Belmont News

Message from the President

Update on the Expansion Project at the Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum

What a wonderful day we had on Thursday, May 17, 2012, to fulfill the dream “Heritage for the Future”. The American Women’s Heritage Society surrounded by board members, local Philadelphia officials, state officials, stakeholders including Wells Fargo bank and our contractors, The Stern Group, broke ground for the long awaited expansion project for the rapidly evolving Cornelia Wells Conference Center at the Historic Belmont Mansion.
We want to thank everyone for being a part of the groundbreaking ceremony. We graciously acknowledge the great contributions and commitment from our community that we have been privileged to receive over the last 25 years.

As the AWHS continues on our quest to restore, research, maintain, and creatively share the Belmont Mansion for many generations to come, we are building a “State of the Art” banquet facility that will permit us to embrace a part of the past lost to history’s progression.

As we take our next step in our quest to build “Heritage for the Future” breaking ground today, for the long awaited Expansion Project, I want you to know that this milestone was made possible through the hard work and commitment of many dedicated patrons of this treasured landmark but could not have been achieved without the collaborative, momentous, and non-yielding efforts of those who have been keenly instrumental in making the dream of this project a reality.

Former Governor Edward Rendell - instrumental in getting us the PIDC Grant, our major funder for this project.

Honorable Mayor Michael Nutter, Councilman Curtis Jones, and State Senator LeAnna Washington,

Wells Fargo Bank, NA, Vice President, Rachelle Petrancuri

Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation, Michael DiBerardinis, Mark Focht, and Robert Allen

Pennsylvania Industrial Development Corporation and Philadelphia Department of Commerce, Duane Bumb

Stern Group, Inc, J2architects, and Art Davis

Special Guests included: Jim Peters, Descendant of Peters Family & Local and State Officials – Vincent Hughes, Vanessa Brown Lowery, and many others!

As we move toward the completion of this monumental endeavor, we look to you for our continued support and we hope you will join us at the Grand Opening of the Cornelia Wells Conference Center at the Belmont Mansion in October 2012.
PHILADELPHIA, PA – The name of the new facility is the Cornelia Wells Conference Center. The name pays homage to an exceptional slave who worked her way to freedom and established herself as an entrepreneur in a time when that was inconceivable for most blacks. Cornelia Wells left a legacy to her daughter and to all women in the generations to follow - a legacy of freedom. She wanted her life to be a testament that “No woman should suffer the cruelties of slavery - to take no benefit from her work, to have no home to call her own, to have her own children taken from her”. She showed us that through hard work and self-reliance that she could leave a legacy of a free woman who can do for herself, make the most of her life, and take care of her own. The Cornelia Wells Conference Center will be the newest center of its type in Fairmount Park. You can become a part of the Belmont “Heritage for the Future” by donating to the American Women’s Heritage Society. We are continuing our work to preserve Philadelphia history and tell the story of the Underground Railroad. Be a part of the culture and legacy of Belmont Mansion and Philadelphia Fairmount Park.

Completion of Cornelia Wells Conference Center is slated for October 2012.

We are booking for 2013 now!

Come and celebrate your special event with the richness that the Cornelia Wells Conference Center at The Historic Belmont Mansion offers.

Call us at 215-878-8844 or visit us online at www.BelmontMansion.org
American Women's Heritage Society Officer Elections

It is with great excitement that we announce the newly elected officers of the American Women's Heritage Society:

**President Emeritus**
Audrey R. Johnson Thornton

**President**
Dr. Naomi Johnson Booker

**1st Vice President**
Naomi Nelson

**2nd Vice President**
Mable Welborn

**3rd Vice President**
Patricia Russell

**Recording Secretary**
Gayle Dickerson

**Corresponding Secretary**
Paulette O'Neill

**Financial Secretary**
Gloria M. Gay

**Treasurer**
Linda Watson

**Parliamentarian**
Joan Howell

**Chaplains**
Rev. Essie Boatwright
Rev. M. Marcia Butts
Rev. Gregory Smith

The AWHS newly elected officers were elected at our May General Body Meeting and installed by the honorable **Judge Sheila Woods Skipper** at a beautiful Installation Ceremony at the August AWHS General Body meeting and will officially take office in September 2012.

Many thanks to AWHS Members Karima Bouchenafa, Michelle D. Ray, Colleen Winn and AWHS Volunteer Marie McCray who assisted with the installation ceremony.

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**West Park Arts Fest and the Belmont Mansion**

On Saturday June 9, 2012, The American Women's Heritage Society opened its doors to be a part of the 5th Annual Arts Fest in West Fairmount Park. This year’s theme is “Friends across Cultures” and is about celebrating the unique multicultural richness of art, nature, and community engagement in the Centennial District and bringing together arts and cultural organizations from throughout the City of Philadelphia with more than 100 artist and 200 children performing. We are proud to be one of several sites highlighted (High School of the Future, Concourse Lake, Please Touch Museum, Cedar Grove, Shoguso, Sakura Pavilions.) The Belmont Mansion grounds were alive and open to the public in conjunction with the Fest. We were joined by a number of Board Members and Volunteers who offered flower planting demonstrations, Historic Re-enactors, Negro Spiritual Yoga and tours of the Underground Railroad Museum lead by Global
Leadership Academy docent trained students.

Special Thanks to all who helped our day to be a success:
Certified Yoga Instructor, John Wylie, Juanita Jenkins and the James family who volunteered for the event in support of AWHS. Thanks to board members: Lillian Green, Jeanyne James, Toni Nash, Michelle D. Ray, and Patricia Russell who helped throughout the event. Thanks to our Global Leadership Academy students, Gregory Wright and Dr. Naomi Booker, GLA CEO for ensuring that we had docents present to offer tours to our guests.

AWHS Celebrated its 25th Year with Style and Grace

2012 is a milestone year for AWHS. We have enjoyed a year filled with great memories. We hosted a very successful 25th Anniversary Gala and now close the year with the completion of our new facility: The Cornelia Wells Conference Center to open in October 2012.

On June 19, 2012 The AWHS hosted a JUNETEENTH & FATHER’S DAY PERFORMANCE of PAUL ROBESON ONE MAN SHOW AT THE HISTORIC BELMONT MANSION

This show was simply amazing. Every person in the house was spellbound as this outstanding actor took us through the life of Paul Robeson. I am sure that everyone in attendance would agree that no better rendition of this great American’ life has come before the show that we witnessed that evening. If you have the opportunity to check out this show or to bring it to a group that you belong to, do not hesitate it is such a moving experience and all there will thank you for sharing it.

Special Thanks to the members of the AWHS who came out to assist with the show and to Stogie Kenyatta who gave us this opportunity.

Stogie Kenyatta Performs His Acclaimed Broadway Style One-Man Show ‘The World is My Home-The Life & Times of Paul Robeson’ Stogie Kenyatta brings a unique interpretation to the stage, where he majestically captures the essence of Paul Robeson. Portraying 10 characters he
Annual Summer 4th of July Celebration in Honor of the 2007 Mansion Restoration

We had a fabulous day which opened with our participation in the Welcome America Parade. Next the GLA team were off to the Historic Belmont Mansion where they joined the Philadelphia Community who came out in force to enjoy historic re-enactors, tours, hot dogs, water ice, and pretzels, music, local vendors and a moon bounce. Everyone had a great time.

Connecting with Preservation Alliance in Support of their Emerging Leaders Training Program

AWHS President and CEO, Ms. Audrey R. Johnson Thornton met with Ms. Joyce Smith of the Emerging Leader's Training Program to share her extensive wisdom and guidance regarding non-profit leadership. The Program's Executive Director, John Andrew Gallery expressed his thanks for our participation in the program. This is a great program worthy of support as it greatly benefits the Philadelphia Community. To learn more visit: www.preservationalliance.com

The Second Annual Summer Docent Training Camp, huge successful for both campers and the Summer Camp Team

The Docent Summer Training Camp concluded with a presentation of wonderful outcomes produced by our campers as a result of the three weeks they spent learning with us. Collectively, they gave their first museum tour to their parents/guests,
showcased the city map history collages they created, gave a presentation of their archeological close up related to our construction project, and dazzled the crowd with their exquisite paper quilt displays representing Underground Railroad messages.

Congratulations to the Docent Summer Camp Team: Dr. Carrissima Faust, Dr. Lillian Gaskin Green, Ms. Jeanyne James, Ms. Michelle D. Ray, Dr. Laura Surtees, Ms. Audrey R, Johnson Thornton, and Mr. Gregory Wright for their hard work. Thank you to Dr. Booker, CEO, Global Leadership Academy for the GLA partnership. This is an incredible camp experience for our community youth.

Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail of the Washington-Rochambeau Trail and the Belmont Mansion

The Belmont Mansion has been discovered as having a connection to the Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail of the Washington-Rochambeau Trail. In April a marker is to be placed on the grounds of Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum. An announcement will be made as to the date and time.

Dr. Lillian Gaskins Green, AWHS Member is recognized by Temple University’s Pan-African Studies Community Education Program

Dr. Gaskin’s Green is a veteran teacher, reetired from the School District of Philadelphia were she taught all grade levels and has worked in the Division of African and African American Students Department was highlighted as one of PASCEP’s finest instructors. To learn more about Dr. Gaskins Green and the PASCEP program visit their website: http://www.temple.edu/pacep

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Summer Tours and Events

During the summer months we have hosted a great number of wonder events and tours. The Historic Belmont Mansion continues to be an exceptional venue for events and our Underground Railroad Museum continues to educate many visitors from all over the world. We were blessed this year to be visited by the Male Academy from James Madison University who strives for “Raising the Bar: Reaching for Higher Expectations”. They were an impressive group of young men hailing from Virginia to visit the mansion. This year’s cohort included 31 exceptional young men who truly enjoyed their experience at the mansion.

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Upcoming Events

Restoration Philadelphia
Third 2012 Prayer Retreat at the Historic Belmont Mansion

Therefore we call the saints of the Most High God to gather in humility in a solemn assembly for repentance and prayer and intercession for our nation. JOIN US AT THE BELMONT MANSION ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2012 2:00 PM - 9:00 PM.

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African American Heritage Museum, Newtonville NJ presents an exhibit: 101 quilts Now - December 15, 2012 For Details Call 609-704-5495 ***

ON OCTOBER 14, 2012 The West Philadelphia High School Association will host “Still the Best: A Centennial Year of Celebration” Gala at the Historic Belmont Mansion

All WPHS supporters are encouraged to attend. Details: www.wphsaa.org ****

The Association of Black Women in Higher Education Superbowl Political Roundtable & Presidential Election Debate October 3, 2012 ~ 7:00 PM

ABWHE Philadelphia Chapter invites you to a non-patrician conversation to learn more about the issues of today’s Presidential Race. Enjoy Superbowl type refreshments & atmosphere, get registered to vote, check your ID for the new PA laws, and watch the Presidential Candidate debate. Global Leadership Academy Charter School, 4601 Girard Ave. For more details: www.abwhe.org ***

African American Museum in Philadelphia & the American Women’s Heritage Society

We will join the AAMP to introduce “Come See About Me” to thousands of Philadelphians, Tri-state residents, and tourists from across the country. The exhibit and a full calendar of engaging public programs will be featured at the museum and several satellite locations from January 2013 through June 2013.

Pennsylvania Humanities Council (PHC)

PHC’s Commonwealth Speakers program opens with a new roster for 2012-13 season. This is a great opportunity to bring your community together to discover something new about history, the arts, and the world around you. Humanities on the Road, a new TV show on September 24, 25 & 27 will feature My Name is Oney Judge filmed at Belmont Mansion. You can view it on Channel 55 or 186
At the end of your visit, continue the dialogue. The Harriet Tubman Gift Shop offers a variety of memorabilia, souvenirs, educational materials, and arts and crafts items devoted to the Museum’s exhibits and historic Underground Railroad.

**DIRECTIONS**
Available online: [www.belmontmansion.org](http://www.belmontmansion.org) or call 215-878-8844. We are also accessible by Septa Bus Route 38. Free Parking on site.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**
The Banquet Room and Gardens of Belmont Mansion are available for weddings, family reunions and other special events.

**HARRIET TUBMAN GIFT SHOP**

Contact Us:
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Historic Belmont Mansion & Underground Railroad Museum  
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(215) 878-8844 (Office)  
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[www.belmontmansion.org](http://www.belmontmansion.org)  
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Now part of Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust, the Belmont Mansion was found to be part of the "Underground Railroad."

In addition to museum visits, Historical Belmont Mansion is a premier property for:

- Parties
- Weddings
- Receptions
- Guild Meeting
- Civic Events

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
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215-879-8844 (or) www.belmontmansion.org