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## ***TPH* Turns Forty**

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James F. Brooks

Forty years ago, G. Wesley Johnson, a historian of colonial West Africa, penned the first of what would become scores of Editor's Corners (at the time, "Editor's Prefaces") to launch the first issue of *The Public Historian*. Two years before, he, Robert Kelly, and the late Otis Graham (see our memorial on page 10) had obtained a Rockefeller Foundation grant for the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) to train historians for public and private sector careers beyond conventional academic employment. Here was born the field of public history, which expanded over the decades to include a professional association, the National Council on Public History, annual conferences, mini-cons, a widely read blog (*History@Work*, <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/>), book series in the field from scholarly presses such as the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Rowman & Littlefield, and an explosion of programs, today numbering more than 150 at the graduate level across the United States and abroad.

"It is rare," Johnson wrote, "when any profession witnesses the birth of a new field, especially when that specialization is History. Historians by their very nature are skeptical of innovation, waiting for the 'test of time' to shed light on the value of the innovation. However, this is one year when the discipline of History is seeing a new field, Public History, emerge; it is growing fast and becoming increasingly important on both the local and national scene. It is emerging at a time in the twentieth century when modern society is sending signals to the historical profession, asking for help. . . . Public History . . . assumes that historical skills and methods are needed now *outside* of the academy, and that it is desirable for the historian to relate to the needs of the community, whether that is defined as government, business, or institutions such as museums or historical societies. . . . In an era of rapid social change, when continuity is often obscured, the services of the historian as interpreter become essential" (4-5).

I find the continued currency of Johnson's call to action startling in this moment, when our tumultuous world seems untethered from common standards of fact, truth, and honest self-critical reflection. The table of contents for volume 1, number 1 featured pieces such as "Oral Inquiry and Public Historical Study," "Historical Preservation and Significance," "Objectivity and the Public Historian," "The Practice of History within the Federal Government," and "We Who Would Sell History"—all topics and issues that occupy our work today.

Yet significant changes pertain as well. The founding "fathers" of the field were indeed largely men, although the journal itself proved a breakthrough opportunity for women in the UCSB graduate program who went on to enjoy landmark careers:

Betty Koed, Shelley Bookspan, Rebecca Conard, Marianne Babal, and Rose Hayden Smith. Today the profession finds women representing more than 60 percent of its academic and professional members. Women compose more than half of the editorial board of *The Public Historian*. The current board of directors of the NCPH is two-thirds female. Although this dramatic shift may in part reflect a “feminization” of the field wherein “women’s work” is often undervalued, the field’s embrace of women’s leadership has enriched it. Whereas articles in the early decades of the journal were dominated by male authors and in sectors where men predominated, our contents today range across the spectrum of genders, sexual orientations, race, and ethnicity. While Johnson’s comments hewed tightly to history as the discipline in which this new field would unfold, we now regularly feature articles by archaeologists, ethnographers, and museum professionals. Finally, although the articles in our first issue focused on the emerging roles of public history in the United States, our journal is now an international product—the current issue, in fact, features a majority of its pieces from non-US settings: Great Britain, Germany, Australia, Chile, and Belize. We also, as our cover image and roundtable illustrate, support “history of the present” with methods like “rapid-response collecting” in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub Massacre in Orlando in June 2016.

We at *TPH* embrace these changes and work to carry them forward, with special issues in the pipeline that tell the histories of African American museums, explore critical issues in Native American culture heritage interpretation and management, and a double issue themed around LGBTQ+ public history. Yet even with these salutatory changes, the founding purpose, as defined in Johnson’s words, holds true and finds expression in our daily practice.

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We also take this issue as opportunity to welcome five new members to our editorial board. The board provides invaluable service in consultation, review, and recommendation to the editorial office here at UCSB, and we are thrilled that Rebecca Bush, Patrick Grossi, Lynn Kronzek, Kyle Mays, and Robert R. Weyeneth have joined our community.

Rebecca Bush is curator of history/exhibitions manager at the Columbus Museum in Georgia. Her professional interests include community history in all its variations, multiple-perspective interpretation, and interdisciplinary museum exhibitions. She often focuses her research on social history of the American South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She serves on the board of the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries and has presented at annual meetings of the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), the National Council on Public History, and the American Alliance of Museums. She is a co-editor and contributing author to *Art and Public History: Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenges*, published through Rowman & Littlefield’s AASLH book series.

Director of advocacy at the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, Patrick Grossi is committed to accessibility, thinking seriously about nontraditional methods of engaging the past, and the equitable and inclusive preservation of the built environment. He has previously worked with the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, Wyck Historic House & Garden, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and Friends of the Rail Park, among others. Prior to joining the Preservation Alliance Grossi served as project manager of Temple Contemporary's *Funeral for a Home*. His report from the field about that project appeared in our special issue "Open House: Reimagining the Historic House Museum" (May 2015) and won the G. Wesley Johnson Award for outstanding article in *TPH*.

The daughter of refugees, Lynn Kronzek focuses on immigrant and ethnic history, with attention to Los Angeles cultures, neighborhoods, and industries. Her projects have covered virtually all formats: from environmental assessments and cultural context statements to books, articles, exhibits/displays, expert witness testimony, and most recently, digital archives. Lynn has been a consultant in private practice since 1989. She also taught graduate courses in regional development and community relations for seven years—and continues to work with nonprofit and government agencies to create (and fund) innovative public programs. Much of her spare time is devoted to board service.

Kyle Mays is on the faculty of the department of African American Studies at UCLA. He is a transdisciplinary scholar who works at the intersection of indigenous studies, critical ethnic studies, Afro-Indigenous studies, urban indigenous studies, and indigenous hip-hop culture. He has two books in process, *Indigenous Detroit: Indigeneity, Gender, and Race and the Making of a Modern American City*, and *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes: Modernity and Hip Hop in Indigenous North America*. An activist public intellectual, his Twitter handle is @mays\_kyle.

Robert R. Weyeneth is a professor of history at the University of South Carolina, where he teaches public history and historic preservation. He directed and codirected the university's award-winning public history program from 1992 to 2014. As a practicing public historian, his research and teaching projects have explored the challenges of doing public history in communities with historical secrets, as well as the opportunities for remembering chapters of the past that are difficult and controversial. He has been active in the National Council on Public History since joining in 1988, and he served as president of NCPH from 2012 to 2014. His work has appeared regularly in *The Public Historian* and has included, most recently, his presidential address: "What I've Learned Along the Way: A Public Historian's Intellectual Odyssey," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 2 (May 2014): 9–25.