“Never has an understanding of our story as a people, of who we are and how we came to be the way we are, and what we stand for, been of such importance as right now.”

—David McCullough
Many museums experience a drop in attendance after their first year. But here at the National Museum of American History, two years after reopening the building, the crowds are still streaming through our doors... more than 4 million people in 2010.

We see parents and grandparents guiding and teaching, we see school groups and teachers exploring and discovering, we see the awe on the faces of everyone who turns the corner in the flag gallery—and sees the Star-Spangled Banner for the first time. We see generations connected and enriched by the wisdom that only the recognition of history can bring. Here, you can discover the American spirit of determination, imagination and innovation that created our past and predicts our future.

The ideals of America are here, in the artifacts and the exhibitions, in particular the American spirit of freedom and the opportunity it brings. The freedom to chart one’s own course, to accept risks knowingly and to own the outcome, to believe that personal initiative counts for something, that if you can imagine it, you can achieve it. It is a freedom that is ours to infuse with tenacity and purpose: to craft and shape the American identity. This Museum is a testament to the American experience, to our collective history. It is a memorial to this country of endless possibilities and boundless hope.

The National Museum of American History reminds us of the promise that is America...furthering the narrative of our nation. Each time I am here, I am filled with hopefulness about what our collective future as a nation can be.

I hope that you will enjoy this overview of the many important moments in the life of the National Museum of American History throughout 2010.
First Lady Michelle Obama Presents Inaugural Gown

Continuing an almost century-long tradition, First Lady Michelle Obama formally presented the gown she wore to the 2009 inaugural balls to the Smithsonian's First Ladies Collection in March 2010.

In attendance were a group of Mrs. Obama's personal friends, students from the Fashion Design and Illustration classes at Huntington High School in New York, special guests and a crowd of journalists. Visitors could see the gown immediately after the ceremony at the center of a new gallery, A First Lady's Debut.

The one-shouldered, white-silk chiffon gown, created by Taiwan-born immigrant Jason Wu, is embellished with organza flowers with Swarovski crystal centers. Mrs. Obama chose Wu's design from several gowns offered, a choice that was not revealed to anyone until that evening.

For decades, the First Ladies Collection has been one of the most popular attractions at the Smithsonian Institution. The original First Ladies exhibition of 1914 was the first display at the Smithsonian to prominently feature women.

The gown has become a part of the country's collective memory—as part of one of the most enduring and popular collections of the Smithsonian—and a part of the personal memories of the millions of visitors who visit the Museum.

"The donation ceremony," said Mrs. Obama, "was about much more than this gown. It's also about how, with enough focus and with enough determination, someone in this room could be the next Jason Wu. Someone in this room could be the next Barack Obama. It's about how the American story is written by real people—not just names on a page. And it's about how something you create today—whether it's a dress, or a painting, or a story or a song—can help teach the next generation in a way that nothing else can."

Students from Huntington High School get a sneak peek at the Obama gown in its new display.

Michelle Obama's diamond ring, bracelets and earrings, designed and donated by Loree Rodkin, total 87 carats—61 carats in the earrings alone.
On February 1, 1960, four African American college freshmen sat down at the Woolworth’s “whites-only” lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., and politely asked to be served. When they remained in the seats after their request was refused, they ignited a youth-led movement challenging injustice and racial inequality throughout the South. A four-stool, eight-foot portion of the Woolworth’s lunch counter is on view at the museum as a powerful artifact of the Civil Rights movement.

2010 marked the 50th anniversary of this bold action and the Museum explored Stories of Freedom and Justice throughout the year, reminding everyone that ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things.


“The sit-ins spread like wildfires and people said, we’re tired, we can’t take it anymore.”

In 2010, actors presented 835 performances of Join the Student Sit-ins for 96,800 visitors.

“American History is built around the struggle to achieve an ideal nation, a struggle that began with the American Revolution.”
—Fath Davis Ruffins, National Museum of American History Curator
Exhibition Openings

JANUARY
Selections from The Lockwood Greene Engineering Records, 1871–2004

FEBRUARY
Fifty Years of Lasers
A Letter from George Washington, November 30, 1785

MARCH
The First Ladies at the Smithsonian: A First Lady's Debut
Good As Gold: America's Double Eagles

APRIL
Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing: How the Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment in the National Museum of African American History and Culture Gallery
Jazz at the Philharmonic

MAY
Cosmos in Miniature: The Remarkable Star Map of Simeon De Witt
Toys from the Attic
Celluloid: The First Plastic

JUNE
Restless Inventor: Solomon "Sol" Adler
Paper Engineering: Fold, Pull, Pop & Turn

SEPTEMBER
The Mexican Revolution! American Legacy
The View From Up North: Americans Experience Mexico, circa 1890–1945

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER
1939
Sam and Friends

DECEMBER
A Gateway to the 19th Century: The William Steinway Diary, 1861–1896
Carmichael and Taylor: Two Smithsonian Key Figures

The Museum had 4.2 million visitors in 2010 with the highest visitation—39,440—on July 4.
Offering free, standards based, innovative resources for teaching and learning history, including the Civil War, Civil Rights and the Gold Rush. historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu

Online Presence
- 24,000 monthly e-newsletter subscribers
- 13,500 Twitter followers (@americanhistorymuseum)
- 9,700 Facebook fans and around 167 comments and likes per week (facebook.com/americanhistory)
- 171 posts and 208,000 visits to the Museum's blog (blog.americanhistory.si.edu)
- 26,000 views of the Museum’s YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/smithsonianamhistory)
- 3,500 photos posted to the Museum’s Flickr group (www.flickr.com/photos/nationalmuseumofamericanhistory)
- 1,733,793 visits to Smithsonian’s History Explorer (historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu)

Ongoing Demonstrations, Music and Theater Programs
- Smithsonian Chamber Music Society
- Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra & Small Groups
- Meet Our Museum
- Broad Stripes and Bright Stars
- Join the Student Sit-ins
- Food for Tomorrow Symposium
- Veteran’s Day Medal of Honor Red Oak Tree Commemoration
- New Americans are sworn in during a special Flag Day citizenship ceremony
- Actor David Kozisek portrays Benedict Arnold
- In 2010, 11,000 visitors participated in folding the full size Star-Spangled Banner replica.
Collections & Acquisitions

Selected Events

JANUARY
- Historic Food Coupons from USDA

FEBRUARY
- Judith Jamison (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater), donates costume from The Mooche

MARCH
- Michelle Obama Inaugural Gown Donation Ceremony

APRIL
- Museum acquires mid-1960s-era John F. Kennedy Cane

MAY
- Lutron Electronics Donates Company History

JUNE
- Dutchess County, N.Y., donates Suicide-Prevention Phone

JULY
- Museum Collects 75 Years of Auto Safety
- Red Hat Society Donates Founder’s Red Hat and Feather Boa

AUGUST
- Jim Henson Family Presents “Sam and Friends” Puppets, including the Original Kermit
- John Isner Donates his Record-Breaking Wimbledon Racquet

SEPTEMBER
- ECRI Institute Donates prototype Medical Emergency Crash Cart

OCTOBER
- Museum Acquires Donald J. Stubblebine Musical Theater and Motion Picture Collection, 1843–2010
- Oklahoma Family Donates Rare Footage of Tulsa’s “Black Wall Street,” 1948–1952
- Museum Purchases Rare 18th-century Silver Milk Pot at Auction

DECEMBER
- Lifetouch Inc. Donates Cameras and other Company History

The First Ladies Collection was inaugurated in 1912 and Helen Taft donated the first ball gown. Every First Lady since Helen Taft has followed that tradition.
The Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation’s 2010 activities advanced scholarship on the history of invention, shared stories about inventors and their work, and nurtured creativity in young people.

The Center continues the development of *Places of Invention*, an interactive, family-friendly exhibition that will follow *Invention at Play* in the Lemelson Hall of Invention. In September, the Center was privileged to receive a $2.58 million grant from the National Science Foundation to fund the development, evaluation and installation of the upcoming exhibition.

**Events and Programs**

**MARCH**
- Spirit of Silicon Valley tour in San Francisco

**APRIL**
- NanoDays and National Robotics Week

**JUNE**
- Solomon "Stu" Adler: Restless Inventor, an Archives Center case collaboration

**AUGUST**
- National Inventors’ Month: Music and Sound

**NOVEMBER**
- Food for Tomorrow symposium, a collaboration with the Museum’s American Food and Wine History Project

**Special Events**

In 2010, SparkLab and Invention at Play welcomed the one millionth visitor to the Lemelson Center since its reopening in 2008.

**MARCH**
- Spirit of Silicon Valley tour in San Francisco

**APRIL**
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Events at the country’s only National Museum of American History provide guests with the exclusive opportunity to view one-of-a-kind national treasures including the Star-Spangled Banner, Abraham Lincoln’s top hat, Dorothy’s Ruby Slippers from the Wizard of Oz, Julia Child’s Kitchen, and much more while enjoying excellent food and drink in a private setting.

Corporations, associations and others who make an unrestricted gift to the Museum may co-host a special celebratory event. In the past year, the National Museum of American History’s special events staff have coordinated over 100 events ranging from donation ceremonies to symposia to evening receptions and seated dinners. The Museum can accommodate receptions for up to 3,200 and seated dinners for up to 500 guests.
The Smithsonian gratefully acknowledges the individuals and organizations that made possible numerous activities of the National Museum of American History in calendar year 2010.

**Warner Bros.**  
**Verizon Foundation**  
**Goldman, Sachs & Co.**  
**The Honorable John F.W. Rogers**  
**Timothy O’Neill**  
**Mrs. Dorothy Lemelson, The Lemelson Foundation**  
**The Argus Fund**  
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**National Asphalt Pavement Association**  
**Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Strickler**

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**Smithsonian Council for American History**

The Smithsonian gratefully acknowledges the founding members of the Smithsonian Council for American History whose generous unrestricted support helped the Museum advance its mission in 2010.

**Anonymous**  
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**Mr. and Mrs. Philip Lader**

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### Donor Events

**FEBRUARY 2010**

Luncheon at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, featuring the Jefferson Bible. Curator Harry Rubenstein and conservator Janice Stagnitto Ellis explored the history of the Jefferson Bible and shared the Museum’s plans to conserve, digitize, and exhibit it in 2011.

**APRIL 2010**

Behind-the-scenes tour and reception sponsored by the Smithsonian Council for American History. Curators Kenneth Slowik and John Edward Hasse showcased the music collections and their own musical talents.

**MAY 2010**

Reception hosted by Council member Vin Di Bona in Los Angeles, California. Curator Dwight Blocker Bowers shared a presentation on the Museum’s entertainment collections.

Museum Advisory Board Dinner with guest speaker David Hackett Fischer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Washington’s Crossing*.

**JULY 2010**

Fourth of July Picnic Supper and viewing of the National Fireworks Display, hosted by Smithsonian Secretary G. Wayne Clough.

**OCTOBER 2010**

Museum Advisory Board Dinner, with a performance by the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society’s Axelrod Quartet and guest speaker Valerie Tripp, an author best known for her work on the American Girl series.

**NOVEMBER 2010**

Donor appreciation luncheon for the Museum’s planned giving donors. Curator Timothy Winkle and conservator Beth Richwine presented three early 19th-century fire hats from the CIGNA Firefighting Collection and explained the process of conserving these artifacts.

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**Thank You to Our Supporters**

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The National Museum of American History is not just a place to learn about America but to affirm our nation’s possibilities. Here we tell stories through original objects with a connection to authentic people and events, such as the Star-Spangled Banner, the flag that "was still there" after the bombardment of Fort McHenry in 1814 and which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the song that would become America’s anthem. In its new state-of-the-art gallery, this flag lies not only at the core of the Museum and of the capital, but in the hearts of all Americans.

And so, it was an easy decision for me to accept the offer to become Interim Director in July while the Smithsonian searches for a new director. Although I retired from the Smithsonian in 2008, I consider myself lucky and privileged to be a part of the team again.

I originally served as this great Museum’s acting director from November 2001 to December 2002, while also holding a full time position as director of the National Portrait Gallery. During this first appointment, the Museum completed planning and design for the renovation of the center core, which was the first phase of the ongoing transformation of the building. I also was involved in the acquisition and display of Julia Child’s kitchen and the opening of Sept. 11: Bearing Witness to History, an exhibition that marked powerfully the first anniversary of the attacks and then traveled across the U.S.

Now, ten years later, I still remember that day and its aftermath; how empty the Museum, and all of Washington, was in the months following. This is a different place now, filled with millions of visitors each year, revitalized and flourishing with light-filled spaces, theater presentations and inspiring exhibitions. As it happens, during my first month here the Museum once again set up a special display about Sept. 11, and we are moving ahead with the second phase of the building’s ongoing renovation and renewal.

There are many changes ahead, and I am thrilled to be helping in that transformation.

Acknowledgements
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The Museum fondly remembers longtime board member Charles T. Manatt, who passed away in July 2011.

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Highlights Report 2010
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Looking Forward to 2012
West Exhibition Wing Renovation

The Museum’s transformation will continue with a major project to renew the building’s 120,000-square-foot West Exhibition Wing, including new galleries, interior public plazas, and a Hall of Music for live performances. A new state-of-the-art Education Center focused on objects and hands-on experiences, a new gallery for the Lemelson Center for Invention and Innovation, and the hands-on Spark!Lab will create opportunities to explore and learn for all ages.

A new panoramic window and entrances to the outside terrace will create a sense of place and connect Museum visitors to the landmarks of the National Mall. The work will also modernize the infrastructure in this section of the building, including wireless environments. The goal is to maximize program and exhibition spaces that engage visitors in the American experience.

The Museum will also return the Alexander Calder sculpture “Gwenfritz” to its original location on the west lawn, facing the Washington Monument and contributing to the monumental cityscape.