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SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The editor invites the submission of articles dealing with the history of Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic region, regardless of their specialty. Prospective authors are urged to review past issues of *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, where they will note articles in social, intellectual, economic, environmental, political, and cultural history, from the distant and recent past. Articles may investigate new areas of research or they may reflect on past scholarship. Material that is primarily of an antiquarian or genealogical nature will not be considered.

Pennsylvania History publishes documents previously unpublished and of interest to scholars of the Middle Atlantic region. The Journal also reviews books, exhibits, and other media dealing primarily with Pennsylvania history or that shed significant light on the state's past.

Please conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* in preparing your manuscript and submit an electronic copy in Microsoft Word format to the editor via email at pnewman@pitt.edu. News of meetings, projects, exhibits, manuscript collections, and related matters for the Announcements Page should be sent to the editor at the e-mail address above. To reach the editor by mail, send communication to: Department of History, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904.

Send books for review and names of individuals who wish to review for the Journal to Dan Barr, Department of History, Robert Morris University, 6001 University Boulevard, Moon Township, PA 15108, or by e-mail: barrd@rmu.edu.

Send suggestions for exhibit reviews and names of individuals who wish to review museum exhibits for the journal to Jeffrey A. Davis, Department of History, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, 128 Old Science Hall, Bloomsburg, PA 17815, or by e-mail: jdavis@bloomu.edu. Also contact Jeff for matters relating to the journal's annual "special issue" that appears in summer.

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The Pennsylvania Historical Association endeavors to stimulate scholarly activity and arouse popular interest in the Commonwealth's history. It sponsors *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, a publication series, and annual meetings held successively throughout the state.

www.pa-history.org

On the cover: The James Buchanan Inaugural, March 4, 1857. Photograph attributed to John Wood. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, American Treasures Collection.

NEWS FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA
FEDERATION OF MUSEUMS AND
HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Deborah Filipi
Executive Director, PFMHO

*A*t the time of this essay, museums in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are faced with the economic woes that confront the rest of the nation. After September 11, 2001, financial support from foundations, corporations, and private individuals started to decline. However, during the early to mid-2000s, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took the opposite route. State funding for museums increased to a high of \$6.3 million. This money was allocated to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) for its Pennsylvania History and Museum Grant Program.¹ PHMC awarded grants for projects, general operating support (GOS), technical assistance, historic markers, statewide organizations—such as the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations (PFMHO) and the Pennsylvania Historical Association (PHA)—and statewide conferences. The majority of the \$6.3 million went to museums in the form of GOS grants though there was generous funding for the other grant categories as well.² In addition to the peer-reviewed PHMC grant program, museums received grants

from the state legislature as well as other state agencies. Nine museums had separate line items in the yearly state budget and were recipients of GOS through that funding mechanism. They are familiarly known as the “non-preferreds.”

Once the United States economy began to weaken as this decade progressed and reached crisis status by the end of it, museums have coped by cutting back or eliminating staff, exhibits, and public programming. As can be expected, the Museum Assistance line item followed suit. By 2008, the appropriation had dropped to \$3.8 million. The PHMC still awarded grants in every grant category, but GOS grants had lessened enough that PHMC no longer used a peer-review process based on institutional excellence for this type of grant. Instead, PHMC began utilizing a formula-based method based on a museum’s operating budget. The other grant categories maintained the peer-review practice.

In 2009 the Governor created a furor by recommending \$0 for the Museum Assistance line item. What was more grievous was his allowing art museums (funded through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts) and the nine non-preferreds to remain in his budget with slight decreases only. PFMHO, other related organizations, museum professionals and visitors, and concerned citizens sprang into action with a multi-month offense on the Pennsylvania General Assembly to reinstate the Museum Assistance line item. After a tortuous budget passage that took many iterations—as far as museum funding went—the Museum Assistance line item reappeared though with a reduced amount of \$1.775 million.³ The museum community rejoiced and applauded state legislators who seemed to understand the importance of museums when the economy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had plunged into a catastrophe.

Though the PHMC’s grant program⁴ survived another year, PHMC itself faces a struggle. As a state agency, it experienced a severe decrease in its annual appropriation in the 2009 budget with the consequential laying off of a significant number of employees and the elimination or rigorous pruning of public programming. Indeed, PHMC lost 43 percent of its annual budget and one-third of its employees. Hardest hit are the PHMC’s museums and historic sites. Of the 22 museums and historic sites, only six of them operate on a full-time schedule. Some are closed for the winter; one is now administered by another museum; some are opened on a reduced and operated by volunteers; some are closed but have their property opened as parks by a

state agency; and some are closed completely. Another PHMC museum, The State Museum of Pennsylvania, is open with reduced hours.⁵ Warnings via the “grapevine” envisage next year’s budget crisis to worsen. How will that affect PHMC and its many public offerings? How will it affect state grant money to the nonprofits that benefit from state support? In a recent news article in *The Patriot-News* of Harrisburg, Governor Rendell was not sure if the Commonwealth should be a custodian of its history. A director of a Harrisburg-based foundation dedicated to lessening taxes opined that this was a perfect opportunity for the Commonwealth to dissociate itself from non-essential government occupations as this is done well by the private and nonprofit sectors. Barbara Franco, Executive Director of the PHMC, and Randall Miller, a former President of the PHA, both countered these claims. Franco wondered if Rendell’s comments signify a change in the Commonwealth’s role as a preserver of history. If it is, she contended, the Pennsylvania Constitution and the History Code will have to change as they state the Commonwealth’s historic assets must be safeguarded. Miller noted that this is in contradiction to the Governor’s endorsement of tourism. According to Miller, such well-known historic sites in Gettysburg or in Philadelphia will survive as they have instinctive audiences, but the rest of the museums in the Commonwealth tell the rest of the Pennsylvania story which is in many ways the story of the United States.⁶

Randall Miller’s mention of tourism is a timely one. Starting in the administration of Governor Tom Ridge and continuing in the administration of Governor Ed Rendell, the promotion of tourism in Pennsylvania has been and is a major priority. Agriculture and tourism are cited as Pennsylvania’s leading industries according to the Pennsylvania Department of Economic Development.⁷ Research has shown that heritage tourists bring in the highest amount of tourism dollars to local communities and to government coffers. Heritage tourists spend more, stay over night more, shop more, and tend to be more highly-educated and affluent.⁸ One of the arguments made during the 2009 battle to reinstate the Museum Assistance line item for the PHMC’s grant program was the need for GOS⁹ and project dollars to assist Pennsylvania museums in attaining the highest caliber of interpretation and education as well as overall visitor experience. An institution that has cut back its hours open to the public, has cut back its staff, and has eliminated or reduced its exhibits, educational programming, special events and depleted gift shops will not attract many visitors—be they heritage tourists or local residents. If the trend of

continual reduction or elimination of funding for museums persists, could this be a factor in a future downturn of the highest-spending tourists in a leading Pennsylvania industry?

The roughly 200 grant awards made by the PHMC in 2008 were not for large amounts of money, but these grants signify the Commonwealth's endorsement of high-quality projects and programs, and excellent institutions. The Commonwealth is signaling their worth to other givers. Thus, PHMC grants and other State funding supply leverage for attracting more dollars from the private sector. Certainly, it is the responsibility of other funders—foundations, corporations and businesses, and private individuals—to support their communities' museums. Obviously, the better-funding a museum receives the more jobs it can offer and the more it can contribute to the tax-base of Pennsylvania.¹⁰

These small PHMC grants are investments in the Commonwealth's people, its economy, and its history by state government and by others in the community.

The implication of reduced or eliminated funding for museums by the commonwealth can impact many other arenas than the economic development wrought by heritage tourism or increasing jobs or the tax base. Examples include such issues as quality of life, educational opportunities for all, government and community responsibilities, community development, and the importance of a sense of place to citizens and visitors. These can be left for another essay.

NOTES

1. As there is no dedicated funding stream for the Pennsylvania History and Museum Grant Program, every year the Governor proposed an amount for the Museum Assistance line item that provides the funding for this grant program. The Governor's budget is acted upon by the Pennsylvania General Assembly that can increase, maintain, decrease, or eliminate any of the Governor's budget proposals. Obviously this is so for the Museum Assistance line item.
2. Museums were not the only nonprofit organizations eligible for PHMC grants (other than GOS). Other nonprofit organizations or local governments with history-related, collecting, archaeological, historic preservation, archival and other missions could apply for the remaining grant categories.
3. The art museums and the non-preferreds also suffered a "roller-coaster ride" in their journey through the budget labyrinth.
4. PHMC's other grant program—the Keystone Grant Program for "bricks-and-mortar" preservation, conservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings (nonprofit and local government only) was

NEWS FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA FEDERATION OF MUSEUMS

eliminated. Even though the Keystone program did have a dedicated funding stream—reality transfer taxes, the State government opted to take Keystone money and to add it to the Commonwealth's depleted coffers.

5. Please see PHMC's website at www.phmc.state.pa.us for more details on these museums and historic sites.
6. Please see "Cuts at Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Provoke Talk about Who Should Be the Caretaker of State History," November 27, 2009, posted on <http://www.pennlive.com>.
7. For an example of this claim, please see a press release from DCED and the Governor's Office, dated November 10, 2009.
8. For examples, please see the 1999 study by D. K. Shifflet and Associates for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR), other Pennsylvania state agencies, and other statewide nonprofit organizations such as PFMHO; a white paper presented by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities for Cultural and Heritage Tourism in the United States for the 2005 U.S. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Summit, p. 5; "Museum Facts" p. 2, on website of American Association of Museums—www.aam-us.org; "Heritage Tourism and the Federal Government," p. 7, presented at the Federal Heritage Tourism Summit in 2002.
9. General Operating Support (GOS) grant funding is difficult to find. At present, it is not awarded by the Federal government, and rarely is it provided by foundations. Other than income it earns, a museum's money for GOS comes from annual appeals or individualized giving which are down.
10. Please see "Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism in PA, the 2007 Travel Year" by Global Insight in partnership with D. K. Shifflet.