, the timeline subcategory lists and describes two events that involved ethnic groups: the Battle of Little Big Horn with Sitting Bull's Sioux Indians, and the unveiling of a monument to Richard Allen in Fairmount Park. Third, the foreign countries subcategory provides an opening quote that suggests harmony among races:<sup>160</sup>

I have watched the faces of [American] country people as they here -undoubtedly for the first time in their lives - look upon Japanese, Turks, Greeks or Moors; and I have not yet discovered the slightest expression of repulsion or instinctive prejudice of race. On the contrary, it is easy to detect an agreeable surprise, in most cases, - as if the spectator had found an unexpected likeness to his own stock, and recognized, if unconsciously to himself, that the ends of the earth are not so very far apart, after all.<sup>161</sup>

The foreign countries subcategory also notes the participation of the countries seldom discussed in Centennial history: Brazil, Japan, Portugal, Spain, Tunis, Turkey,

Egypt, Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Argentine Confederation, China, the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), Bolivia, Nicaragua, Colombia, Liberia, Ecuador, the Orange Free State, Guatemala, and Honduras. Several photographs of the foreign countries' pavilions and exhibits are incorporated, but the accompanying text is limited to accession numbers and titles, while interpretation is left to the user. Fourth, the music subcategory contains textual information about the Centennial's musical programs, including sheet music, daily concerts, marching bands, and choruses. Images and photographs of the fair's opening day and sheet music are incorporated, but the accompanying text is again limited to accession numbers and titles without context. The music played at the Restaurant of the South is listed as the "Old Time Darks Band."<sup>162</sup> There is no accompanying text that explains this title refers to black performers or that this type of incendiary language was often used in Centennial ephemera and in that era to describe blacks or other ethnic groups. Fifth, the period testimony subcategory provides a quote from Fukui Makoto, the Japanese Commissioner, one of the few ethnic groups who had a say in their own exhibits and pavilions at the Centennial. Sixth, the further reading subcategory provides a print materials checklist of over 130 Centennial holdings, some of which cover the topic of ethnic minorities at the Centennial and several of the print materials are used as reference resources for this thesis. The further reading subcategory also contains a listing of website links for additional viewpoints of the Centennial. These websites help to support historic preservation practices since many are preservation organizations and cultural institutions websites that offer access to their digital resource collections which preserve elements of the Centennial.

The website links include national and state organizations. The Library of Congress's digital preservation and digital collections provide access to the Centennial's sheet music collection. The NDIIPP is also accessible from the Library of Congress website. The Smithsonian Institution and the United States National Museum websites provide access to official records of and finding aids for the Centennial Exhibition. The *Wisconsin Electronic State Reader* website is a cooperative project between the University of Wisconsin's general library system and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which offers digital images of Centennial history. The University of Delaware's library system's special selections department for the Centennial also has a website link for users. Local organizations with links include the Philadelphia City Archives, which offers access to official Centennial documents, but website links for other local organizations such as the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, or the University of Pennsylvania's Centennial archives are not provided. A number of the provided website links are inoperable. The requested URL's or website addresses are not found, because the pages may have had a name change, are temporarily unavailable, or have been discontinued. Systematic website maintenance and update protocols should be in place for the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* to prevent such issues.

The tours category features a unique interactive map that contains information about the buildings and areas of the former fairgrounds. Website users can uncover what happened to select buildings, machinery, objects, and sculpture after the fair closed. The map has a touch screen feature wherein users can touch a building or item of their choice and images and related textual information about the selected entry will open. The

images have a zoom option to view details, but there is no option for an image slideshow.<sup>163</sup> The collections website lacks other digital technology features like virtual tours, video clips, or audio clips, all of which could be used to present the Centennial. The collection's website is, however, linked to the Free Library of Philadelphia's main site, giving visitors access to other digital resources from the library like digital media, digital catalogs, databases, podcasts, blogs, online surveys, and social media networks.

The Centennial schoolhouse category offers teaching resources for classroom study and parent instruction. The resources include instruction on the foreign countries that participated in the Centennial and their respective languages, but there are no activities dedicated to the study of ethnic groups that participated in the Centennial. The last category is a search option; it features preferences to explore a subject, keywords, materials, catalogs, or images.<sup>164</sup> The search and advanced search features for any specific images or topics are difficult to trace and only yield related information after extensive or repeated searches of all of the website's categories and subcategories.

The *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* at the Free Library of Philadelphia incorporates online materials regarding ethnic groups at the Centennial; however the information is limited in terms quantity, content, and contextual information. The Centennial-related digital resource collections of some preservation organizations and cultural institutions can be accessed through computer imaging and the internet at the Free Library's *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection*. However, more organizations and institutions with digital resources and website links, archives, and holdings that preserve the history of the Centennial should be made available to website users and researchers. Several of the advantages and characteristics of digital resources are also

demonstrated by the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection*, including the ease of online accessibility and the volume of available materials and archives, as well as the promotion of interdisciplinary learning that connects the collection to other museums, libraries, archives, and universities.

#### The Online Centennial Exhibition - Library Company of Philadelphia

In comparison to the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* at the Free Library of Philadelphia, which is an image-focused website, the *Online Centennial Exhibition* at the Library Company of Philadelphia is a content-focused website, associated with its library and archival repository. The online exhibition serves as a research database. The collection contains materials relating to the Centennial, including official catalogues and proceedings, fair guidebooks, personal testimonies, advertising pamphlets, playbills, newspapers, photographs, and periodicals.<sup>165</sup>

#### Analysis

The *Online Centennial Exhibition* is listed among other Exhibitions Available Online, accessible from the Library Company's main website. The Exhibitions Available Online is organized by title and is easy to access from the online exhibition icon on the website's homepage. Researchers are directed to click on an image of a centennial engraving to view the resources. The online exhibition's organization is condensed into three categories: overview, collection, and access.

The overview category is a one-page synopsis about when the Centennial occurred, the visitor turnout, the number of nations in attendance, the major buildings, and the fair's exhibits and exhibitors. This page also includes images and photographs of site maps of the fairgrounds, the main building, the agricultural hall, and samples of

admission tickets. The page has a touch screen wherein the zoom option can be used to enlarge images and view details, but the *Online Centennial Exhibition* does not incorporate any other digital media or technology features, such as slide presentations or videos.<sup>166</sup>

The next category, collection, is a database that includes three resources for research which contain materials relating to the Centennial: the *Centennial Ephemera Collection*, the *David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera*, and the *Print and Photograph Department*. The majority of materials from these resources are catalogued in WolfPAC, the Library Company's general online catalog. WolfPAC links to the catalogs of several other area libraries and is easy to navigate. The touch screen option directs researchers to the basic search page that contains drop down menus and search hints. Materials that cannot be accessed through the online catalog are available at the library and archival repository.<sup>167</sup>

The online finding aid for the *Centennial Ephemera Collection* holdings include six volumes of 1,000 items (most of which is accessed from the library and archival repository) that contain circulars, advertising cards, broadsides, sales catalogs, admission tickets, and railroad timetables. Much of the advertising ephemera were produced by businesses that exhibited goods and amenities at the fair. The collection was created by Horace J. Smith, who donated the materials to the Library Company in 1877. Smith was appointed to the Centennial Commission's Advisory Committee of the Bureau of Agriculture, where he assisted with the development of the agricultural exhibit. In 2008, the online finding aid for the collection was created. The holdings date from 1876 and are mostly in English but some are in French, German, Spanish, and Dutch.<sup>168</sup>

The online finding aid for the *David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera* holdings include 100 items (most of which are accessed from the library and archival repository) of circulars, price lists, advertising cards, stationary, fair guidebooks, and maps. Much of the collection also consists of advertising ephemera from businesses that exhibited goods at the exhibition. Many of the collection's advertisement ephemera are from foreign nations. The collection is organized in two series, Series I - Centennial Exhibition Philadelphia and Series II - Oversize Materials. David Doret created the collection and gifted it to the Library Company in 2006. In 2008 the collection was processed and the online exhibit was later established. The materials date from 1855-1882 and are mostly in English, but some are in French, German, and Spanish.<sup>169</sup>

The *Print and Photograph Department* holdings include hundreds of materials that include photographs, lithographs, engravings, certificates, stereographs, maps, trade cards, prints, and souvenirs. Materials from this resource are accessed from ImPAC, the Library Company's online catalog for digital collections and several are available through WolfPAC. Finding aids are available for the *Centennial Photographic Company's* collection and trade cards.<sup>170</sup> The *Print and Photograph Department* holdings contain images and other materials that provide evidence of the involvement of ethnic groups in the fair. Several of the images provided in Chapter II of this thesis of Black Americans who participated in the fair were obtained from the *Print and Photograph Department*.

The final category, access, also directs website users to the detailed finding aids of an itemized inventory of the *Centennial Ephemera Collection* and the *David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera*. The finding aids are organized by accession

numbers and can be retrieved online by directly clicking icons from the access page for a downloadable PDF. The finding aids (lists) and actual inventories can be retrieved from the library. Each item is categorized with one of eleven general topics ranging from chemical manufactures and substances (chemical) and clothing and textiles (clothing) to food and beverages (food) and tools and instruments (tools).<sup>171</sup> Since the collections include items from the foreign nations that participated in the Centennial, foreign nations should be added to the general topics in the finding aids for research.

The *Centennial Ephemera Collection* and the *David Doret Collection of Centennial Ephemera* are both limited to the actual items gifted to the library, and therefore do not contain materials that specifically relate to topics about ethnic minorities and their participation in the Centennial. The Library Company does, however, have other holdings, reference books, and printed materials that cover topics about ethnic minorities at the Centennial, including Black Americans and Native Americans.

It is not clear whether the *Online Centennial Exhibition* essentially serves as an online exhibit or just a draw for researchers to view the Centennial holdings. An online exhibit generally indicates to researchers that certain electronic data or material will be presented that documents history or an event, and that expectation is not met when the online exhibit lacks ample content and interpretation; to some extent it is misleading to researchers. Martin R. Kalfatovic indicates in his book, *Creating a Winning Online Exhibition: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums*, that online archival and library collections offer access to finding aids, databases of archival records, and scanned documents, but they are simply collections online and not exhibitions.<sup>172</sup>

Digital resources have profoundly altered how we access information. Museums and other cultural institutions, reference libraries, and archival repositories have become more closely linked through the induction of digital resources. The internet and social media practices have become dominant methods of exchanging information and contributing to how we experience history. Information is exchanged through online applications, websites, social media networks, digital archives, imagery, podcasts, blogs, media and content syndication, online videos and discussion boards.<sup>173</sup> It is therefore not only important for preservation organizations and cultural institutions to incorporate digital resources, but it is also important to incorporate them well, by presenting and managing information content, not just by merely providing access to collection databases and finding aids.

Online Centennial sites and exhibits feature benefits and drawbacks to the interpretation process that a physical historic site or museum do not. It would be very difficult for a historic site or museum to exhibit entire collections. However, large volumes of materials and images can be digitally stored; remote computer access to these digital resources can occur anyplace internet access is available and rare or original materials that are digitized can be accessed without archival restrictions. Yet cataloging large quantities of materials does not necessarily indicate quality. For instance, if the Centennial's digital resources and online exhibitions are limited in supporting content and contextual information, and archive administrators and/or Centennial scholars are not consulted to interpret the materials significance, most users are limited in how to interpret and process the materials.

In addition, accessing digital resources online that exhibit the Centennial is a virtual experience which will not replace the experience of researching at an actual archive or visiting a physical Centennial historic site like the Please Touch Museum. Both learning experiences however serve as an opportunity to understand and help to preserve the history of the Centennial and the ethnic groups that participated in the event. The virtual experience can also serve to connect cultural organizations and professionals that have shared interests. Online exhibits require fewer resources to develop and incorporate interpretive programs as opposed to historic sites or museums. The management or maintenance of an online exhibit is less costly than a museum exhibit.

Access to the Centennial's digital resources and online exhibits could serve as an extension of the Centennial's historic sites and museum by supplementing and enhancing visitor's experiences, prior to and/or after physical site visits. By connecting historians, scholars, and researchers interested in the overall Exhibition, the issues of race and discrimination, and the preservation of the Centennial sites with the Centennial's current resources and institutions, a larger demographic can be reached and interpretive programs could be shared. Specifically, these resources and institutions could provide links on their respective websites to connect users: the *Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection* at the Free Library of Philadelphia, the *Online Centennial Exhibition* at the Library Company of Philadelphia, the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit at the Please Touch Museum, and other cultural and preservation organizations that have Centennial holdings.

The field of historic preservation is essentially connected to the industry of museums and other cultural institutions and their use of digital resources provides yet

another component that helps to interpret and preserve the history of the Centennial, thus supporting the overall practice of historic preservation.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined the interpretation of ethnic minority groups at Philadelphia's Centennial Exhibition. The research demonstrates the Centennial's history of discriminatory treatment of various ethnic groups – both visitors and exhibitors – who participated in the event. The issues of racism at the fair did not occur in isolation; they were reflected in its exhibits and reflected the views of the nation in the late nineteenth century.

The exhibits featured at the Please Touch Museum incorporate significant information about the Centennial, which benefit from being within one of the Exhibition's historic buildings. While this helps to validate and enhance the objectives of the exhibits, more interpretative programming is needed to underscore the contributions and experiences of ethnic cultures at the Centennial. This will in turn strengthen the exhibits' messages as well as preserve the history of ethnic culture at the fair. It will also contribute to more diverse audiences, providing more meaningful visitor experiences. In turn, this will help to present a more complete sense of the past and demonstrate that preservation of the past should be an inclusive activity. Interpretative goals for the Centennial exhibits can help to be achieved through initial planning and guidelines set forth by the National Park Service's National Register Bulletin for Planning Effective Interpretive Programs, Freeman Tilden's principles of interpretive planning, and William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low's historic site interpretation.

The rehabilitation and restoration of Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park serves as an inspiring example of a preservation effort to protect the physical landmarks of the past. However, at the same time preservation needs to confront in greater detail the undesirable aspects of the Centennial's history, such as the experiences of ethnic minorities. This thesis also shows that while the overt racism of the time has dispersed, much still needs to be done to be more inclusive of the contributions of ethnic minorities at the fair. It recommends specific actions that should be taken not only at the primary exhibit of the Centennial Exhibition at the Please Touch Museum, but also at various archives and collections housing materials related to the Exhibition.

To help accomplish this, the first research question of this thesis asked: "What are the most effective interpretive methods to incorporate when presenting the contributions of ethnic minorities to the Centennial Exhibition?" First, the current exhibits at the Please Touch Museum need new context and exhibit ideas that interpret the treatment of minority groups at the fair. They should help visitors of all ages to learn about how race affected America during the Centennial period and make comparisons to race relations in America today. It is especially important to expose children to this information to provide them with opportunities to learn about changing attitudes toward cultural diversity. The new context and exhibit ideas should contain both temporary and permanent interpretive components. Temporary interpretive components typically require less funding and time to develop. For example, temporary components that could be incorporated to help interpret the Centennial exhibits are moderated discussions or forums about race relations at the Centennial. These discussions should target older children and adults and focus on topics about Black American exclusion from the event

as well as society beyond the fairgrounds, or the violent portrayal of Native Americans at the event and the demise of their culture.

Permanent interpretive components typically require more funding and time to incorporate. Permanent components would be integrated within the existing Centennial exhibits or in new stand-alone exhibits. For example, a permanent component could be a digital interactive map of the exhibits in the Main Exhibition Hall and Memorial Hall's Art Annex highlighting how the organization of the exhibits was based on nationalism and race. The map should be placed midway through or at the end of the Centennial exhibits once visitors have an overall concept about the fair. In addition, more permanent components that should be incorporated are audio or film clips and computer terminals that interpret information about various ethnic groups at the Centennial. Other permanent components could include artifacts or replicas, photos, and newspaper clippings which would help to make the exhibit's message and interpretation more inclusive of all races, ethnicities, and cultures.

The second and third research questions of this thesis are: "What audiences should be the focus of interpretive programming? How is their awareness of the contributions ethnic minority cultures being raised?" The Please Touch Museum's mission and programming supports cultural diversity and targets children and families of all socioeconomic backgrounds and learning ability levels. Visitors are engaged through educational programs, culturally diverse programs, community programs, performances, and exhibits. The museum also provides school group vouchers, reduced and waived entry fees, and services for children with disabilities. However, the *Centennial Exploration* exhibit, through interpretive methods and museum programming, does not

specifically focus on or engage adequate support from the local community or the neighboring historic sites. The local community is predominately Black American of lower economic means. An opportunity to connect with the community would be created by presenting the experiences of Black Americans in the Centennial exhibits; both the positive and negative happenings surrounding their stories about the Centennial should be highlighted. The museum's mainstream visitors are White Americans, most likely of middle to upper incomes, since admissions fees are costly.

The Please Touch Museum's programming should target audiences that also include local residents and more visitors from surrounding regions of Philadelphia. Museum visitors and supporters are currently reached through the museum's donor and membership programs, advertising campaigns, the museum's website, and social media. Other online resources should be utilized, such as blogs and pod casts. The museum should foster more participation from other historic sites within the Centennial District and with other cultural organizations that share interests in the Centennial, American history, race relations, and preservation.

Other historic sites, like Shofuso Japanese House and Garden, located directly behind Memorial Hall, incorporate programming linked to the Centennial's history. Shofuso's current location is the original site of the Japanese Bazaar and Garden from the 1876 Centennial fairgrounds. Shofuso holds an annual Centennial Day on May 10th, the anniversary of opening day at the Centennial. The day typically includes a lecture, an archaeological investigation, and a walking tour of the former Centennial fairgrounds and sites which includes Memorial Hall. The Please Touch Museum should develop similar programming that would foster support for the Centennial's existing and any future

exhibits. Developing museum programming with Shofuso would create educational opportunities to explore Japan's connection to the Centennial, including their exhibits and pavilions.

This thesis also examined the interpretation of ethnic minority groups in the Centennial Exhibition through digital resources. Chapter V showed that digital resources also require interpretative programming for an online exhibit or in an online setting. While digital resources also require funding and time to launch, they are easier to maintain and update than actual museum exhibits. However, like the historic sites and museums that were examined, more interpretative programming is needed for the online exhibits to underscore the contributions and experiences of ethnic cultures in the Centennial.

The Please Touch Museum's website offers general visitor information and links for Centennial information. An update to the museum's website would provide an opportunity to present history about minority cultures at the Centennial. This should serve as a companion tool to the existing *Centennial Exploration* exhibit or to any new exhibits for visitors to learn about the Centennial prior to and after visiting the museum, as it would help to target a larger demographic and appeal to online users.

The museum should also establish more of an online presence with the launch of a blog dedicated to the Centennial. The blog could be hosted by Centennial scholars, preservationists, neighborhood leaders and activists, or by local and national cultural institutions and organizations like the Free Library of Philadelphia, the National Park Service, the SHPO, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The blog

would provide a way to introduce topics about race and online users could post comments or questions.

The Centennial online exhibits offered at the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Library Company of Philadelphia differ in the interpretive process from historic sites and museums. The Free Library's online exhibit presents a large volume of images with interactive components to help view images and utilize the website. The Library Company's online exhibit lacks content and is more of an archive reference tool to access Centennial information at library. Both of these digital resources require much of the interpretation to be determined by the user. For example, several images of Native American dioramas are presented on the Free Library's website but very little information is offered about their original tribes or their connection to the Centennial and the United States Government building. These digital resources are beneficial in the capability to target larger audiences including, researchers, preservationist, historians, and other cultural resource professionals interested in access to the documents and materials. However, a concerted effort by these libraries to connect with more cultural institutions would provide a means for them to share material and contribute to interpretive programs. The digital resources, like the historic sites and museums that exhibit the Centennial, are also limited in the interpretive process about ethnic groups at the Centennial.

#### Further Research

This thesis provides a base for additional research in an area of historic preservation which is often overlooked – interpretation, especially for children. How interpretation is defined, its processes, and how it relates to preservation practices and the

overall field of historic preservation were examined in relation to the Centennial Exhibition history. However, additional work on exhibit planning and funding resources to support and implement new exhibits needs to be incorporated. Additional areas that merit further research include the advertising ephemera produced by businesses that exhibited goods at the Centennial, particularly as it relates to themes and images (many negative) of minorities. The contributions and experiences of women in the Centennial's history should also be examined.

There is also a need to examine the substantial quantities of Centennial Exhibition research materials related to the role race played in the fair. Few researchers and scholars have examined the topic of diversity in the Centennial or examined the interpretation and preservation of this history. Further research would benefit the Centennial sites and institutions and their visitors as it will help to share interpretive processes and explore funding sources.

### Conclusion

The modern interpretations of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition presented by historic sites, museums, and for the digital resources examined in this thesis are significant. They offer important historical narratives about race that help the public learn about the past and relate to the present. Balanced and fair interpretation is vital. It helps to support historic preservation practices that not only include the preservation of physical sites but the history of the people and experiences associated with the sites. The examination of the Centennial's history as it relates to the treatment of minority cultures and the coinciding historical events in the United States are also important.

If the current exhibits and interpretive processes are not updated or changed to reflect the issues of race, dated materials and narratives that only provide a partial view of the history of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition will continue to be presented. By incorporating the new exhibits and materials offered in this thesis, efforts would be made to present a fairer representation of all groups that developed, executed, and attended the Centennial Exhibition.

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121. Memorial Hall site tour September 13, 2013 and November 6, 2015.
122. Kolb, *Response To The Request For Expression Of Interest*, 6-7.
123. Memorial Hall site tour September 13, 2013 and November 6, 2015.
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135. Lord and Lord, *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*, 311-312.
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138. Bridal, *Effective Exhibit Interpretation and Design*, 8-12.
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