National Museum of American History

GRAND REOPENING YEAR
The National Museum of American History has resumed its central role in telling the story of America and providing a critical link between the past and the present.

Through dramatic architectural changes and innovative exhibitions and programs, the Museum is shining new light on American history.

The central atrium serves as a new national public square—a crossroads for ideas, information, entertainment, commerce and face-to-face human connection—where the Museum hosts educational programs, performances and naturalization ceremonies for new citizens.

A triumph of engineering and craftsmanship, a spectacular new gallery features the flag that inspired our national anthem—the Star-Spangled Banner—preserved and presented dramatically "by the dawn's early light."

This two-year renovation encompassed 120,000 square feet in the central core of the Museum.
The heart of the National Museum of American History is Flag Hall, which serves as our public square. In this space, we connect visitors with information and ideas and with each other. In this public square, we sponsor naturalization ceremonies, musical performances, hands-on education activities and social events.

In the first year after reopening the Museum, there have been dozens of occasions that affirmed the special role the public square plays in the civic life of the Museum. The most memorable and inspiring events.

In the past year and a half, we have marked the renovation and reopening of the National Museum of American History with ribbon-cuttings, ceremonies and public programs—celebrations certainly befitting the magnitude of the occasion and the great and tireless work of so many.

In this moment of rededication, we have opened a new chapter in the rich history of this institution, which first opened its doors in 1964 with a dedication by President Lyndon B. Johnson, citing the words of William Faulkner: “…here is recorded the agony and the sweat of the human spirit, the victory of the freedom and the genius of our country.”

With this renovation of the building’s core, the Museum is, in a very real sense, a sanctuary for reflection, a place for gratitude and quiet awe. The objects here and the collective stories they tell remind us that adversity doesn’t pass. It is overcome. Innovation isn’t conjured from the empty air. It is bred of human creativity and human effort. Injustice doesn’t disappear. It is conquered. History does not just happen. People make it. We prepare the way for those generations yet to come.

In this moment of rededication, we have indeed a cause for celebration, for gratefulness and for the enduring optimism that has always been the hallmark of our great country.

John F. W. Rogers
Board Chair
Five million people have visited since the Museum’s reopening, with the three millionth visitor entering on July 4, 2009.

At the Gala Reception, 1,200 supporters celebrated the Museum’s metamorphosis.
On the first day, 25,760 visitors came to see the Museum’s transformation.
Exhibitions

During the reopening year, the Museum opened 40 permanent and temporary exhibitions.

May 2009
- The Star-Spangled Banner: The Flag that Inspired the National Anthem
- Picturing Words: The Power of Book Illustration in the Dibner Library Gallery
- Thanks for the Memories: Music, Sports and Entertainment History
- The Gettysburg Address in the Albert H. Small Documents Gallery
- Robots on the Road Gallery in Science in American Life

December 2008
- The First Ladies at the Smithsonian

January 2009
- Abraham, Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life
- The Scurlock Studio and Black Washington: Picturing the Promise in the National Museum of African American Culture and History Gallery
- America’s New Birth of Freedom, Documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in the Albert H. Small Documents Gallery

April 2009
- I Do Solemnly Swear: Photographs of the 2009 Inauguration
- Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn: Jazz Composers and Their Signature Works in the Albert H. Small Documents Gallery

At the Museum’s reopening, 4,784 objects were on display.

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The Museum’s Transformation Letters Gala Reception & Dedication

Grand Reopening & Ribbon Cutting
Exhibitions Programs, Education & Outreach Collections & Acquisitions

Lemelson Center
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National Museum of American History GRAND REOPENING YEAR americanhistory.si.edu
The Flag Day performance of Jordan Shelton, the winner of the Star-Spangled Banner Singing Contest, has been watched 9,824 times on YouTube.

The Museum held 2,500 performances of historical theater, short pieces performed by actors in period costumes, in various Museum settings.

Smithsonian’s History Explorer
The Museum, in partnership with Verizon’s Thinkfinity, launched Smithsonian’s History Explorer in fall 2008.

By using real stories and actual objects, the web site offers an exciting new way for the Museum to connect students, teachers, parents and caregivers across the globe to American history.

Smithsonian’s History Explorer offers free, standards-based, innovative resources for teaching and learning American history.

In the first year, 1,128,000 visits were made to the site.

historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu

Programs, Education & Outreach

Events & Programs

January 2009
- Inauguration 2009: Renewing America’s Promise
March 2009
- Chocolate: The North American Experience
April 2009
- Jazz Appreciation Month programs
June 2009
- Flag Day Family Festival, with a Children’s Citizenship Ceremony and a performance by the Star-Spangled Banner Singing Contest winner

November 2009
- Day of the Dead program at the National Museum of the American Indian

Ongoing Music & Theater Programs
- Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra
- Smithsonian Chamber Music Society
- Broad Stripes and Bright Stars (Star-Spangled Banner)
- Join the Student Sit-ins (Greensboro Lunch Counter)

Online Presence
- The Museum’s monthly e-newsletter has 20,000 subscribers
- The Museum has 6,500 Twitter followers (@amhistorymuseum)
- The Museum had 5,000 fans on Facebook in the reopening year (facebook.com/americanhistory)
- The Museum’s blog has received 150,000 visits (blog.americanhistory.si.edu)

The highest visitation, 42,354 people, was on January 20, 2009, Inauguration Day.

The Museum

• Chocolate: The North American Experience

Hands-on Activity Cart

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In the Blu-Ray package of the film *Julie & Julia*, three Museum curators were interviewed as part of a special feature about Julia Child’s kitchen and the more than 1,200 objects it contains.

Selected Events

March 2009
- The secret message in Abraham Lincoln’s watch is revealed.

April 2009
- Chuck Mangione’s hat donation kicks off Jazz Appreciation Month.
- America’s Funniest Videos donates materials from its first 20 years on TV.

June 2009
- Bobcat Company donates archival materials about the invention of the loader and company papers.
- The Red Sox present Jon Lester’s jersey from Game 4 of the 2007 World Series and the third base from the 2004 World Series.

July 2009
- In a special ceremony, Julia Child’s copper pots are presented to the Museum and Columbia Pictures donates Meryl Streep’s costume from the film *Julie & Julia*.

September 2009
- Disney Theatrical presents materials from The Lion King stage production.

December 2009
- Carol Burnett visits the Museum and her gown from the *Went with the Wind* comedy sketch.

Six landmark objects point the way to themes and stories in American history in each wing:
- Disney’s Dumbo ride car
- Clara Barton’s Red Cross 1898 ambulance
- Horatio Greenough’s statue of George Washington
- The Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth’s lunch counter from the Civil Rights era
- The 1865 Vassar Telescope used by America’s first woman astronomer, Maria Mitchell
- The 1831 John Bull, one of the nation’s earliest steam locomotives

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