The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, a non-profit organization, inspires individuals to enjoy and share a life of learning enriched by human experience across time and around the world. Through programs and partnerships, the PHC fosters the sharing of stories and ideas—to increase understanding and a large vision of human life, community, and possibility. Visit the PHC website www.pahumanities.org.

Activities and Programs in 2010

The PHC invites PHA members to participate in federal advocacy efforts as it communicates with the administration of President Barrack Obama and the 111th Congress, particularly on behalf of the National Endowment for the Humanities. (The PHC represents Pennsylvania in the Federal-State Partnership of
the NEH, which includes state councils in all fifty-six states and territories.)

The PHC will offer opportunities for local visits to U.S. Representatives to
showcase the value of history and other humanities disciplines. It will also
organize visits to Washington for “Humanities on the Hill” and “Humanities
Advocacy Day” early in 2010, building upon visits made early in 2009.

Recent visits for “Humanities Advocacy Day” have engaged such aca-
demic leaders as David Shumway, Director, Humanities Institute, Carnegie
Mellon University; and Marica Tacconi, Director, Institute for the Arts and
Humanities, Penn State University.

The PHC also invites PHA members to consider board membership. In
recent years, historians have played leadership roles on the council. Randall
M. Miller, Professor of History, Saint Joseph’s University, served as Chair,
and Michael J. Birkner, Professor of History, Gettysburg College, served as
Program Committee Chair. The PHC continues to have a number of board
members with strong interests in Pennsylvania history. Lynne Conner, who
recently left the University of Pittsburgh to become Chair of Theater and
Dance at Colby College, is the author of Pittsburgh in Stages: Two Hundred
Years of Theatre (2007). Judith O’Toole, Director/CEO of the Westmoreland
Museum of American Art, led the development of Born of Fire (2006), a
multi-media project on Pittsburgh’s steel heritage, featuring a book written
by Curator Barbara L. Jones, with commentary by Edward Muller and
Joel Tarr; a CD by The NewLanders, a southwestern Pennsylvania folk
group; and documentary in DVD co-produced by the Westmoreland and
Bill Mosher. New board member Margaret Jerrido, past Head of the Urban
Archives in the University Libraries at Temple University, recently consulted
on the Jubilee Project, gleaning records from African American churches
in Philadelphia. Another new board member, Todd Pfannestiel, Associate
Professor of History, Clarion University and the author of Rethinking the
Red Scare (2003), is working with a group of undergraduates on the history
of the university. Todd also is co-author of Creamed Onions for Supper: The
Great Depression in Jefferson County (2001), published by the Jefferson County
Historical Society, for which Todd has been consulting scholar on several
high-quality projects.

The PHC also invites PHA members to join in the exciting new
research, teaching, and public history on the Civil War in Pennsylvania
now being generated in advance of the national observance of the 150th
anniversary in 2011–15. Anniversary planning in the Commonwealth is
being led by the Pennsylvania Heritage Society, working with and on
behalf of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and with other partner organizations. PHC’s special roles are (1) to engage scholars; (2) foster innovative public humanities programming; and (3) reach under-served regions—outside the major cities and Civil War Trails—with program resources.

Historians have opportunities to develop interpretive themes; to identify national experts to invite to Pennsylvania; and to explore ways for colleges and universities to engage faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in special research, courses, and projects linking campuses to surrounding communities.

Statewide working groups have been developing such activities as an interactive website, launched in summer 2009, to be a resource for scholars and their students as well as the general public. A mobile traveling museum, a “Civil War Road Show,” will travel throughout the state, creating “StoryCorps” opportunities and sparking local programming in scores of communities. There is a project to unearth letters, documents, and images from collecting institutions and individuals, digitize them, and make them accessible online. There are publications and education resources for K-12 teachers. A large-scale “blockbuster” exhibition will be presented in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh, led by the National Constitution Center.

Finally, the PHC invites PHA members to consider participating in public humanities programs strongly rooted in the Pennsylvania experience—as project scholars in PHC grants or as Commonwealth Speakers. The PHC has a special interest in projects or presentations that expand interpretation and audiences at historic sites, societies, and museums; or which bring history to new audiences at public libraries and arts organizations, and at community sites that attract diverse audiences, including young people and seniors, not reached by cultural institutions. Please visit www.pahumanities.org for guidelines and news of special initiatives.

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