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*Cover photos:*
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*Top Right: Japanese American family at Utah internment camp.*
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*Bottom Right: The Allen-Roberts-Harris House, Raleigh, N.C. Photo by Willie J. Kelly.*
Confronting Contentious Pasts: The Challenges of Interpreting “Controversial” Subjects at America’s Historic Sites

Dwight Picciollo

I will begin with the assumption that we historic preservationists consider ourselves to be in the preservation and education business. This has certainly been true for the National Park Service. Education has been part of the mission of the NPS since its creation in 1916. Indeed, in 1917, at the national parks conference of that year, one entire day was devoted to the subject of education. Eighty years ago, park managers knew what we know today: We preserve places of importance to us because they have stories to tell and we have lessons to learn from those stories.

The underlying premise is that controversy is not something we necessarily seek out as we manage historic sites; controversy is something that results from preservation or interpretive actions and programs. We should not shy away from controversy, but embrace it. Historic sites, if they are to say anything of importance, will not build interpretive programs around the goal of affirmaing assumed truths, but the goal of encouraging the visiting public to think differently about what they thought they knew about the past and about how we understand the past, how history is constructed. Some topics are controversial precisely because they are important to us as a society, and historic sites should serve as public forums for the civil discussion and exploration of those topics.

The National Park Service has only recently begun to embrace that wonderful addition to historical literature we call the New Social History or the New American History—although it is now not so new. The fresh perspectives presented by new scholarship are often the target of well-meaning people who take offense as those unfamiliar perspectives clash with traditional historical beliefs and established historical interpretations.
Little Bighorn

The NPS has had some help along the way in handling new interpretations and new views on the American past. In 1991 Congress passed a law that forced the park service to approach the premier Custer shrine, then known as Custer Battlefield National Monument, from a broader intellectual perspective. Congress changed the name to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, mandated that the park present a more equitable and balanced interpretation of the battle, and directed the creation of a monument to the Indians who fell on that day in 1876. There was the expected outcry from the Custer buffs, but the general public understood the need for a fairer presentation of the event.

This congressional act led to a series of acts during the 1990s that forced the National Park Service to think more expansively about sites that speak to the darker side of the American experience. In quick succession, Congress established Manzanar National Historic site to memorialize the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site to remember the legal framework for segregation, and desegregation, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site which focuses on the massive resistance to Brown v. Board, and Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail to mark the culmination of the march toward voting rights by black Americans.

It is appropriate, of course, that these important places be added to our national collection of historic sites. The late Robin Winks, who served with distinction on the National Park System Advisory Board, eloquently defended the appropriateness of national recognition of these sites. "Education is best done with examples," he wrote. "These examples must include that which we regret, that which is to be avoided, as well as that..."
for which we strive. No effective system of education can be based on unqualified praise, for all education instructs people of the difference between moral and wanton acts and how to distinguish between the desirable and the undesirable. If this premise is correct, we cannot omit the negative lessons of history.”

**Slavery and War**

Slavery is another sensitive subject at historic sites, as Colonial Williamsburg and other places have discovered. Slavery is still considered “controversial” because traditionally this country has failed to directly confront its legacy. It is also a topic that historic sites can and should present with more directness and historical integrity. We should do this not to malign the country and its heroes, as the conservative right has suggested, but to understand the past (as well as those heroes) and the journey this society has made from then to now. That, it seems to me, is why we study the past; to understand, not to judge, not to feel smug about how far we have come, but simply to understand the past and how contemporary society has been, and continues to be, shaped by it.

Which leads me to the Civil War, another subject we as a society have failed to address in any meaningful manner. Civil War battlefields have traditionally focused on tactics and strategy, not on causes and outcomes. Certainly there was no discussion of causes during the centennial of the war. (Keep in mind that the centennial coincided with South’s massive resistance to the public school desegregation mandate of the **Brown v. Topeka Board of Education** Supreme Court decision and the beginnings of the modern Civil Rights movement with its sit-ins, Freedom rides, and marches.) But by the end of the century, it seemed appropriate to introduce the subject of causality to the visiting public. Or so it seemed to a gathering of NPS superintendents in Nashville in 1998.

They were mindful that the Civil War was a watershed event in the history of this country, one that resulted in the deaths of 620,000 men over a four-year period. How could these battlefields, they asked themselves, be at all meaningful to the MTV generation if the battles were not presented in a broader context; a context that included the coming of the war? And with the Civil War, if one is going to talk about causes, one must inevitably talk about the institution of slavery.

The outcry from the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Civil War Roundtable groups against this initiative to include a discussion of slavery at Civil War sites was intense and loud. So far, my office has received approximately 2,400 cards and letters protesting this decision. I even have a section of the Sons of Confederate Veterans webpage devoted to a letter I wrote the national headquarters explaining what the NPS was doing and why. They argued that we would dishonor the men who fought and fell at these places by talking about causes. We responded that the war was fought over important issues of the day and one can not understand the battles without understanding the issues. They argued that the war was not about slavery; we responded, based on current scholarship and original sources, that slavery was indeed the issue over which the South seceded. (I keep telling myself that the only bad press is no press!)

In pursuit of this effort, we received tremendous intellectual support from leading scholars of the Civil War and from the Organization of American Historians. Even
A Fuller Examination of History

Controversy in public education is not a recent phenomenon. It has been around for generations and will continue to infuse and excite our deliberations as we work to present our sites in meaningful ways. To that end, we should examine the source of controversy when it occurs and deal with it head on, being true to our mission as preservers and educators and true to the historical evidence as we understand it.

[W]e should examine the source of controversy when it occurs and deal with it head on, being true to our mission as preservers and educators and true to the historical evidence as we understand it.

The controversy over school histories is largely between defenders of doctrine and defenders of free inquiry, between those who do not believe that children can be trusted with the truth and those who believe that they can... A true American history need not rob us of the story of Paul Revere or the reverence for George Washington, but it will teach that personal anecdotes are not the life of a nation, that great men as well as mean men flourish in every generation... That was written in 1922 and is no less relevant today. Our job, then, as I see it, is to tell our stories as best we can, to tell a wide variety of stories, to present conflicting historical perspectives when doing so sharpens our vision of the past, to explain how we understand what we understand about the past (how history is constructed), and to encourage the public to join with us in a discussion of how our historic places represent the journey our country has made from then to now.
The Civil Rights Institute and historic district tell the story of Birmingham, Alabama’s Civil Rights struggle. Photo by Ed McMahon.

has been, at turns, an exciting and ignoble and inspiring journey, and one from which we and our visitors can learn much, for understanding our history in its various forms will enable us to better understand ourselves. To shy away from distasteful or shameful aspects of our past limits our ability to make sense of who we are, and significantly clouds our ability to determine where we want to go.

Dwight T. Pitcairn is the chief historian at the National Park Service. He is past president of the National Council on Public History and serves on the board of the American Association for State and Local History.

NOTES:
1 Robin Winks, “Sites of Shame: Disgraceful episodes of our past should be included in the park system to present a complete picture of our history,” National Parks (March/April 1994), 22-23.
Preserving the Sites and Telling the Story of Japanese American Internment

Amy Cole and Anne Guillian

Beginning in 1942, almost 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living along the west coast of the United States were rounded up and forced to leave behind their homes, businesses, and possessions for the bleak conditions of internment camps. For many years the history of the internment experience was not well known outside of the Japanese American community, but that is changing.

Most of the internees who were adults during the internment period are no longer living, and surviving internees who were children at the camps are widely scattered around the country. Families of former internees and local citizens who live near the internment camp sites have formed groups that are working to preserve the oral history and the places that tell the complex internment camp story. These groups share common goals of educating the public and preserving the camp sites, and common challenges such as interpreting archaeological sites, working with remote site locations, managing collections, and dealing with land ownership issues. Such groups can better achieve these goals and meet these challenges by exchanging information with each other and by making connections to the broader historic preservation movement.

Origins and Extent of Internment

Following the December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States government determined that the relocation of Japanese aliens and Japanese American citizens was justified as a military necessity as well as a way to mollify a perceived threat to national security and provide protection from anti-Japanese sentiment. The 1942 issuance of Executive Order 9066 empowered the Army to identify “exclusionary zones” from which all persons of Japanese ancestry would be removed, and a mass exodus was organized.
Camp populations ranged from approximately 7,000 to 18,000 people. Additionally, other Justice Department and Army facilities from Crystal City, Tex., to Bismarck, N.D., housed Japanese American internees as well as others of German and Italian ancestry.

and implemented by the Army and other federal agencies. Beginning in Seattle, Civilian Exclusion Orders were issued, giving residents six days to dispose of property and possessions, often at a discounted rate, and report to a collection point from which they were transferred to an “assembly center.” Assembly centers, run by the Wartime Civil Control Administration and located at sites such as the Tanforan and Santa Anita racetracks in California, temporarily housed internees until they could be transferred to a relocation center.

Ten “relocation centers,” operated by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), became semi-permanent homes in remote locations in seven states. (A note about terminology: Although “relocation center” is the term
used by the WRA, these sites are also historically accurately referred to as "internment camps," the term that will be used throughout this article. Many in the Japanese American community use the historically accurate term "concentration camps," defined as places where persons are detained or confined.

**Life at the Camps**

The camps, most surrounded by barbed wire and spread over thousands of acres, were constructed rapidly and cheaply. They were designed to function as largely self-sufficient communities, with areas for living, farming, administration, and security. The living conditions followed an Army model. Barracks were laid out in a block system, with each block having 10-14 barrack buildings with shared communal facilities for recreation, bathing, and eating. Each tarpaper-covered barrack was usually divided into four, one-room apartments, furnished with a source of heat and light, cots, blankets, and mattresses. Barracks afforded little privacy, were frequently too hot or too cold, and were nearly always dusty. Schools and churches were also built throughout the camps.

Internees improved their surroundings to make their conditions more palatable and to reflect their culture. They installed landscape features such as Japanese ponds and gardens, evidence of which survives today. Social activities such as dances, Scout troops, and art clubs helped break up the monotony of camp life. Blocks had elected leaders and the camps had community councils made up of internees who were liaisons to the WRA camp directors. While much of daily life was carried out within the camp confines, internees were permitted to leave to work on the camp farms, to collect landscape materials, and for recreation.

Cultural differences and questions of loyalty permeated interactions at the camps. Issei (immigrants from Japan) and Nisei (first-generation Japanese Americans) did not always see eye-to-eye on issues. Feelings about internment ran the gamut from cooperation and resignation to hostility and resentment.

Yet despite such feelings against the U.S. government and its internment policy, Japanese American young men volunteered directly from the camps to serve in the
United States military. The 100th battalion/442nd regiment composed of Japanese American soldiers serving in Europe was among the most highly decorated units in American history. Camps had honor rolls that recognized their children serving in the war and the casualties they suffered. For example, 63 Heart Mountain internees were killed or wounded in combat.

All adult internees were required to answer a questionnaire called “Application for Indefinite Leave Clearance.” It was designed to determine loyalty to the United States and used as a mechanism for approving internee resettlement away from both the west coast and the camps. Negative responses to Questions 27 and 28 of the form, which inquired specifically about loyalty to the United States, led to internees being segregated at the Tule Lake camp in California.

Differences between internees and camp administrators were magnified by the language barrier. There were numerous disturbances, strikes, and protests between internees and camp administrators over issues such as work hours and wages at Minidoka and the killing of an internee by a sentry at Topaz.

Closing the Camps

Following the conclusion of World War II, the camps began to close, with Tule Lake the last to close in March of 1946. The WRA provided internees with minimal resettlement assistance—$25 and a train ticket. Some internees returned to the West Coast while others settled in the states where they had been interned. They began to rebuild the lives they had enjoyed prior to 1942, while facing continuing prejudice. The camps were gradually disassembled, with most buildings demolished or moved. It is easy to identify barracks.
moved from Topaz to Delta, Utah, where they now serve as residential buildings. Camp land reverted to the federal agency that had previously owned it or was sold. Not long after the end of the war, the physical manifestations of the camps were not much more than archeological remains.

As the era of the camps came to a close, “no person of Japanese ancestry was ever convicted of any serious act of espionage or sabotage during the War.” (Confinement and Ethnicity, page 25). A final chapter to the internment story was added in the late 1980s when, in response to a decade of lobbying, Congress passed and President Ronald Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which bestowed a formal apology and paid $20,000 to each of the surviving internees.

Current Circumstances

Today each camp has unique circumstances concerning level of historic designation, related friends groups and preservation organizations, programs and activities, and site conditions and ownership.

Designation

Many of the sites related to internment have been evaluated for National Register, State Register, or National Historic Landmark eligibility. The National Park Service is now completing a National Historic Landmark Theme Study about Japanese Americans in World War II and is reevaluating several internment-related sites for National Historic Landmark eligibility.

A study completed by the National Park Service in 1989 identified Manzanar as retaining the most integrity of the 10 relocation camps and offering the best opportunities for interpretation of the government’s World War II evacuation and relocation program. In response to the study’s findings, in 1992 Congress designated Manzanar a National Historic Site and it is now a National Park Service unit. Site development has been underway for several years, and this fall an interpretive center will open in Manzanar’s historic auditorium. Minidoka Internment National Monument was designated by President Clinton in 2001 and was also added as unit of the National Park Service, which is currently preparing a management plan for the site.

The internment camps below are already listed in
Groups working to preserve the stories and the camp sites are at different levels of organizational maturity and have a variety of missions and supporters. They include:

- Amache Preservation Society & Denver Central Optimists — [www.amache.org](http://www.amache.org)
- Friends of Minidoka — [www.friendsofminidoka.org](http://www.friendsofminidoka.org)
- Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation — [www.heartmountain.org](http://www.heartmountain.org)
- Japanese American Citizens League, Arizona Chapter (Gila River) — [www.jacl.org](http://www.jacl.org)
- Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego and Colorado River Indian Tribes (Poston) — [www.jahssd.org](http://www.jahssd.org)
- Life Interrupted Project (Rohwer & Jerome) — [www.lifeinterrupted.org](http://www.lifeinterrupted.org)
- Manzanar Committee — [www.manzanarcommittee.org](http://www.manzanarcommittee.org)
- Topaz Museum Board — [www.topazmuseum.org](http://www.topazmuseum.org)
- Tule Lake Committee — [www.tulelake.org](http://www.tulelake.org)
- National Park Service (Manzanar & Minidoka) — [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

The National Register or as National Historic Landmarks or National Historic Sites:

- Amache: NR
- Heart Mountain: NR
- Manzanar: NHL, NHS
- Minidoka: NR, NHS
- Rohwer: NR
- Rohwer Cemetery: NHL
- Topaz: NR
- Tule Lake: NR, eligible

**Programs and Activities**

As an early recognition of the significance of internment, all of the camps had monuments or markers placed to commemorate their locations. These were frequently installed by groups of former internees, local chapters of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), veterans groups, or historical societies. Reunions or pilgrimages of former internees and their families have been held at the camp locations for many years. For example, the Tule Lake Committee has organized a biannual pilgrimage to Tule Lake since 1975, giving former internees an opportunity to return to the camp, reconnect with friends, and revisit the internment experience.

All of the groups recognize the need to educate the public about the story of internment. Educational activities target a range of age groups and levels of interest, from local school teachers bringing the story of internment to their classrooms to universities sponsoring national conferences. The Amache Preservation Society, composed of Granada High School students and teacher John Hopper, have researched the camp, completed site improvement and interpretation projects, and collected artifacts for a traveling exhibit and museum. Similar education programs are part of the work of the Topaz Museum Board and the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation as well. The Arizona Chapter of the JACL holds an annual workshop in Phoenix for teachers to learn ways to incorporate the history of Gila River into their curriculum. With major fund-
ing from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Public History Program has partnered with the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles to research the experiences of Japanese Americans in World War II in Arkansas, and educate the citizens of Arkansas and the nation about the two camps at Jerome and Rohwer.

**Partnerships**

Many traditional supporters of the camps, including former internees and their families, do not reside in the community where the camps are located. In some communities residents were opposed to the construction of camps there, and lingering local reactions range from hostile to apathetic (although in other places, supportive local citizens have spearheaded camp preservation efforts). These challenges are being overcome as groups work to find ways to form partnerships with broader constituencies including private landowners, government agencies, and Native American tribes. For example, The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) are working with the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego and former internees to develop plans to restore the remaining buildings at Poston and ultimately create a multicultural village for the CRIT and Nisei communities. The Poston Restoration Project pays tribute to the past while also providing economic development and cultural tourism opportunities for the present and future communities. The town of Granada, Colo., which owns Camp Anacche, is administering grants for an archeological study and site plan for that camp, and the town now also views the camp as a tourism and economic development asset.

**At Topaz Internment Camp, families lived in barracks constructed of pine planks covered with tarpaper, which provided little protection against the extreme weather. Photo courtesy of the Topaz Museum Board.**
Site Issues

Although oral histories, exhibits, and educational programs play a major role in telling the story of Japanese American internment, the full story cannot be understood without the sites. Even though the integrity of the camp sites varies, gaining control of the sites is also an important aspect of camp preservation groups’ work. Some groups, such as the Topaz Museum Board, own large parcels of their respective camps, while other groups have made the decision not to purchase property.

Site interpretation also poses a number of challenges. For the most part, the sites have few standing structures from the internment period, but many have significant surface archaeological features that can best be seen and understood by walking through the sites. This raises concerns about vandalism, theft, and control over visitor behavior. The sites are also all located in remote areas, many far from large population centers. That means they must be sought out by visitors as destinations, which requires marketing and tourism planning. At some locations, off-site museums or interpretive centers are being considered to educate visitors prior to sending them to see the actual sites.

Coordination Planning

In 1999 the Topaz Museum Board was awarded a Save America’s Treasures Preservation Planning Fund grant administered by the National Trust’s Mountains/Plains Office. The grant produced an archaeological site assessment and an interpretive plan. Trust staff in the Mountains/Plains, Western, and Southwest Offices realized that many of the camps were facing the same issues, and after discussing the idea with several camp groups, decided to develop a strategy to assist
the camp preservation groups as a whole.

The Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles provided the first venue for convening internment camp preservation groups. In November 2002 it hosted an All Camps Summit attended by hundreds of former internees. Several educational sessions focused on camp preservation activities and gave the groups a chance to exchange information and learn about what others were doing. It was also an opportunity to introduce preservation programs and services of the National Trust, statewide and local preservation organizations, the state historic preservation offices, and the National Park Service. While many of the camp groups had long been working on preservation activities, not all were connected to the larger preservation movement or the support it could bring to their efforts. The California Civil Liberties Public Education Project provided funding to convene a second meeting of camp preservation groups in August 2003 and additional framework for an All Camps Coalition was outlined.

From the connections made at these initial meetings, internment camp groups were able to access Preservation Services Fund grants for strategic planning and site assessments as well as technical assistance. An educational session at the 2003 National Preservation Conference in Denver featured speakers from the Tule Lake Committee and from the Life Interrupted Project at the University of Arkansas Little Rock. The Denver Central Optimists, who provide much support to activities at Amache, hosted a reception for those interested in preserving internment camps. Arkansas and the Japanese American Story, a conference sponsored by the University of Arkansas and the Japanese American National Museum, to be held in September 2004, will provide another opportunity for camp groups to share stories and continue to work toward developing a coalition.

Lessons/Conclusions

The story of Japanese American internment is complex. Internment was a source of shame for the Japanese American community for many years; only in the last 20-25 years have people begun to speak openly about it within the community, let alone outside of the community. It is a story that many people do not even know or do not know in detail, although public interest was stimulated by David Guterson's book, Snow Falling on Cedars. Finally, it is a story that has been misconstrued, and misunderstanding of the facts about internment contributes to continuing prejudice.

The sites of Japanese American internment camps present challenges because most of the buildings no longer exist. It is easy to infer a sense of significance from a stately courthouse, ornate church, or Victorian mansion, but more difficult to do so from a dry, barren landscape dotted with the foundations of buildings. Education, therefore, is an
extremely important step in the effort to preserve the camps. By learning the true story of internment, those who were unaware of or misinformed about this history are able to understand the significance of the camps and are more likely to support the efforts to preserve them. The story is most convincing when told by an individual who lived through internment, but especially those who were adults at the time, are elderly, time is of the essence.

An inclusive planning process, although challenging, is also integral to the preservation of the camps. Given the remote locations and lack of former internee populations in the surrounding areas, it is important that new communities and groups take an interest in the preservation and stewardship of the sites. Strategic planning sessions that involve stakeholders with conflicting opinions and different cultural perspectives are more productive when facilitated by people who understand the complexities and have the skills and sensitivity to foster collaboration.

The National Trust helped fund a strategic planning workshop for the Poston Restoration Project, which included the participation of former internees, members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes, preservation professionals, and local residents. The workshop was facilitated by a Japanese American woman who uses words and illustrations to graphically record ideas, concepts, and relationships on large murals. This organizational development tool is new to many in historic preservation, but it was crucial to stimulating big-picture thinking and collaboration among diverse people now committed to a common goal.

A strong relationship has developed between the established preservation community and the Japanese American internment camp community. These two groups, which several years ago were not very familiar with each other's work, are now partners on many projects and the distinction between the two communities is disappearing. One of the reasons for the success has been the willingness of both groups to educate and learn from each other.

Much has been said about the need to broaden the preservation movement and increase the awareness and preservation of America's diverse historic places. Often
the strategy used to meet that goal is to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to "join us" by attending preservation conferences or submitting a nomination for an award or inclusion on an endangered list. However, it is equally important for us to "join them" by participating in the activities led and organized by diverse communities that might not meet the traditional definition of "preservation." By participating in the All Camps Summit, the organized preservation community was able to educate camp groups about available resources while gaining a better understanding of the story of internment, the significance of the camp sites, the layers of complexity, and the different approaches to historic preservation—all of which helped form a solid foundation for a sustainable relationship which will further camp preservation efforts into the future.

Amy Cole is a senior program officer and regional attorney in the Mountain/Plains Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Anne Castillon is a field representative in the Western Office of the National Trust. Both are working closely with internment camp groups and efforts to organize an All Camps Coalition.

The principle resource for this article was Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites by Jeffrey F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord and Richard W. Lord (University of Washington Press, 2002). It provides a comprehensive overview of internment and all of the related sites. Another source was Report to the President: Japanese-American Internment Sites Preservation (Department of the Interior, 2000).

Topaz Internment Camp, located about 140 miles south of Salt Lake City, opened September 11, 1942. The camp housed about 8,000 internees. Photo courtesy of the Topaz Museum Board.

Johanna Miller Lewis

The preservation of America’s historic sites, and the resulting visitation to them, has provided very public means to educate millions of Americans and foreigners about U.S. history. And in much the same way that the practice of scholarly history gradually expanded beyond the study of politics, economics, and wars to embrace “ordinary people and everyday lives,” historic preservation has broadened to include the structures and sites associated with the less positive, and often painful, episodes in the nation’s past. Recent additions to the list of National Historic Landmarks document the federal government’s denial of civil rights to various groups of U.S. citizens, as well as the struggle of those groups to end such practices. The Shelley house in St. Louis, for instance, documents one family’s fight in the landmark 1948 case of Shelley v. Kraemer for the right to live in the home of their choosing despite their race. Manzanar War Relocation Camp in California bears witness to the U.S. government’s incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.

A desperate need exists to take on these difficult historical topics in the public arena, despite the fact that some people may want to avoid such divisive subjects. Refusing to acknowledge the built and natural environments associated with the negative aspects of U.S. history only adds to the nation’s ignorance of the past. And yet, for preservationists, answering the call to preserve controversial historic sites and teach the public about what occurred at those sites is 1) never easy, 2) extremely stressful, 3) periodically regrettable, but 4) always worthwhile and educational in the end. Small wonder why so many sites remain “lost” to history!

I’ve been involved with two such projects as a public historian—the creation of the Central High Museum, Inc., in conjunction with the Fortieth Anniversary Commemoration of the 1957 Desegrega-

...
A desperate need exists to take on these difficult historical topics in the public arena, despite the fact that some people may want to avoid such divisive subjects.

I've learned some important lessons from this work that I would like to share with historic preservation advocates, civic leaders, elected officials, and community members who are undertaking what may be difficult and controversial history projects.

Be prepared for the fact that projects dealing with the collective memory of a community, or using unconventional approaches to explore "known" historical topics, frequently may take years to get underway and may suffer many false starts.

It is easy to recognize the educational value of contentious history projects and the potential they bring for reconciliation in a community. The difficulty comes in the reality of dealing with such topics. Both projects that I was involved with at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock failed to see action for years after they were first proposed.

One simple reason for this rests with human nature: Visionary people do not always possess the necessary skills to plan and carry any preservation project (not just controversial ones) to fruition. Another reason people will back away from controversial topics is that, as in the case of Central High School, the actual event and its legacy still play a prominent and divisive role in the community. Lastly, the politicization or revision of a topic—even one without a reputation as being controversial—will scare away supporters who may deem the topic worthy but find the approach distasteful. The potential debate over an exhibition title from the Japanese American National Museum that documented the U.S. government's treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II—"America's Concentration Camps"—was enough to warn at least two prospective partner institutions in Little Rock away from the project.

So the first lesson is: If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

When getting started, think carefully about the right partner organizations or sponsors for potentially controversial projects.

State or local government-funded museums and cultural organizations frequently will shy away from topics involving mistreatment of certain groups because of the controversy and political fallout generated by racial issues. For instance, none of the state-run museums in Arkansas had ever addressed the 1957 Central High desegregation crisis.

Financial help may be available from agencies of the federal government such as the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, or the National Park Service, which don't have to worry about the local political ramifications of funding con-
trroversial projects. Still, navigating the maze of writing grant proposals, finding matching funds, and documenting historic significance can be a challenge for local organizations, especially young ones. In addition, local nonprofits may not want to accept funding from the federal government for the fear of losing interpretive control of “their” history.

The community planning group that originally worked on the Central High School Museum shuddered at the thought of receiving money from the state of Arkansas or the National Park Service because of such concerns—but fundraising was not their responsibility. Two years later, however, the board of Central High Museum, Inc., was thrilled that Congress passed legislation making the museum and school a unit of the National Park Service. That’s because two years of operating as a private nonprofit (with annual fundraisers and a bookstore to provide revenue) had depleted virtually all of the funds raised for general operating support.

In other situations, groups welcome help and funding from state and local government agencies, but fail to recognize the requirements that come with that help. In the 1990s I successfully nominated the home of Civil Rights heroine Daisy Bates, mentor to the Little Rock Nine, for National Historic Landmark status. A local nonprofit dedicated to restoring and preserving the home then became more concerned with getting money they were eligible for from the National Park Service and the matching funds from a fundraiser to fix up the house than they were about any issues of interpretation or following the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

The lesson here: Get the project started, and as the potential success of the project becomes evident, appropriate types of support will become apparent. When dealing with entrenched “stakeholders” of a particular historic topic (especially if they participated in the event), realize that for all of their good intentions, they will be biased (if you’re lucky) and/or have a political agenda (if you’re unlucky).

Everyone can get emotional over controversial topics, especially when the historical event has to do with laws or policies that have deprived citizens of their rights as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. Any organization taking up such a project must be prepared for its members not to agree on everything, or anything! The group must be prepared to practice patience and tolerance at all times, and having a neutral (or at least calm) discussion facilitator can be a wise addition to the group.

For instance, the community planning committee for the Central High School Museum frequently argued about whether “outsiders” could really understand what happened in Little Rock in 1957. Exactly who was considered an outsider varied from anyone not originally from Arkansas, to anyone not alive in 1957, to anyone not originally from the South who was not alive in 1957. I was able to make the case that if the planning committee didn’t think any outsider could understand the Central High crisis, they really shouldn’t be opening a museum.

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When the Central High Museum, Inc., board asked me to become the historian and project manager for the museum I never suspected how many groups of stakeholders existed. They included supporters of now-deceased Governor Orval Faubus, white students who attended Central High in the fall of 1957 (split into factions that accepted desegregation because it was the law and those who were vehemently opposed to it because it tarnished their own high school experience), the nine black students who desegregated the school that same fall, Daisy Bates and the local and national NAACP, the Little Rock police, Arkansas National Guard members, and soldiers from the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne unit. Each group's perspective of the event varied considerably. In a situation like this, it is important to treat everyone with respect and to listen carefully to their story from the beginning.
When considering the opinions of various stakeholders, do not overlook what may be the most important group of all—the general public. The staff at the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution learned this lesson with the infamous Enola Gay exhibit. Drawing on new research from the federal government and the military, the exhibit team sought to revise the commonly accepted version of history that dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was justified because it spared the lives of countless American soldiers assigned to the invasion of Japan. Historical documentation existed to support the new interpretation that dropping the bomb was not necessary because the Japanese were close to capitulating anyway. Unfortunately, the exhibit team failed to solicit feedback from the prospective audience—which included World War II veterans and their families. Consequently, the exhibit team unknowingly created a hostile environment with the public, dooming the exhibit. And, the greater the number of people who have been affected by the event or topic under examination, such as all the Americans who lived through World War II, the quicker a project's demise if you displease them.

Even terminology can stir emotions. With the Life Interrupted project, for example, disagreements arose over what to call the U.S. government's actions toward Japanese Americans living on the West Coast during World War II. The most historically accurate terms for the War Relocation Authority camps and those individuals who lived in them are “concentration camps” and “inmates” or “prisoners.” In fact, historian Roger Daniels has made a solid and compelling case for using these terms. Yet the majority of Americans use and recognize the terms “internment camps” and “internees.” Using others can both perplex and anger Americans not familiar with the story. My job as a public historian is to educate as many people as possible about this egregious chapter in our nation's history—not to scare them off. The compromise? In short speeches and interviews about the project, I use the familiar terminology, i.e., internment camps. In all written materials and longer speeches and interviews, however, I explain why the familiar terminology is historically incorrect and why the more accurate terminology is appropriate.

Lesson learned: Historians may be accurate but they write for an academic audience, not the general public.

Make the project “double” by getting help from the best sources possible.

The key to making any project successful, and especially a controversial one, is to obtain assistance whenever and whenever possible. Accumulating support from many organizations will increase the public profile of your project and show that more than one group is concerned about, and has a vested interest in, having your project succeed.

In seeking support, look beyond the traditional sources of assistance, donate money, or contribute to the project in some way. I had a lawyer volunteer to review the State of Texas charter for the project. He did not accept payment and was willing to assist me for free.

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Make the project "doable" by getting help from the best sources possible.

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In seeking support, look beyond the traditional sources of money (especially local, state, or federal governmental assistance) and recognize that donations do not have to be money to have real value to your project. Donations of professional services and materials can make a big difference toward a successful outcome.

Those of you who are used to working in the nonprofit arena know that having a lawyer or accountant on the organization's board of directors can cut down significantly on professional service fees. Having members who have experience in planning—charting a course for an organization's short and long-term goals—is also essential for fairly new boards, especially if there is no professional staff. State humanities councils and local foundations frequently can be great sources of information, professional assistance, and preliminary funding for controversial projects.

Planning grants provide the opportunity to get organized and develop a course of action. They can also help you to gauge community interest in the project at that specific time by providing funding for consultants, facilitators, and space and resources to hold meetings with stakeholders. Even more important, positive results from planning grants

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will encourage other potential funders to make an investment in your organization’s activities. Every large project I’ve worked on greatly benefited from planning grants. Successful completion of the planning phase with a roadmap on how to proceed with the project leads to additional funding for implementation of various goals mentioned in the plan. Another lesson: Thinking big is great, but starting small is realistic.

One frequently overlooked but excellent resource for difficult projects is the local or nearby college or university—especially if the institution has a program in museum studies, historic preservation, or public history. Working with faculty and students in an applicable scholarly field will give the project two very important qualities: an imprimatur of intellectual honesty and academic freedom of speech. On the Central High Museum project my graduate students in a museum interpretation class completed almost all of the necessary research in both primary and secondary sources for me to write the exhibit script (with my graduate assistant, Laura Miller) for the introductory exhibit in the Visitor Center. In addition, numerous graduate assistants and graduate and undergraduates interns created interpretive programming and administrative policies, and even implemented the retail operation for the site. Such projects are the ideal: The organization gets professional help for free or at a deeply discounted rate and the students get the all-important hands-on experience.

Having academic administrators and faculty involved in the Central High Museum and in Life Interrupted, as well as outside scholars whenever possible, has provided a public forum for discussing controversial issues. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock has hosted speakers, meetings, and workshops in which scholarly debate has thrived—demonstrating to the public that civil discourse over emotional issues is possible. Such events also help the community understand the vast complexities of presenting such topics to the general public.

My last piece of advice for projects dealing with divisive events is this:

Do not attempt to sugarcoat your message. Recognize the controversy and face it head on; honesty is the best policy.

In 1996, just as the Central High Museum project was getting underway, some board members nominated Central High School to be on the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. They believed the publicity generated by the list would help raise money for renovations desperately needed at the historic high school, which is still in use as a school. What the civic leaders did not factor into their decision was that the public perception outside of Arkansas of what happened at the school in 1957 could reflect badly on Little Rock almost 40 years later. When the list was announced in May 1996, instead of receiving donations for the school’s renovations, the museum board received quite a few letters damning the people of Arkansas for allowing the school to deteriorate, indicating that they must be ashamed of their history. This was a most ironic turn of events, given that the board was dedicated to showing the public that what happened at Central High School in 1957 was not a national disgrace but a monumental victory for the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law.

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Our country's history is not always pretty. Unfortunate events occur and people get hurt, and important lessons are learned. Ignoring our history is easy to do, until we pay the price of repeating it.

Joanna Miller Lewis is professor and chair of history at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She is a project director for Life Interrupted and president of Central High Museum, Inc.

Life Interrupted will come to fruition September 23-26, 2004, in Little Rock with eight exhibit openings, a documentary premier, and a conference, "Camp Connections: A Conversation about Civil Rights and Social Justice."

For more information see:
- www.lifeinterrupted.org
- www.jamm.org

For more on Central High Museum see:
- http://home.swbell.net/chmuseum
- www.nps.gov/chcm/index.htm
Reflecting Community Diversity at the Local Level

More than 20 years ago the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) began a determined effort to become more thoroughly inclusive in its stewardship of Raleigh’s historic resources. Only a handful of its then 70 local historic landmarks were designated for their African American significance, in a community whose demographic make-up is 27 percent African American. The commission resolved to work in partnership with African American community leaders to chart a path in its programs toward a more balanced reflection of the community’s diversity.

The Pledge

The focus for this goal was a project to conduct a comprehensive architectural survey of African American properties. This was suggested by Father Arthur Calloway, a member of the Raleigh City Council and rector of St. Ambrose Episcopal Church, a longstanding African American congregation in the city. The idea galvanized the RDHC to action. The commission passed a resolution to undertake the project, and began a period of evaluation and planning. The commission made a report and recommendation to the city council, which, in turn, on September 16, 1986, officially requested that the commission become the chief coordinator of a study of black historic properties in Raleigh.

In hindsight, the importance of this statement of organizational commitment cannot be underestimated. The project would serve to “make up lost ground.” As it turned out, it would also require a long period of sustained investment of organizational resources. Three years of evaluation, planning, and financial resource development were required to initiate the project, which would then take another seven years to complete.

The Players: A Commitment to Diversity

One of the most powerful
manifestations of the commission’s commitment to diversity is seen in its own membership profile. Simply put, the RHDC mirrors the community in its composition. It is the policy of the Raleigh City Council that its appointed boards and commissions reflect the demographic make-up of the community. This goal is not always easy to achieve, but the 12-member commission is very proud of its record over the last two decades of ensuring that at least three members are minority representatives and that gender is balanced.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG) in the federal preservation program, the city is also charged under CLG guidelines to ensure that its designated preservation commission is made up of persons that “have a demonstrated interest, competence, or knowledge in historic preservation” and to “make a good faith effort to appoint professional members from [preservation-related] disciplines.” Add to the mix a local ordinance requirement that one-third of the commission membership be made up of persons who live or own property within a historic overlay district, and it is clear that it has taken great effort to identify and recruit for city council consideration potential members who “fit the slots.”

Living with a major project for such a long period of time also had the salutary effect of integrating the commission’s concerns for diversity into its lifestyle, so to speak. Working and personal relationships were established between the commission and the community. The commission’s governance and strategic planning were infused with consideration of issues of diversity. This has helped to create an organizational culture today that ensures that the breadth of the community’s diversity is part and parcel of every decision the commission makes.
The Project

The African American Studies Project, as it was finally developed, consisted of two components—oral history and architectural survey—and was completed in three phases: planning, research, and education. The project was primarily consultant- and volunteer-based, with policy oversight by the African American Studies Committee composed of commission and community representatives and with administration by RHDC staff.

The planning phase established the oral history methodology and identified eight traditional African American communities to be surveyed. For the oral history component, 56 interviews were conducted by volunteers trained in four workshops held in different community locations as well as by paid consultants. The architectural survey documented more than 1,300 buildings and included preparation of a National Register nomination for a district embracing some 650 properties, the largest district in Raleigh to that date.

The education phase consisted of the publication of 2,000 copies of Culture Town, a 180-page hardcover book, and production of a 22-minute cassette tape, Culture Town: Life in Raleigh's African American Communities, which is provided with the book. The cassette tape provides additional background on the project and gives listeners a flavor of the oral history interviews.

Funding was garnered from a broad array of sources. Some $12,500 in seed money came from commission reserves of city funds (unspent funds which the commission had inadvertently failed to return at the end of each fiscal year). Funding totaling $38,650 for planning and research of the oral history project and $51,350 for the architectural survey came from the RHDC's reserve of city funds and from a National Trust Preservation Services Fund grant, the North Carolina Humanities Committee, the city council's Contingency Fund, CLG grant funds received through the state historic preservation office, the city planning department budget, and in-kind donations. The education projects required $64,650 of prepublication funding which was obtained through grants, corporate contributions, and loans, with $57,000 recovered through book sales for loan repayment.

The commission brought the publication to the attention of the Wake County Public School System, which purchased copies for every school library in the county. The Wake County Public Library also purchased a sizable number of copies and distributed them among its branches. In addition, the commission donated a copy of the oral history collection of interview tapes and transcripts to the Mollie Huston Lee Collection at the county's Richard B. Harrison Library branch. Mrs. Lee established the Harrison Library in 1935, before which time there were no library services for blacks in Raleigh, and amassed a remarkable collection of "books by and about the Negro." When the countywide system was established, this collection was maintained in her name.

The Program to Designate

Armed with the data from the architectural survey, the commission's research committee has made designation of African American properties one of the priority thematic categories of the RHDC's ongoing programs. Each year the commission evaluates its priority list for designation, and makes decisions regarding...
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Both National Register and local designations have been pursued. Along with nominations for individual properties and districts, the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form has been used to recognize the remaining historic resources in communities that no longer retain sufficient integrity for district nominations.

The work continues today. Two traditionally African American neighborhoods are being evaluated at

Washington School, built in 1923-1924, is Raleigh's first African American public high school. Photo courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.
Putting Women in Their Place

Author Harriet Beecher Stowe, reformer Jane Addams, and women's rights leader Susan B. Anthony are all regarded as extraordinary women. In Am, women have to look to sites associated with them to find examples of women who serve as role models and demonstrate that individuals can make a difference. However, many historic sites do not include women in their tours and programs, and other sites associated with women are being lost because they are not considered "historically significant."

Why be concerned? Because women makeup more than 50 percent of the population, and they have preserved our historic sites in the past and continue to maintain many of them today. Because they visit our sites with their children and with other school children. Because they shop on our historic main streets. Therefore, we need to tell compelling stories that are relevant and have a message for them. And thanks to the work of historians in the last...
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Author Harriet Beecher Stowe, reformer Jane Addams, and women's rights leader Susan B. Anthony are all regarded as extraordinary women and as a result, historic sites associated with them have been saved. Here, women serve as role models and demonstrate that individuals can make a difference. However, many historic sites do not include women in their tours and programs, and other sites associated with women are being lost because they are not considered "historically significant."

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At historic sites where women played a prominent role in American history, the task is easy. But this is only a small percentage of places. Most sites focus on the life, struggles, and achievements of men (for example, Mt. Vernon and Gettysburg). These sites do not address the role of women because their contributions are seen as irrelevant or their history is unknown. If women are included, they are generally cast into the stereotypical roles of charming homemaker or radical feminist. Changing the story to include women is not easy but the rewards are great, as in the following two examples that place women at the center of economic life and politics.

Economics

Interpreters at most historic sites discuss how people made
Dear Sweetheart:

The Letters of Howard and Margaret Hall,
Brucemore in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, developed "Dear Sweetheart," a theatrical performance emphasizing the lives of both women and men, thus presenting an integrated perspective of the past. Photo courtesy of Brucemore.

Using correspondence between Margaret and Howard Hall, Brucemore in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, developed "Dear Sweetheart," a theatrical performance emphasizing the lives of both women and men, thus presenting an integrated perspective of the past. Photo courtesy of Brucemore.

a living during a particular time. In talking about the economy, the focus is mainly on the activities performed by the male head of the household, such as farming, ranching, or business, and how that work mostly supported the family and community. Women, on the other hand, made contributions to the family by producing items for household consumption, such as clothes and food. These items were usually not traded or sold outside the home. In other words, women have been assumed to play a relatively minor role in economic life beyond their own households.

However, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's book, A Midwife's Tale, challenged and changed this view when it was first published in 1990. Martha Ballard was a midwife and healer. For 27 years, from 1785 to 1812, she kept a diary recording her household chores, work as a midwife, and other activities. Although historians had long known about the diary, they had dismissed it because they felt they had obtained all of the information they needed. That was very little because they believed the entries did not seem to connect to the larger world of men's activities—economics and politics. Like other diaries of farm women, Martha's diary was a repetition of domestic chores and activities. But for Ulrich it was in that very repetition that she discovered much about Martha Ballard, economics, and community life.

In Kennebec, Maine, where Martha lived, a merchant's account book survives from the same period and provides information on the economy of the town. Almost all entries, including those for the Ballards, are listed under the name of a male head of household. More importantly, the entries on the credit side of the book consist of mainly male commodities such as fish, furs, and lumber. Historians naturally concluded that Kennebec women played a relatively minor role in the economy. Studying the account book, though, Ulrich noticed that flaxseed, a plant used to make cloth, was sold. But the merchant's book did not have any entries for textile products. By using Martha's diary, however, Ulrich was able to learn what had happened to the flaxseed. Martha lists in her diary which family members planted, weeded, and harvested the flax. She also names the men who turned and broke it and the female neighbors who helped her with the time-consuming process of combing, spinning, reeling, boiling, spinning, warping, quilting, weaving, bucking, and bleaching that turned the seed into finished material.

Thus, the account book told historians a great deal about the male economy of the 18th century, but Martha's diary revealed more. It revealed the work and trade of women—work and trade absent from a merchant's book—and how both men and women worked together to sustain the economy of this 18th-century community.

Politics

Politics provides another example where it is believed that women aided their husbands, brothers, and sons but were never directly involved until the 20th century when women gained the right to vote.

Catherine Allgor's Patriot's Parlor Politics changed this assumption. Through careful analysis of documents, material culture, architecture, and spaces, Allgor was able to place women as political actors in the forming of the new federal government in Washington, D.C.

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For example, Allgor shows that there is much more to know about Dolley Madison than her role as the hospitable First Lady who refurnished the White House and saved Gilbert Stuart’s portrait of George Washington before the British burned the executive mansion in 1812. Dolley, in fact, was an astute politician. She turned the White House into a powerful political institution and gave women a voice in national politics.

Objects reflect economic, political, and social values. Although the White House was completed at the time the Madisons moved in, its appearance already suffered from a lack of funding, a sign of indifference by politicians and the public. When James Madison agreed to let Dolley renovate the White House (a task generally performed by men at the time), she was well aware of the importance of furnishings to symbolize a nation’s greatness.

For Dolley, patriotism preceded personal taste. Rather than a landscape painting, a portrait of George Washington greeted visitors in the state dining room. In the drawing room, guests sat on furniture with the insignia of the United States. And visitors no doubt noticed that the Greek-revival interiors linked the democracy of the new...
Instead, she hosted large social events. In this setting, men and women conversed freely with each other and the president. If women could not debate issues in Congress they could at the White House. Women were part of politics.

Think of the possibilities. Here are two examples where it was believed that nothing more could be learned about women in a particular time period and place. But through research and reexamination of old sources in addition to studying unconventional sources such as material culture, these historians discovered everyday women making significant contributions to American history.

Learning from New Sources

Discovering women's stories, however, takes time and money. Time is needed to conduct research. Many historic places do not allow enough time for thorough research because resources are limited, and other tasks, such as preserving and maintaining a site, giving tours, coordinating special events, providing school programs, fundraising, and marketing, often seem to take precedence. Money is also needed to conduct research—for photocopies, travel, or consultants. Although it is the hardest to justify especially when the outcome is unknown, it does pay substantially in the long run. Research can strengthen an institution's credibility, shatter myths, and include overlooked people into the story.

Researching women's history requires a variety of approaches since few women left documents. Fortunately, most historic places have an advantage. Historians can study documents, but also architecture, space, and objects—resources readily available at historic sites. Women's stories can be found in the architecture and space of a historic house, building, or structure. They can also be found in neighborhoods and the surrounding landscape. And stories abound in objects, such as quilts, domestic goods, and photographs. For instance, designs in housing in the late 1940s show how built space helped to define and maintain women's roles in the home. During the Cold War, the threat of communism and nuclear war generated great insecurity and anxiety. Some government leaders believed that the United States' superiority over the Russians lay not in weapons but
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For instance, designs in housing in the late 1940s showed how built space helped to define and maintain women’s roles in the home. During the Cold War, the threat of communism and nuclear war generated great insecurity and anxiety. Some government leaders believed that the United States’ superiority over the Russians lay not in weapons but in the ideal of the suburban house where a woman and men played their distinct gender roles of full-time housewife and successful business husband; the opposite of a communist life in which both women and men worked and left their children to strangers in day care.

The postwar house helped to fulfill this ideal. New homes included open floor plans, the kitchen at the center of the house, and the utilization of glass in the form of sliding glass windows and glass walls. This new arrangement in space ensured that the housewife was at the constant center of activity and easily in reach of family members almost all of the time. From her position in the kitchen, the housewife knew what was happening in and outside her home. She could watch and hear her children playing in the playroom or backyard; she could attend to her husband and guests in the dining room and living room; or family members and guests could join her in the dining/kitchen area to talk, eat, watch television, or play games. She knew the whereabouts of her family, too, since the kitchen served as the main passageway to and from the bedrooms to the playroom, living room, dining
A 1940s floor plan by Sewall Smith illustrates the open plan, centrally located kitchen, and utilization of large glass windows on the back side of the house that allowed the housewife to supervise activities throughout the home. From "House for Children," Sunset, December 1946.

However, many historic places can make simple changes now to improve the interpretation of women roles. First, dispel popular myths, especially the “separate spheres” ideology. Historic houses tend to reinforce the myth of confinement in the domestic sphere for white, middle-class women and overlook activities inside and outside the home. In this myth, the woman becomes the charming homemaker, a retiring woman, or an invalid. Sites must get past the categories of public and private realms and keep in mind that women shared the same physical spaces as men. Women worked. Women participated in politics. Women attended school. And women participated in and shaped society.

Another myth to dispel is that technology is always progressive. In More Work For Mother, Ruth Schwartz Cowan demonstrates how technological advances often freed men from household labor yet increased women’s work in the home. For example, with the introduction of the cast-iron stove, men no longer had to cut, haul, and split wood for the open hearth. Although the stove made it easier for women to cook, they were now expected to cook more and varied dishes which increased a woman’s time in the kitchen. Unlike the fireplace, the stove also had to be cleaned at the end of the day and polished regularly to prevent rusting—a job considered to be the woman’s.

Second, do not create stereotypes. Stereotypical roles are generally made through the use of euphemisms which conceal the truth. Susan Smith was not Mr. Smith’s “little lady” or “better half.” These euphemisms hide the type of relationship the Smiths had. Instead, when referring to a woman use her name or refer to her as “his wife.”

Third, avoid the passive voice. Do not say, “Children were fed in the nursery” but rather “Susan Smith fed the children in the nursery.” Give credit where credit is due because things do not happen on their own.

Fourth, stop universalizing statements. Do not tell visitors that if they happen to be traveling by the Smith’s mansion in the 1850s, they would be invited in for dinner or to stay the night because the Smiths were known far and wide for their hospitality. In reality, the Smiths would not have invited “everyone” into their home. Women traveling alone were certainly not welcomed in the Smith’s home.

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Finally, do not "add-on." Because historic places want to include women they add-on a sentence or short story about women into the tour or program. This only confuses the visitor and does not tell the real story about women's lives. Integrate women into the story of the site but do not leave her in the kitchen or nursery. Women occupied all spaces of a home and the outdoors. Therefore, a woman's story can be found in every room and in the landscape.

**Preservation of Historic Places**

Historic places can change a visitor's attitude about women.
This new clothes wringer not only promised to ease the drudgery of laundry but also allow the wife more time to fix hearty meals for her husband. Technology, however, is not always progressive. Many times, technological advances freed men yet increased women's work in the home.

and preservation. Many visitors believe that historic sites should present pleasant, interesting stories and provide a place to bring relatives and guests. Historic places need to do more. Visitors need to be encouraged at the end of the tour or program to look anew at a range of places that deserve preservation in their own community, and that takes courage and boldness. When it comes to women's history, it can be done in two ways.

First, the preservation of "great homes"—George Washington's Mt. Vernon, Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House—was often the work of women who saw the need to save, maintain, and open the site to the public. These sites would not be here today if women had not stepped in. Historic places "saved" by women need to tell this story when women played such an important role.

Second, the story of women is not only found in "great homes" but also in everyday houses and boardinghouses, small town businesses and textile mills, parks and campgrounds, main streets and malls, and clubhouses. Visitors need to know that only by preserving these places as well can the whole story of women be told.

Mary A. van Balgooy is the collections manager in the Office of the Curator at the Supreme Court of the United States. This article is based on her presentation at the 2003 annual meeting of the American Association for State and Local History.

1 Mary A. van Balgooy, "Women and Domestic Architecture in Cold War America: Cliff May's California Ranch House Designs" (master's thesis, Claremont Graduate University, 2001).