



# The FEDERALIST

Society for History in the Federal Government Newsletter

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Fall 2021

## SHFG

[www.shfg.org](http://www.shfg.org)

### SAVE THE DATE SHFG ANNUAL MEETING

“The Resiliency of Institutions”

The Society for History in the Federal Government (SHFG) will hold its annual meeting on June 2–3, 2022, at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Research at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV.

Please see [www.shfg.org](http://www.shfg.org) for more information and direct any questions to the Program Committee at: [shfg.primary@gmail.com](mailto:shfg.primary@gmail.com)



## U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command History Division

By Susan Thompson

A book that traveled to the Arctic with Lieutenant Adolphus Greely, and the journal of a soldier who did not make it back from that ill-fated 1881 mission. One of the largest collections of World War I-era photographic negatives, recording training camp life from around the country. A searchable collection of newspapers documenting Army activities at Fort Monmouth from 1917 until 2011. A souvenir publication given as a Christmas gift to one of the Hello Girls, female telephone operators sent to France in World War I. A collection documenting the first space communication under Project Diana, and the pioneering African-American scientist whose theoretical work made it possible. Records from the Army’s pigeon training and breeding program. These are just a few of the archival highlights reflecting over 100 years of history under the purview of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) History Division.

Currently located at Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), Maryland, the CECOM History Division, under the Command’s Strategic Communications directorate, retains institutional memory for the CECOM and its predecessor organizations, provides public access to the history of the Command, and develops and maintains a physical and digital archive of material related to the Command. CECOM can trace its roots to the establishment of a Signal Corps training facility and radio research and development laboratory at Camp Little Silver/Camp Alfred Vail, New Jersey, in 1917, which gained



Camp Alfred Vail Radio Laboratories, 1918.

permanent status as Fort Monmouth in 1925. The archival collection reflects the broad history of technical and scientific advancements that were developed to meet the communications needs of Soldiers dating back to the founding of the Signal Corps in 1860, through the life of Fort Monmouth as “The Home of the Signal Corps” until the 1970s, as well as modern advancements in communications and electronics technology. On 1 May 1981, several organizations combined to form the new Communications-Electronics Command. In 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) committee ordered the closure of Fort Monmouth and the relocation of CECOM and the Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C5ISR) Community to APG. CECOM officially uncased its colors at APG in October 2010.

See “U.S. Army Communications” cont’d on page 5

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## The **FEDERALIST**

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The Society is a national professional organization open to all who are interested in federal history programs. Annual membership fee is \$55, \$35 students, \$100 institutions and includes a subscription to *The Federalist*, *Federal History* journal, and other periodic publications. Contributors are encouraged to submit articles, news listings, and photographs to the editors.

Current and back issues are available to members at <http://shfg.wildapricot.org/Federalist>. Content listings for all issues are posted at <http://shfg.wildapricot.org/page-18090>.

Opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of *The Federalist*, the SHFG, or the agencies or organizations where the authors are employed.

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## President's Message

Mattea Sanders

Welcome to the fall issue of *The Federalist*. The end of summer is upon us and with it the end of summer vacations and a re-

turn to work after some much needed rest and relaxation. I know for myself, I look apprehensively at the fall, and even winter, as we still do not know what is in store for us with the ongoing pandemic, and any necessary measures to combat it. Apprehension characterizes Executive Council meetings as well, as we try to make plans for in-person tours and lectures. We still find it difficult to make these plans given the potentially ongoing tumult. Nevertheless, the Executive Council will still seek opportunities for our membership to connect, whether in person or otherwise.

Recently the Strategic Planning Task Force met for the first time. This first conversation was incredibly fruitful, rooted in defining what and why the organization exists. Some of the definitions that came from this discussion were that SHFG encourages knowledge of the history of the federal government and sustains a community of scholars. Another was that SHFG helps to grow the federal history community and supports federal history offices. Yet another person said that SHFG fosters discussions about agency history programs and serves as a repository (or home) for all federal history

programs. In the next meeting, the Strategic Planning Task Force will begin to define a mission statement, but I would also ask the membership to email the SHFG Primary Email ([shfg.primary@gmail.com](mailto:shfg.primary@gmail.com)): Why do you think the organization exists and/or what does it mean to you?

Another ask for the membership that came out of this meeting was that we would love to receive input from the federal history community regarding challenges or problems we face as federal historians, such as documenting the history of an organization, making historical documents available to the public, information sharing across programs, etc. Through understanding these challenges the Task Force believes that the organization can better define itself around what the membership needs.

As always, please let me know if there is anything that myself or the larger organization can do for you. Best wishes.

## GET INVOLVED!

SHFG is seeking enthusiastic members to serve on committees and to help with events.

For more information, please visit our website and fill out a questionnaire!

<http://shfg.wildapricot.org/Volunteer>

## Donate to SHFG

### Support New SHFG Events

Please donate to SHFG's current efforts to organize and promote new events and workshops. These events will provide opportunities for professional development: to meet colleagues, exchange ideas, and learn more about the federal community. We urge you to contribute to our General Fund. You can donate the amount of your choice, either by check or online payment (at <http://shfg.wildapricot.org/Donate>).

Your donations also support all activities of the Society, including publication of *The Federalist* newsletter, *Federal History* journal, and stories and news for our website; our annual conference, the Richard G. Hewlett Lecture; and programming such as occasional tours, workshops, and social events that help students and historians develop in their careers.

## Editor's Note

Veterans and active-duty military service members are a central constituency within the federal history community, and this issue of *The Federalist* highlights several organizations that are responsible for historical projects related to U.S. veterans and the history of the federal government's national defense activities. **Susan Thompson** describes the work and collections of the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command History Division, located at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. **Andrew Huber** highlights a recent panel hosted by the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress on post-traumatic stress and music. **Sheon Montgomery** profiles the Vietnam War Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University, one of the largest collections of Vietnam War era archival material outside of the U.S. government. And **Robyn K. Rodgers** describes her work as the inaugural Senior Archivist of the Department of Veterans Affairs History Office in this issue's History Professional feature.

This issue also features a new article highlighting the resources of the Library of Congress—following this summer's feature by JJ Harbster tracing the evolution of the Library's science and technology collections—**Josh Levy** details the history of the science and technology collections at the Library's Manuscript Division. **Gray Brechin** of the Living New Deal revisits an insightful Public Works Administration publication, *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1935-1939*. And I highlight an important, newly released, historically themed video game, *Blackhaven*. Read about the recommendations released by the National Archives and Records Administration's internal task force on racism, receive an update on the renovation of the National Cryptologic Museum, and see an open letter from a community of survivors at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in this issue of *The Federalist*.

Comments and suggestions are welcome at [shfgfederalist@gmail.com](mailto:shfgfederalist@gmail.com) or on Twitter [@faithtomfaith](https://twitter.com/faithtomfaith).

## Federal History

### CALL FOR PAPERS

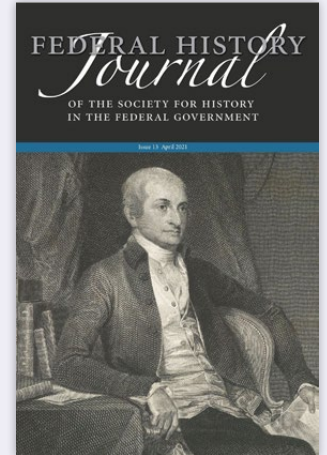
*Federal History*, journal of the Society for History in the Federal Government, seeks submissions for its April 2022 issue.

The journal promotes an interdisciplinary approach in its efforts to advance knowledge of the history of the federal government as well as of the professionals who produce historical work in government offices. It features scholarship on all aspects of the history and operations of the U.S. federal government, and of critical historical interactions between American society and the U.S. government, including the U.S. military, 1776 to the present.

It also publishes articles investigating contemporary issues and challenges in federal history work, including the areas of institutional history, interpretive work, museum work, records management, oral history, digital history, education, and library science. The journal highlights the research of historians working in or for federal agencies, in academia, and as independent scholars.

Federal History is an annual, peer-reviewed academic journal published both in print and online. It is indexed by Ebscohost. Read current and past issues at <http://shfg.wildapricot.org/page-18340>, and submission guidelines at <http://shfg.wildapricot.org/Submission-Guidelines>.

Send a draft and CV to the editors at [federalhistory@gmail.com](mailto:federalhistory@gmail.com) for prompt consideration.



## Feature Your Project!

Want to spread the word about your work? *The Federalist* newsletter prints information about federal history projects and issues affecting federal history programs.

If you or your organization have news items related to federal history that you would like printed in *The Federalist*, or if you have a press release, feature article, or profile you would like to contribute, email the editor at [shfgfederalist@gmail.com](mailto:shfgfederalist@gmail.com).

*The Federalist* welcomes contributors with information highlighting news of the profession, or who are willing to describe their projects for the SHFG audience!

## National Archives Releases Recommendations from Internal Task Force on Racism

Last year, as our nation was confronting ongoing issues related to racial justice, Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero established a task force of National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) employees to identify issues of racial inequality in both our customer-facing operations and internally within our workplaces, in pursuit of an equitable and inclusive environment for all employees and customers.

“As the home of this nation’s founding documents—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—we have a special responsibility to the ideals that all people are created equal, that all people have equal protection under the law, and that there is a common good that includes us all,” Ferriero said. “Although we as a nation have fallen short at times, these are the goals we aspire to as Americans, for all Americans, and the ideals that drove the work of the task force.”

The 35 members of the Archivist’s Task Force on Racism formed three groups:

- The main Task Force on Racism addressed the employee experience (issues such as recruitment, advancement, retention, assignment of work, and access to opportunities); diversity and inclusion (how we interact with each other and our customers); and race-based harassment and discrimination.
- The Subgroup on Archival Description examined matters relating to anachronistic or offensive terminology that have been used to describe our historical records;
- The Subgroup on Museums examined how we ensure a diversity of representation, viewpoints, access, and outreach in our exhibits, education, and public programs.

These groups researched contemporary conditions within NARA, consulted staff and experts outside the agency, and scrutinized issues such as the hiring process and workplace culture and what researchers and the broader public see and understand of the National Archives’ work. The result, released to staff in April 2021, is a final report that identifies issues “both explicit and implicit” that stem from structural racism.

The task force recommended a robust series of actions to move the agency forward on a path toward diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. Ferriero accepted the recommendations in full.

“It is obvious to me from my reading of the report that we share a common desire to make NARA a better and more equitable workplace. It also points out our responsibilities to the greater archival community, acknowledging harmful past practices of our own, and building on the work of other archival and cultural heritage institutions which have led the way on efforts towards change,” Ferriero told employees at a May 11, 2021, town hall meeting to discuss the report. “This is a remarkable milestone, but as I’ve shared with the task force members, this is just the beginning.”



*The National Archives Building in Washington, DC.  
(National Archives photo)*

The following are some of the report’s recommendations:

### **For researchers, museum visitors, and other members of the public**

- Establish meaningful consultation, engagement, and collaboration with underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Reimagine the National Archives Rotunda at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, to create a more inclusive and historically accurate tribute to the nation’s founding.
- Ensure our exhibitions across the agency better reflect the experiences and roles of all people who have lived in what is now the United States.
- Establish a clearly defined virtual exhibit and education outreach program, specifically welcoming Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).
- Engage in a comprehensive reparative description program, ensuring that our historical records are described using respectful, accurate, and discoverable terminology. Alert users to potentially harmful content in the National Archives Catalog; create a road map for correcting harmful language; and develop processes to correct description for under-described and over-described records.
- Focus digitization efforts on records related to underrepresented communities.
- Address the needs of non-English and low-English-proficiency speakers to promote equal access to our services.

### **For current and future employees**

- Refocus current programs into a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Program.
- Evaluate hiring practices and policies for bias, unfairness, and legality; evaluate our performance management system to ensure that NARA staff are evaluated on the quality of their work, without racial or other discrimination.
- Develop targeted recruitment programs aimed at meeting diversity goals in NARA’s workforce.
- Develop a strategy to train, recruit, and retain more diverse staff in senior leadership positions.

- Examine and address barriers that discourage or prevent Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) from securing staff, internship, and volunteer positions.
- Develop a centralized internship program, with in-person and virtual offerings, to recruit and bring awareness to students of diverse backgrounds.
- Establish training and development programs to promote an equitable environment.

The full report, which includes the methodologies used in the task force's assessment and more detailed recommendations, is now available to the public: <https://www.archives.gov/files/news/>

#### *"U.S. Army Communications" from page 1*

To improve and expand its outreach capabilities, CECOM launched a new CECOM Historian website at the end of November 2020. Available at <https://cecom.army.mil/Historian>, the website features some of the most popular aspects of CECOM, Signal Corps, Fort Monmouth and Aberdeen Proving Ground history. A highlight of the site is a search feature that allows the user to explore and request tens of thousands of documents and photographs from the CECOM History Archive, including the collection of over 10,000 technical manuals, a popular resource for amateur radio "hams". Along with an "Ask the Historian" link, the new website allows the public the opportunity to access the resources associated with over 100 years of communications and electronics history. Individuals can search for keywords or within specific collections.

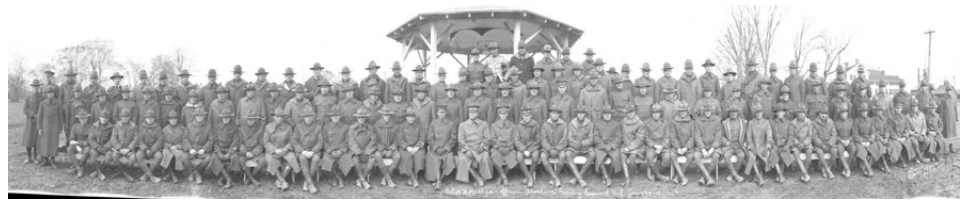
Features on the website currently include one on the Army pigeon service, and another on the development of communications and electronics equipment, including radar and night vision. Information is also available on how people can donate documents to the archive. Highlights include photographs from the earliest days of the Signal Corps laboratories, along with photographs of pigeons and equipment.

Since 2016, one of the History Division's focus areas has been the development and execution of a Hall of Fame to celebrate and capture the leadership lessons from former members of the community. In 2020, what had been the CECOM Hall of Fame expanded to become the C5ISR Hall of Fame. The program's intent is to preserve the history of the C5ISR Community, and give all members a sense of heritage, honor, pride and belonging. The Hall of Fame recognizes and memorializes former members of the C5ISR Community, which includes both Soldiers and civilians from the CECOM, Army Contracting Command—Aberdeen Proving Ground (ACC-APG), Combat Capabilities Development Command (CCDC) C5ISR Center, Program Executive Office Command, Control, Communications—Tactical (PEO C3T), Program Executive Office for Intelligence, Electronic Warfare and Sensors (PEO IEW&S), and the Network Cross-Functional Team (Network CFT), who have made a significant and enduring contribution to the Community and the

#### *archivists-task-force-on-racism-report.pdf*

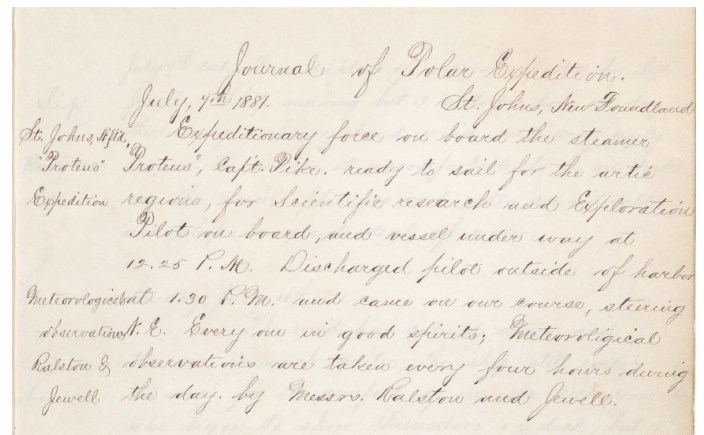
NARA has begun taking the first steps to implement many of these recommendations, in part through the framework of Executive Order (E.O.) 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, which outlines a whole-of-government approach to advancing equity and opportunity for all.

NARA leadership and staff are dedicated to working for meaningful and long-lasting changes for our employees and for the communities we serve. We look forward to sharing our progress with you as it unfolds.



**Above:** Panorama of COL Phillips at Aberdeen Proving Ground, January 1919, from Frank Cole Collection.

**Below:** H.S. Gardiner Journal entry from Greely Polar Expedition of 1881, July 7, 1881.



Army. These organizations share a common heritage and a mission of providing Command, C5ISR systems to Soldiers.

Membership in the C5ISR Hall of Fame is open to any former Soldier or Department of Army (DA) Civilian assigned to the above listed organizations, whether at headquarters or subordinate organizations. Since 2016, six classes, totaling 30 inductees, have been inducted into the Hall of Fame (<https://cecom.army.mil/Halloffame>). Nominations are open from October to January, and a 10-person selection board evaluates their significant and enduring contributions to the C5ISR community's historic and ongoing missions. Classes are limited to no more than five individuals per year, honored with a formal induction ceremony in the mid-June time frame, in celebration of the Army and Signal Corps birthdays.

*Susan Thompson is the CECOM Command Historian.*

## Science and Technology Manuscript Collections at the Library of Congress

By Josh Levy

In the summer issue of this newsletter, JJ Harbster highlighted some of the milestones in the development of science and technology collections at the Library of Congress (“Evolution of the Library of Congress Science and Technology Collections”, *The Federalist*, 2nd Series, Number 69, Summer 2021, pgs. 6-7). As she suggested, general collections overseen by the Library’s Science, Technology and Business Division are complemented by special collections found elsewhere, of manuscripts, rare books, prints and photographs, maps, moving images, recorded sound, and international collections. The Library’s manuscript collections relating to American history, overseen by its Manuscript Division, chronicle the lives and work of individuals across numerous scientific and technological fields, constituting an invaluable resource for researchers. They also tell an intriguing story of the place of science and technology within American culture and memory, and of the history of science itself.

The Manuscripts Division was founded in 1897, the same year the newly-opened Jefferson Building allowed the Library’s bursting collections to escape the confines of the U.S. Capitol. Since then, division staff have focused on acquiring papers of individuals of national eminence, along with other source materials it deems to be of substantial importance. The division now maintains more than 70 million analog items across 12,000 separate collections. Those collections have built on a foundation of diplomatic, military, and political history, including the papers of 23 presidents and more than 35 Supreme Court justices, to incorporate substantial holdings in African American history, women’s and gender history, legal history, arts and literature, and the history of science and technology.

Prior to the First World War, division staff mainly acquired science and technology manuscripts ad hoc, wherever they seemed especially relevant to American culture and society. Among their first technology acquisitions were the papers of John Fitch, one of several inventors with a claim to the steamboat. They arrived with the Library’s 1867 purchase of Peter Force’s private library. Force, an enthusiastic collector of early American manuscripts and former mayor of Washington, D.C., had accumulated a nearly unmatched private stash of printed matter, maps and atlases, and around 150,000 manuscript items. Over the division’s first two decades, only a few substantial science and technology acquisitions joined the Fitch collection. There were the papers of E. G. Squier, an archaeologist whose investigations of indigenous mound building became the Smithsonian’s first publication, U.S. Naval Observatory superintendents Simon Newcomb and Matthew Fontaine Maury, and U.S. Coast Survey superintendent Alexander Dallas Bache. But already a pattern was developing, of centering those who excelled in Washington’s way of doing



*Manuscript Division reading room, circa 1930-1940.*  
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/93509740/>.

science: navigating political rivalries while entangling their own work with the priorities of federal institutions.

A few other major science and technology collections were acquired during the war, like the Samuel Morse Papers, but the trickle started to increase in the 1920s. Manuscripts at the intersection of science and exploration were brought in, frequently with a military dimension, including the papers of geographer Joseph Nicollet, civil engineer Montgomery Meigs, American Red Cross nurse Clara Barton, and polar explorer Evelyn Briggs Baldwin. The end of the decade then brought two key changes. First, a grant from the Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics sparked the development of a national aeronautical library within the Library of Congress, which also stimulated aeronautics manuscript acquisitions. The division ultimately built one of the world’s most extensive early aeronautics archives, made up of more than a hundred collections that include the papers of Octave Chanute, the Wright Brothers, “Hap” Arnold, Carl Spatz, and Wernher von Braun.<sup>1</sup>

Second, historian J. Franklin Jameson, notable in part for his participation in the founding of the American Historical Association, was made the division’s new chief. Jameson subsequently worked to expand manuscript acquisitions beyond political and military history to other areas of intellectual and social thought, including the history of science.<sup>2</sup> An expanded range of acquisitions followed. The papers of Panama Canal engineer George Washington Goethals and naval ordnance inventor John

<sup>1</sup> Ronald S. Wilkinson. “Manuscript Collections” in *Aeronautical and Astronautical Resources of the Library of Congress: A Comprehensive Guide*. (Washington: Library of Congress, 2007), 153-185.

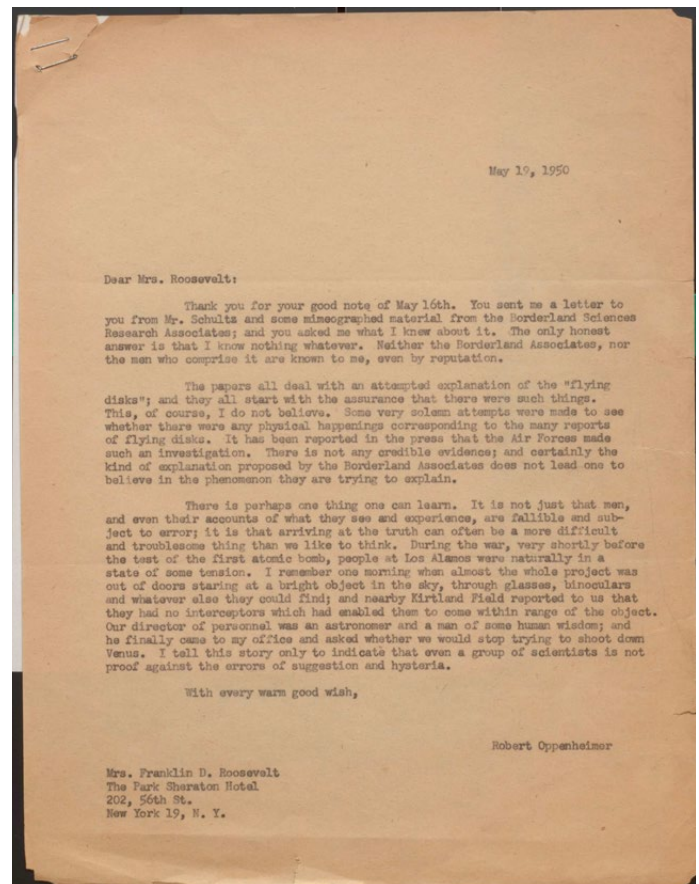
<sup>2</sup> John Y. Cole and Jane Aikin. “Manuscript Division and Collections” in *Encyclopedia of the Library of Congress: For Congress, the Nation & the World*. (Washington: Library of Congress, 2004), 340.

A. Dahlgren built on prior strengths in military history. But the division also acquired the papers of surveyor Andrew Ellicott, statistician Walter Francis Wilcox, sugar chemist Charles Albert Browne, birth control activist Margaret Sanger, botanist Mira Dock Lloyd, and inventor Alexander Graham Bell.

Science and technology acquisitions accelerated significantly during the 1950s. At the time, scientific research was growing closer to politics and the military, the division's traditional collecting areas. Scientists had been thrown onto center stage after the success of wartime projects like radar and the atomic bomb, and the model of what physicist Alvin Weinberg called "Big Science" was increasingly channeling their work into expensive, large-scale, government projects.<sup>3</sup> The division seized the moment, boosting its science collecting overall and successfully soliciting the leaders of Big Science initiatives like the Manhattan Project, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, Vannevar Bush, I. I. Rabi, and John von Neumann. That expansion also coincided with new partnerships with the Naval Historical Foundation and the Sigmund Freud Archives, both of which housed their collections at the Library. The former now numbers more than 300 collections with several, like the records of the U.S. Naval Observatory, being directly science related. The latter exceeds 130 collections ranging from the papers of Sigmund Freud himself to those of his family, associates, and rivals. Together, they constitute one of the world's most extensive archives of the history of psychoanalysis.

Over the next three decades, the division worked to collect the papers of nationally significant scientists and inventors regardless of field. By the 1990s, however, collecting was expanding even further, notably into women in science and environmental history. The former effort helped bring in the papers of biologist Lynn Margulis, astronomer Vera Rubin, biochemist Maxine Singer, microbiologist Rita Colwell, and geneticist Nina Fedoroff. The latter focus led to the papers of zoologist William Hornaday, environmentalist Barry Commoner, entomologists E. O. Wilson and Thomas Eisner, and Environmental Protection Agency administrator Russell Train.

The Manuscript Division's century-long strategy of documenting scientists and inventors of national significance raises the interesting question of how that significance has been judged, and of the relationship between institutional collecting decisions—at the Library and elsewhere—and evolving ideas about the value of science to the nation. Here, those decisions have produced an exceptional archive of more than 700 science and technology collections that is also, in some ways, broader than it is deep. Still, the numerous minor strengths produced as collections intersect can be revealing, from public science (Margaret Mead, Carl Sagan, E. O. Wilson), to family planning (Margaret Sanger, Gregory Pincus, M. C. Chang), early



*Robert Oppenheimer assures Eleanor Roosevelt no "credible evidence" of flying saucers exists, in a letter dated May 19, 1950. From the J. Robert Oppenheimer Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.*

computing (Herman Hollerith, John von Neumann, Claude Shannon, John Backus), animal rights activism (Ann Cottrell Free, Henry Spira), polar exploration (Frederick Cook, Finn and Edith Ronne), and more. Taken as a whole, the division's collections seem to map out the shifting prestige of scientific work, its changing relationship to the state, and evolving attitudes regarding what constitutes scientific and technological progress, and who gets to participate in it.

Of course, the collecting continues. The division is now working to expand its science policy acquisitions into science activism, including environmentalism and animal rights, racial and gender advocacy in scientific and technological fields, alternatives to mainstream scientific practices like ethnomathematics, and collections that reveal not only innovation but the maintenance of existing technologies and infrastructures as well. If any of the collections above interest you, or if you have an idea for a future acquisition, please reach out at [jlevy@loc.gov](mailto:jlevy@loc.gov)! I look forward to hearing from you.

*Josh Levy is the historian of science and technology in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress.*

<sup>3</sup> Alvin M. Weinberg. "Impact of Large-Scale Science on the United States." *Science* 134, no. 3473 (July 21, 1961), 161-164; David Kaiser. "The Postwar Suburbanization of American Physics." *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (December 2004), 852.

## The History Professional *An Interview with Robyn K. Rodgers*

*Robyn K. Rodgers serves as the inaugural Senior Archivist within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) History Office. In this role, Ms. Rodgers is responsible for developing archival standards, practices, and operations for the VA History Program and the National VA History Center, to be established on the VA Medical Center Campus in Dayton, Ohio. Ms. Rodgers comes to VA from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), having served as Chief Archivist. She graduated with honors from Virginia State University holding bachelor's degree in American history, as well as a master's degree in Information and Library Sciences with a concentration in Archival Management from San Jose State University.*



*Robyn K. Rodgers*

*Interview by Thomas Faith*

### **Why did you decide to become the Senior Archivist for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) History Office?**

They offered to let me! The chance to build a cabinet-level archival and history program from the ground up doesn't come around all that often. It was just such an exciting opportunity.

### **As the inaugural Senior Archivist in the VA History Office, what are your current priorities?**

My first priority -always- is taking care of my people; we've been fortunate enough to have had several excellent detailees and graduate assistants. Because this is such a new startup, each of these folks have brought a specific expertise to the table and helped us integrate their specialty into our business policies and practices. Being small makes for tight team cohesion and that has to be fostered so that everyone has the best outcome. My second priority is development. That means development of relationships, practices, policies, as well as our collection. It comes with many moving parts, all with their own story, way of doing things, and requirements, so one must find the connection points. If there isn't a connection point, then it must be made and that can be delicate. Third is building our collection, both digital and physical. As the word gets out, we've been so fortunate to have been approached with some excellent building blocks from which to grow. It may seem odd that the collection is third but I feel strongly that if we want a strong collection, we have to have strong infrastructure in place to support it first.

### **Are there unique challenges associated with being the "first" person in a newly-created position?**

Yes. I often tell this story so, Dear Reader, stop me if you've heard it before. In the federal government, we don't usually get new buildings, right? New programs move into buildings that others have used, in some cases for over a century. My current "home" was built about 1901. There are always things left in closets, old posters on the wall, soy sauce packets and so on. Related, Mike Visconage (VA Chief Historian) is a gifted storyteller; ask him about his first walk-through in one of the buildings. When I arrived, the previous occupants, a civilian entity, had cleaned out so well that there

was not so much as a plastic spoon. All the things we tend to take for granted weren't there. I borrowed a garbage can from the nursing home across the street until we worked through the right way to put those kinds of requests in. That in itself is a challenge because so many things are done via a web-based systems and we're not always in them. We had to figure out how to get our line item added for this system or that one so we could do things like make service requests, buy supplies, etc. It's a lot of thinking about things that one doesn't normally have to think about, and requires a different kind of patience. I am fortunate to work with a team that thrives in that environment, though.

### **What are some strengths of the collection you oversee?**

There are a few ways to answer that. First and foremost, the collection is growing in thoughtful, responsible ways. Many archives are started as an afterthought to a museum or other history collection. We are not. The National VA History Center Archives has a tightly focused mission and the collections reflect that. Everything we've taken in so far can be tied directly back to our Scope of Collections, so everything contributes to telling the story of the VA. Another way to answer that is with a few of my favorite things we hold. Right now, I'm processing the Veterans Health Administration former historian, Darlene Richardson's collection. I've learnt so much about the VA and her work from that. Another star will be our oral history collection done during COVID. I am looking forward to processing those soon. At this point, there are some 50 histories.

### **How will the VA archive be part of the creation of the National VA History Center?**

We are 50% of the package. As it stands today, the Archives is one half of the NVAHC, and the museum collection is the other half. As we work through strategic planning, our mission and scope will expand, but we will always be a core function equal to the other parts.

### **You previously served as Chief Archivist at the NASA History Division. What were your responsibilities like there?**

My time at NASA was such an important part of my life. I



met some of my favorite people on the planet there. My responsibilities were similar there as they are here at VA. Taking care of my people, both those that worked with and for me, was my every day. The second priority was moving from a reactive collection to a modern, proactive one. That required an entire mentality shift and a total rework on policy as well as practice. We had a program review with the entire history team not long after I started. The title of my presentation was something to the effect of “Bringing NASA Archives into the 21st Century—whether it wants to come or not”.

**Is there a particular aspect of your personal or professional experiences that you think most influences your approach to your current position?**

Yes. I spent most of my tenure at NASA working for the chief historian, Bill Barry, now retired. He’s so tired of me telling this story, so I’ll do it again. 😊 I was at a NAGARA conference, getting ready to go down for the evening activities. I was listening to a podcast series, and next one in the queue was one that he’d done about Hugh Dryden, a pioneer of NASA. He hadn’t been talking three minutes and I forgot I was supposed to be somewhere. Given the audience, I am certain a fair number of our readers know Bill or have heard him speak, so they know exactly what I mean. He has a gift making even non-space/aero people go buy a NASA shirt and casually throw

around terms like “the meatball” (referring to the logo) and “STEM” in conversation. I was at NARA at the time, and remember thinking “Gosh, it would be cool to work for that guy.” So, when I got the opportunity to do exactly that, I took it. He is that person you know wakes up in the morning absolutely loving his work. What’s all that got to do with the question? The thing I learnt in that was that when you love your work—which is different than loving your job—people know it. Something intangible conveys when you love it and makes people want to engage, even when they aren’t necessarily into your exact topic. That passion can be a vehicle of positive opportunity in ways that may not be predictable, but definitely beneficial.

**Finally, what is your favorite aspect of your duties?**

Watching it grow. Every day, something happens that takes us one step closer. I love it when shelving arrives. I love watching someone who was never “into history” light up because I showed them something that resonated. I even love getting a filter replaced in the AC, because it means we are directly executing the mission. Even better is when a process clicks into place because it means that the next time we want to do something, it will go more smoothly. It’s incredibly satisfying to see the growth. Not every day is easy, but it’s always good.

## Veterans History Project Hosts Panel on Post-Traumatic Stress and Music

*By Andrew Huber*

The Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress convened a discussion panel in June entitled “Post-Traumatic Stress and Music: the Healing Power of Song” to highlight the work being done by individuals and nonprofits using music to improve outcomes for veterans diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress. The panel was moderated by Rob Jackson of Beats, Rhymes, and Life, an Oakland-based organization that teaches “Hip-Hop Therapy” to young people who have been affected by traumatic experiences. It also included a special video message from actor and philanthropist Gary Sinise, whose nonprofit foundation and musical group The LT. Dan Band has raised over \$100 million for veterans causes.

Jackson led an engaging and informative session with Bob Regan, founder of Operation Song, a nonprofit that teaches veterans how to express their trauma via songwriting. Also on the panel were Patrick Nettesheim, co-founder of Guitars for Vets, a group that donates free guitars and lessons to veterans with PTS, and Doc Todd, a Navy combat vet and hip-hop artist. Together these experts spoke on their personal experiences with veterans using music to express their feelings and alleviate trauma,



identifying success stories and resources available for veterans who wish to include music in their healing process.

“Post-Traumatic Stress and Music: the Healing Power of Song” is currently available on the LOC Youtube page, or on the LOC Webcasts page at <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-9838>.

*Andrew Huber is a liaison specialist at the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress.*

## The Vietnam War Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University

By Sheon Montgomery

The Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive (VNCA) is the largest archive of Vietnam War era research material outside of a government archive—this is even more remarkable when you consider that materials are received only by donation, which means that individuals and organizations decide to trust us with their materials.

The VNCA was founded in 1989 by James Reckner, a career Navy man (two tours in Vietnam) whose post-military career was teaching military history at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. He found that, only a few years after the war had ended, the history of the war was being lost. He recruited a group of Vietnam veterans and they began contacting veterans they knew to collect personal papers related their war experiences. The letters written home from Vietnam in 1967 by Dan Siewert (A/1/1 Marines) was our first collection. This mission was formalized and grew to include collecting, preserving, and making available for research any materials related to all aspects of the war. Materials are primarily received from Vietnam veterans (and others who served in country) and scholars, and our holdings include everything from personal papers to unit newspapers, as well as restored era helicopters!

To enhance access, in 2001 we began digitizing our materials and making them freely available for online research. About 15% of our holdings have been digitized, and over 925,000 items totaling 10 million pages is available online in our Virtual Vietnam Archive research database (<https://vva.vietnam.ttu.edu/>). In the last six months the database has had 1.4 million searches conducted from around the world—the highest number of researchers are in the United States, followed by Vietnam, England, Australia, Canada, and Germany. Besides documenting personal experiences, we have also digitized varied materials: a full set of U.S. Army 1:50000 maps for RVN; enemy documents captured and deemed of intelligence value by the Combined Exploitation Document Center (CDEC, Saigon); military reports including USMC monthly Command Chronologies; Admiral Zumwalt's Agent Orange materials; era research materials on Southeast Asia; advisors/counterparts; interviews with workers on the Ho Chi Minh Trail; and Medal of Honor award case files.

With a staff of seven full-time archivists and specialists, every day we receive and process new collections and add digitized materials online. Our Oral History Project is adding to our 1200 interviews, and we host an annual conference. We are active in outreach and engagement with both online and in person exhibits, and we provide support for student and general research. In 2020 we launched our Volunteer Headquarters, where volunteers can add descriptive details for images, and



*Elementary school students participating in an educational program hosted by VNCA in 2018.*

this year we are adding a transcription project to type text from difficult to read documents to enhance access (<https://vhq.vietnam.ttu.edu/>).

Find us on Facebook and YouTube, and for more information on VNCA, please visit our website (<https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/>) or contact us: [vnca@ttu.edu](mailto:vnca@ttu.edu) / 806-742-9010.

*Sheon Montgomery is the Reference Archivist at the Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive.*

## National Cryptologic Museum: A Reimagined Experience of Cryptologic History

The following was posted at [nsa.gov/News-Features](https://www.nsa.gov/News-Features) on April 12, 2021, by Louis J. Leto, a Public Affairs Officer at the National Cryptologic Museum:

The National Cryptologic Museum (NCM) is working on overdrive creating a reimagined experience of cryptologic history for first-time and repeat visitors alike. The museum's goal is to reopen this summer with completely transformed exhibits, artifacts, and branding. "The National Cryptologic Museum is being transfigured from a good museum that had cool stuff to a great museum that will awe visitors with some of the best stories history has to tell," Museum Director Dr. Vince Houghton said.

NCM staff, painters, construction crews, electricians, plumbers, carpet layers, and carpenters dedicated the past several months to giving the museum a complete makeover, and their work isn't done. Their efforts have included taking down exhibits and displays, painting walls and display cases, improving the plumbing and electrical power, installing new air handlers, adding a new security system, installing state-of-the-art storage shelving for documents and publications, installing proper environment control equipment for rare artifacts. Even the staff office has been upgraded with modern furniture and telephones. "If you read our article on NSA's website earlier this month, you know that we have centuries old, original books and documents found no place else on the planet," Dr. Houghton said. "We have one-of-a-kind artifacts that can be found only at the NCM. Some of these have never been on public display," he added.

NCM Chief Sally Lockley credited many key partners who have played a significant role in making the museum's transformation a reality. "The museum is working as hard and fast as possible to reopen this summer," Ms. Lockley said. "We've had wonderful support from leadership at all levels, Installations & Logistics, and our own support staff in (NSA) Strategic Communications. We want to make sure we do this smartly—moving a 2.5-ton cryptanalytic Bombe, for example, takes a lot of thought and planning," she said.

Throughout the NCM's temporary closure, the staff has found creative ways to share their treasured artifacts and historical books with the public by hosting Library and Artifact Spotlights on its Facebook page. These short videos give the public a taste of what they will see when the museum reopens. Look for more articles and videos on NSA's Press Room and Features pages and social media as the NCM continues its journey—dubbed Operation Makeover—toward sharing the unique history of the "old" in an entirely "new" way.

For more information about the NCM and its programs, please call 301-688-5849, or email [crypto\\_museum@nsa.gov](mailto:crypto_museum@nsa.gov).



*Above: Museum Director Dr. Vince Houghton tears down old displays.*

*Below: Electricians carefully move one of NSA's first supercomputers.*

*Bottom: : This is the largest of three surviving pieces of the Japanese diplomatic ciphering machine the U.S. Army Signal Intelligence Service named PURPLE. NCM featured this one-of-a-kind artifact that was recovered from the wreckage of the Japanese Embassy in Berlin in 1945 during a recent Artifact Spotlight.*



## Revisiting the “Blue Bible”

By Gray Brechin

President Biden’s initial \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal is merely a belated down payment on decades of cost-cutting neglect and deferred maintenance that has brought much of U.S. infrastructure to near third world status. If it passes Congress, his proposal would create a myriad of needed jobs, but it’s also a reminder of the stupendous feat that “Honest Harold” Ickes achieved modernizing the country in just half a decade. During that time, he served as both a seemingly never sleeping Secretary of the Interior and head of the Public Works Administration (PWA), a vast public works construction agency often confused with its sometimes rival, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) under Harry Hopkins.

I call the doorstopper of a tome with the snoozer title *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1935-1939* the Blue Bible not only for its buckram binding of that color but also because of the volume of information, much of which the Living New Deal has used on its website <https://livingnewdeal.org/>. Published by the Government Printing Office in 1939, the richly illustrated book is proof of what could be accomplished in the future.

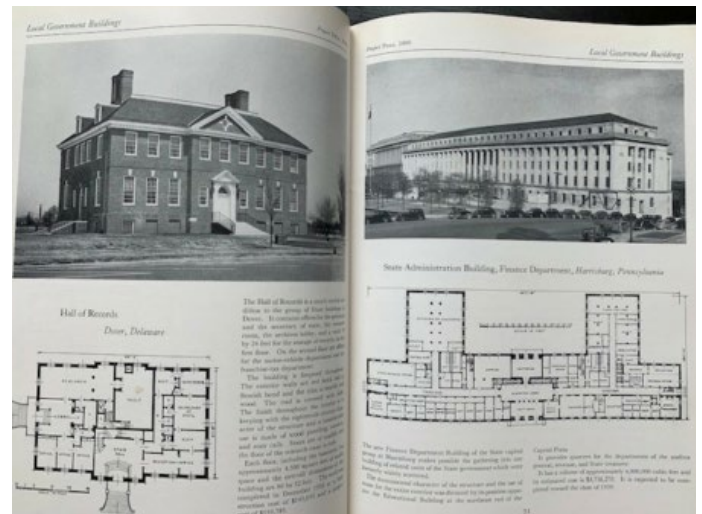
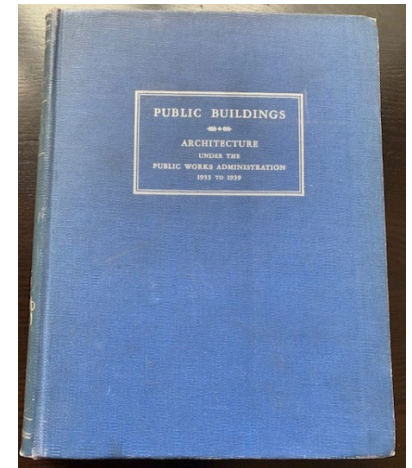
Contracting with both small, local and giant construction companies such as Bechtel and Kaiser, the PWA stimulated the economy by building dams, airports, schools, colleges, bridges, public hospitals, art galleries, sewage treatment plants, lighthouses, libraries and even sleek Staten Island ferries and Coast Guard cutters. At over 600 pages of text, black and white plates and floor plans arranged by building type, the book shows a nation transformed in short order, yet it is only an abbreviation of a larger report requested by President Roosevelt and compiled by architects C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown. They culled hundreds of what they regarded as all-stars from more than 26,000 PWA projects, many of which remain to be discovered.

Despite the gigantic scale and quality of many of the buildings, the plates included in the book identify neither the architects nor engineers responsible for the projects, although the cost is given. They show the smorgasbord of styles popular during the New Deal, ranging from Georgian to Pueblo, from Art Deco and Streamline Moderne to hints of the new International Style. Lavish government patronage led many artists employed by New Deal agencies to compare their era to that of the Renaissance. The architects who compiled the book wrote, “Today architecture in the U.S. is passing through a period of transition, thus creating a condition which has much in common with that which existed in Italy in the 15th century when the architecture of the Middle Ages was changing to that of the Renaissance.”

Scanning the book reminds me of architect and urban designer Daniel Burnham’s famous command in the early 20th century: “Make no small plans,” he said, since “they have no magic to stir men’s blood.” Ickes himself said when dedicating

**Right:** The “Blue Bible,” compiled 82 years ago, is a “best of” the PWA’s thousands of construction projects. Photo by Gray Brechin.

**Below:** The PWA funded and administered the construction of more than 34,000 projects. Many outstanding examples appear in these pages. Photo by Gray Brechin.



California’s Friant Dam that “Even those of us in Washington who are responsible for carrying out orders sometimes lack comprehension of the mighty sweep of this program.”

Short and Stanley-Brown closed their introduction with a claim you won’t find in any government report today: “This vast building program presents us with a great vision, that of man building primarily for love of and to fulfill the needs of his fellowmen. Perhaps future generations will classify these years as one of the epoch-making periods of advancement in the civilization not only of our own country, but also of the human race.”

The Blue Bible reminds us today how far the U.S. once materially advanced civilization, even as forces in Europe conspired toward its destruction.

Copies of the book can be acquired on Amazon as originals or as a 1986 paperback reprint by Da Capo Press.

*Gray Brechin is a geographer and Project Scholar of the Living New Deal. He is the author of Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin. For more on the Living New Deal visit <https://livingnewdeal.org/>.*

## Historiated Games Releases *Blackhaven*

By Thomas Faith

*Blackhaven* is an exciting, new, first-person narrative video game that explores themes in the history of race and slavery in the United States, and considers how that history should influence monuments, museums, and historical sites. In the game, players take on the role of Kendra Turner (voiced by Darby Farr), an undergraduate intern at a historical plantation home who investigates the hidden histories of the mansion while completing tasks assigned by her internship supervisor. Appropriately, the game was released the week of National Intern Day.

*Blackhaven* is the creation of Historiated Games, a video game design studio “dedicated to designing historically accurate, story driven games that challenge and entertain.” (<https://www.historiated.com/>) Historiated Games’ founder James Coltrain is an Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut, with a background in historic architecture and material culture of the early Americas, whose research focuses on the development of humanities-themed games. In *Blackhaven*, Historiated Games has created a compelling game narrative with elegant graphics, that serves as an effective way for a public audience to explore difficult history.

The game begins with you, as Kendra, serving as the lone employee on duty during a federal holiday at the eponymous *Blackhaven* mansion. You perform tasks at the museum gallery, in the archive, and on the grounds of the historic site, which familiarize you with the history of this fictional mansion—a sprawling Virginia plantation that was destroyed during the Revolutionary War and is now a preserved ruin that has been partially reconstructed in glass. Along the journey, it becomes clear that the history told in *Blackhaven*’s displays and signage ignores crucial elements of the past. The hollow and incomplete-looking glass shell of the plantation house in the game serves as a powerful visual metaphor for the way in which history has been inequitably reconstructed at the site.

*Blackhaven* works on several levels. Players perform typical duties of a historical internship while experiencing the thrill of making new historical discoveries. Playing as Kendra exposes players to the unconscious bias and casual racism her character experiences in the workplace, as an intern at a historical site that grossly distorts the past experiences of African Americans like her. The game environment is rich with detail (the museum features a donor wall, and a gift shop with overpriced mugs) and many tropes of historical plantation homes are present, including cringeworthy references to the plantation’s slaves as “servants.” Ultimately, *Blackhaven* is a game about reconciling historical mythologies with the complexities of the past, and about seeking restorative justice at historic sites with racist histories.

By the end of the game, there are still mysteries at *Blackhaven* left unsolved, and at least some of them will likely be explored in *Cassius*, a planned follow-up game set at the



**Above:** The visitors center lobby in the game *Blackhaven*, with the *Blackhaven* historic site in the background.

**Below:** In the *Blackhaven* museum gallery, players explore the mansion’s history.

**Bottom:** The archives in *Blackhaven*, where the player makes a series of disturbing discoveries.



same plantation in 1781. *Blackhaven* is currently available for free download on Steam at <https://store.steampowered.com/app/1668610/Blackhaven/>.

*Thomas Faith is the editor of SHFG’s Federalist.*

## An Open Letter to American Leaders and Citizens From a Community of Survivors at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

We are 50 Holocaust survivors who volunteer at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. We are proud Americans, eternally grateful to this great nation that became our home after the war and enabled us to live in freedom and rebuild our lives and families. Yet today, our solemn obligation to the memory of those who were murdered in the most destructive eruption of antisemitism the world has ever experienced compels us to write this open letter to our leaders and fellow citizens.

We are seeing an alarming confluence of events that we never imagined we would witness in our adopted homeland. We cannot remain silent in the wake of the recent antisemitic attacks in cities and towns across the country. We know firsthand the danger of unchecked antisemitism. This targeted violence is happening

as we also watch with great dismay a persistent and increasing tendency in American public life to invoke the Holocaust for the purpose of promoting another agenda.

It is deeply painful for us to see our personal history—the systematic destruction of our families and communities and murder of six million Jewish men, women, and children—exploited in this way. What we survived should be remembered, studied, and learned from, but never misused.

We thank those leaders in government and other sectors of American society, including business, academia, religious, and civic, who have forcefully rejected antisemitism and the misuse of the Holocaust in our national discourse. We call on all leaders and citizens to do the same.

Katie A., survivor from Austria

Ralph B., survivor from The Netherlands

Ruth C., survivor from Czechoslovakia

Frank C., survivor from Germany

Joan D., survivor from Poland

Ania D., survivor from Poland

Marcel D., survivor from Poland

Maria D., survivor from Poland

Ruth E., survivor from Poland

Arye E., survivor from Czechoslovakia

Peter F., survivor from Germany

Ninetta F., survivor from Greece

Steven F., survivor from Yugoslavia

Allan F., survivor from Poland

Gideon F., survivor from Czechoslovakia

Albert G., survivor from France

Agí G., survivor from Hungary

Rachel G., survivor from Poland

Peter G., survivor from Hungary

Tamar H., survivor from Yugoslavia

Julie K., survivor from Poland

Mark K., survivor from Ukraine

Theodora K., survivor from Yugoslavia

Maryla K., survivor from Poland

Lisa K., survivor from Italy

Peter L., survivor from Germany

Estelle L., survivor from Poland

Louse L., survivor from The Netherlands

Frank L., survivor from Germany

Emanuel M., survivor from Latvia

Alfred M., survivor from The Netherlands

Joel N., survivor from France

Jill P., survivor from Germany

Kurt P., survivor from Germany

Halina P., survivor from Poland

George P., survivor from Hungary

Samuel P., survivor from Poland

Sylvia R., survivor from Poland

Rita R., survivor from Romania

George S., survivor from Hungary

Nat S., survivor from Romania

Alex S., survivor from France

Rose-Helene S., survivor from France

Esther S., survivor from Germany

Peter S., survivor from Czechoslovakia

Josie T., survivor from Belgium

Susan W., survivor from Germany

Henry W., survivor from Austria

Irene W., survivor from Czechoslovakia

Martin W., survivor from Czechoslovakia

*Last names omitted for personal privacy*

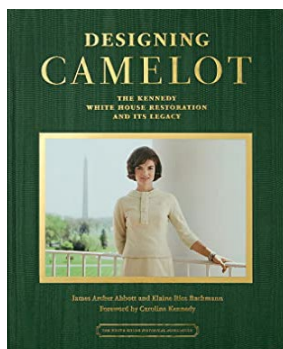
## Recent Publications

### The Chairmanship OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF 1949-2019



communicate sometimes conflicting advice to the Secretary of Defense and the President.

This revised sixth edition of *The Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* is the story of the twenty Chairmen and how they addressed these and other challenges during their tenures, and it provides an updated perspective on the historical development of the institution. While focusing on the roles of the Chairman and Vice Chairman in formulating and implementing national policy, it also examines civil-military relations at the highest levels from World War II through the second decade of the twenty-first century. It reminds us that our commitment to support and defend the Constitution is ongoing and ever challenging. Available for purchase at <https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/chairmanship-joint-chiefs-staff-1949-2019>.



*The Chairmanship of The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1949-2019*. Seventy years ago, on 10 August 1949, President Harry S. Truman signed into law an act that created the position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The fact that this occurred two years after Congress had established the Joint Chiefs of Staff reflects the need at that time for an independent presiding officer to referee interservice deliberations and to

On February 23, 1961, Jacqueline Kennedy launched the most historic and celebrated redesign of the White House in its history. The White House announced Mrs. Kennedy's plan to locate and acquire the finest period furniture, with which the historical integrity of the Executive Mansion's interiors would be restored. Thanks to the vision of the young first lady, who was determined to make her

new home the most perfect house in the United States, a committee was formed, a law was passed, donations were sought, a nonprofit partner was chartered, and an inalienable museum-quality collection that would belong to the nation was born. *Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration and Its Legacy* by James Archer Abbott and Elaine Rice Bachmann, foreword by Caroline Kennedy, celebrates the sixty-year legacy of one of the most influential interior design projects in American history. First-person reflections, personal and public correspondence, media accounts, and photographs

are included with detailed room-by-room analyses of the restoration, anecdotes about the people involved, and insights into the decisions made by Mrs. Kennedy in transforming the house into the national treasure we know today. Available for purchase at <https://shop.whitehousehistory.org/products/designing-camelot-the-kennedy-white-house-restoration-and-its-legacy/>.



*Green Persuasion: Advertising, Voluntarism, and America's Public Lands*, by Jeffrey K. Stine. *Green Persuasion* traces the history and evolution of volunteer-based public lands stewardship in the United States as well as the Advertising Council's work promoting environmental causes, such as the Smokey Bear fire prevention and the Keep America Beautiful campaigns. The Take Pride in America program, developed during the Reagan administration, was revised, neglected, and re-

adopted by subsequent presidencies. Working with the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Ad Council enlivened the Take Pride initiative with public service announcements featuring celebrity spokespersons Clint Eastwood, Charles Bronson, and Louis Gossett Jr. *Green Persuasion* offers valuable insights into how and why Americans have expressed care of the nation's landed inheritance in their collective political choices.

Jeffrey K. Stine is curator for environmental history at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. He founded and coedited the University of Akron Press book series *Technology and the Environment* and has served as president of the American Society for Environmental History and the Public Works Historical Society. His publications include *America's Forested Wetlands: From Wasteland to Valued Resource*, *Mixing the Waters: Environment, Politics, and the Building of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway*, and the coedited volume *Living in the Anthropocene: Earth in the Age of Humans*. *Green Persuasion* is available for free on the Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press website: <https://doi.org/10.5479/si.16549779>.

## Making History

### America250 Foundation

On August 2, 1776, members of the Second Continental Congress began signing the Declaration of Independence. Exactly 245 years later, 20 federal agencies gathered to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in support of activities marking the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. Organized by America250 Director of Federal Partnerships Terry Brown, the signing was held in the Library of Congress' Great Hall. Opening remarks were provided by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission's Lynn Forney Young, Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden, and Commission Executive Director Frank Giordano. Specific plans to support America250 will be announced in the coming months. The 20 federal agencies that signed the agreement include: the Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, Department of State, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Smithsonian Institution, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, American Battle Monuments Commission, Corporation for National and Community Service, Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, Railroad Retirement Board, U.S. African Development Foundation, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, U.S. Office of Government Ethics, and U.S. Trade and Development Agency. America250 is proud to work alongside its federal partners to commemorate this milestone in American history.

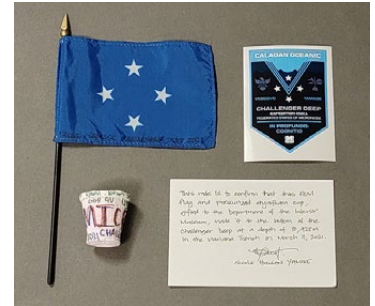
### Department of the Interior

In remarks to the National Congress of American Indians 2021 Mid Year Conference on June 22, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced a Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative: a comprehensive review of the troubled legacy of federal boarding school policies. The announcement was accompanied by a secretarial memo in which Secretary Haaland directed the Department to prepare a report detailing available historical records, with an emphasis on cemeteries or potential burial sites, relating to the federal boarding school program in preparation for future site work. This work will occur under the supervision of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. The recent discovery of 215 unmarked graves by Canada's Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc First Nation at the Kamloops Indian Residential School prompted the Department to undertake this new initiative with the goal of shedding light on these past traumas. The work will proceed in several phases and include the identification and collection of records and information related to the Department of Interior's own oversight and implementation of the Indian boarding school program; formal consultations with Tribal Nations, Alaska Native corporations, and Native Hawaiian

organizations to clarify the processes and procedures for protecting identified burial sites and associated information; and the submission of a final written report on the investigation to the Secretary by April 1, 2022.

### Department of the Interior Museum

Our collection spans "from West to East and from sea to sky," but a recent donation to the Interior Museum gave a whole new meaning to that phrase. On March 11, 2021, Nicole



Yamase made history by becoming the first Pacific Islander to descend to the deepest part of Earth's ocean: the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench. Fewer people have been here than have gone to the Moon! Nicole is from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in marine biology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. We are honored that Nicole has gifted several items from her historically, culturally, and scientifically significant expedition "in remembrance of who we are and what we stand for." The first item is the signed FSM flag that accompanied her in the two-person submersible DSV Limiting Factor on her 10-hour voyage to 10,925 meters below the surface. The second piece is a polystyrene cup she decorated with "United We Stand" and the names of the islands of Micronesia. This traveled in a pouch outside the submersible and literally shows the incredible effects of ocean pressure, shrinking it to the size of a large thimble. The third item is her mission badge sticker. Nicole's gift to the museum arrived during Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander Heritage Month and strengthens the museum's collection of artifacts representing island areas with long-standing connections to the Department of the Interior.

### Holocaust Memorial Museum

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum welcomes the historic announcement establishing a state-to-state dialogue on Holocaust issues by the US Department of State and the Federal Foreign Office of the Republic of Germany. This new commitment to regular bilateral dialogue at the senior governmental level will help ensure that the United States and Germany can coordinate more closely in addressing many of the growing number of challenges that threaten long-term memory of the Holocaust. Given the rise in antisemitism and Holocaust distortion just as the survivor generation is diminishing, this governmental cooperation is more important than ever.

As an independent establishment of the US government charged with commemorating and educating about the



Holocaust and its continuing relevance, the Museum is privileged to play a role in this dialogue, building on our many years of cooperation with several German officials and institutions and with the State Department. We look forward to working with our partners in both the American and German governments to develop approaches that strengthen understanding of the causes and events of the Holocaust as well as its contemporary significance for future generations.

### **Institute of Museum and Library Services**

The Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the American Library Association (ALA), and the Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) announced the launch of Communities for Immunity, an unprecedented partnership to boost COVID-19 vaccine confidence in communities across the United States. With support from the CDC and IMLS, ASTC will lead Communities for Immunity, which will provide funding to museums, libraries, science centers, and other cultural institutions to enhance vaccine confidence where it matters most: at the local level. Building on the many ways they have supported their communities during the pandemic, the partnership will activate museums and libraries to create and deliver evidence-driven materials and develop resources, programs, and approaches specifically designed to help museums and libraries engage diverse audiences in building trust in the COVID-19 vaccine. For more information, please visit [CommunitiesForImmunity.org](https://CommunitiesForImmunity.org).

### **James Madison's Montpelier**

In a first-ever milestone for museums and historic sites that are former places of enslavement, The Montpelier Foundation (TMF) board of directors voted, based on a proposal from the Descendants, to approve bylaws to establish equality with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) in the governance of James Madison's Montpelier, the home of the fourth president and "Father of the Constitution." The vote on bylaws on June 16, 2021, during the week of Juneteenth, followed a resolution passed by the Board of TMF on May 27 which stated, "The Board of The Montpelier Foundation affirms its commitment to collaborate with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) to achieve structural parity with descendants at all levels of the organization." This vote came after tremendous leadership from, and collaboration with, MDC and represents an important step toward equity and reckoning with histories of racism. The relationship provides a national model for resolving historic imbalances in decision making, power, and authority. Learn more at <https://montpelierdescendants.org/>.

### **Library of Congress**

The Library of Congress announced that U.S. congressional records dating back to the days of printing presses and the telegraph are now easily accessible on mobile devices. With this latest update of *Congress.gov*—the official website for U.S. federal legislative information—the Library has transitioned over 33,000 bills and resolutions crafted by Congress between 1799 and 1873 (the 6th to 42nd U.S. Congresses) to a modern, user-friendly web format. The Library's "Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation" collection has been a premier source of historic legal documents since it was first published online in 1998, serving as an access point to the lawmaking of early America. The bills and resolutions provide insight into events during the nation's most formative years, from the Louisiana Purchase to the American Civil War and Reconstruction.



### **National Archives and Records Administration**

The National Archives Catalog recently surpassed two million pages of records enhanced with tags, transcriptions, and comments, thanks to the record-breaking efforts of citizen archivists, as well as agency employees working from home. This was the second major milestone in a year for the Citizen Archivist project, which began in 2014. Enhancements reached one million on August 10, 2020, and two million on June 1, 2021. Citizen Archivists contribute to records by tagging them, making comments, or transcribing documents to make searching easier and allow more members of the public to find documents relevant to their research. Information about the project is at <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist>.

The National Archives History Hub has been named Top Innovator by the Society of American Archivists (SAA). This award celebrates creative and impactful approaches to archives programs and outreach. The National Archives History Hub provides "one-stop shopping" for crowdsourcing historical research, connecting National Archives staff with history experts and enthusiasts alike. The Hub uses an online, community-based customer service model to make historical research accessible, engaging and user-friendly. The platform has served a vital role throughout the pandemic, staying open and responsive to thousands of remote inquiries and requests.

NARA recently partnered with the University of Maryland's Cinema and Media Studies Program to present Films of State: Moving Images Made by Governments, a virtual conference highlighting current scholarship on the topic of government films and filmmaking. The conference sessions are now available for viewing on the National Archives YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/usnationalarchives>. Learn more by reading the blog post at: <https://unwritten-record.blogs.archives.gov/2021/06/24/films-of-state-conference-recordings-now-available/>.

### **National Endowment for the Humanities**

On June 15 the National Endowment for the Humanities announced the distribution of \$51.6 million in funding to the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils and interim partners, the agency's first awards under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021. These funds support humanities organizations, programs, and professionals at the local level, advancing economic recovery within a cultural sector devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A state-by-state breakdown of funding to each humanities council is available at [neh.gov](https://www.neh.gov).

On August 17 the National Endowment for the Humanities also announced \$28.4 million in grants for 239 humanities projects across the country. These grants will support a documentary about the 1873 Colfax Massacre, the bloodiest instance of racial violence during Reconstruction, and the development of Archaeorover, an autonomous robot that uses ground-penetrating radar to search for buried sites, structures, and artifacts of historical and archaeological significance, and other humanities projects. A full list of the 239 grants by geographic location is available at <https://www.neh.gov/news/neh-announces-284-million-239-humanities-projects-nationwide>.

### **National Historic Landmarks Program**

The National Historic Landmarks Program is pleased to announce the release of a new theme study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Discrimination in Housing*. As part four of the five-part Civil Rights in America series, this theme study examines the history of race-based housing discrimination leading to the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Beyond potential NHLs, the context here and in other NHL theme studies can be useful when preparing National Register nominations. The complete accessible PDF including analysis of potentially nationally significant properties is available for download here: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/recent-theme-studies.htm>.

### **National Library of Medicine**

The National Library of Medicine is pleased to announce that we have joined Instagram! Follow [@nlm\\_collections](https://www.instagram.com/nlm_collections) to see highlights from our collections that span ten centuries of global health history. First launched in 2010, Instagram is an American photo and video sharing social networking service. With over one billion monthly users worldwide, Instagram remains one of the fastest growing social media platforms. By joining, NLM aims to raise awareness of our holdings to boost discovery, access, and use of our collections and encourage users to engage with the collections through the platform's liking, sharing, commenting, and location tagging features. Followers can expect to see a variety of visuals and learn interesting details on our page. Explore images and videos from our expansive collections of books, manuscripts, archival collections, audiovisuals, journals, and more.

### **National Park Service**

The National Park Service (NPS) reopened Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, following a complete rehabilitation of the site and transformation of the visitor experience. New exhibits and research allow the NPS to interpret the history of the Custis and Lee families alongside that of the more than 100 enslaved people who labored on the plantation. Together, their stories reveal a more complete picture of life at Arlington House and of the people and events that changed our nation.

The rehabilitation, which began in 2018, was made possible through a \$12.35 million donation by philanthropist David M. Rubenstein to the National Park Foundation. NPS curators worked to conserve or restore more than 1,000 historic objects and acquired 1,300 antiques or reproductions, including several artifacts associated with African American history which will be displayed for the first time. The project stabilized the foundation of Arlington House, restored exterior finishes and hardware, re-coated decorative masonry faux-marble finishes, completed interior painting, repaired plaster, rehabilitated windows and doors, and reset the brick portico floor. The work also included new or improved electrical, lighting, security, climate management and fire suppression systems. The historic grounds and kitchen gardens were realigned to allow for accessibility.

### **National Trust for Historic Preservation**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, through its African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, announced more than \$3 million in grants to 40 sites and organizations dedicated to preserving landscapes and buildings imbued with Black life, humanity, and culture. Thanks to the generosity of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and other funders, this year's awards represent the largest single disbursement in the Action Fund's four-year history. In that time, the National Trust has funded 105 historic places and invested more than \$7.3 million to help protect sites where Black history happened. Action Fund grants are given across four categories: capacity building, project planning, capital, and programming and interpretation. See the full list of grant recipients, and learn how they will use the funds to preserve places that tell the full American story at <https://savingplaces.org/stories/2021-action-fund-grant-recipients>.

### **National Women's History Museum**

In celebration of 25 years of service and dedication to amplifying women's distinct contributions to our nation's history both past and present, the National Women's History Museum launched the first of a four-part virtual exhibit series, *Feminism: The Four Waves* in April 2021, with the next exhibit in the series, *Feminism: The Second Wave*, debuting on June 1. (<https://www.womenshistory.org/exhibits/feminism-second-wave>) This series of exhibits delves into the complex history of the feminist movement and breaks feminism down into each "wave." The remaining two exhibits on the third and fourth "waves" will debut later this year and will be complimented by virtual programming. The exhibits are available in both English and Spanish.

### Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations

No member of SHAFR was better known for archival research and promoting archival access for other SHAFR members than Anna K. Nelson. It could not be more appropriate, therefore, to award the inaugural Anna K. Nelson Prize for Archival Excellence to an archivist who is equally identified with promoting and facilitating archival research and access. For that reason, SHAFR's Historical Documentation Committee—Richard Immerman (chair), Doug Selvage, Kelly McFarland, Jim Brennan, and Hannah Gurman—voted unanimously and enthusiastically to bestow the 2021 Nelson Prize on David Langbart for his decades of service to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). David requires no introduction for SHAFR members. He has offered us, and our students, the expert advice that has assured that our visits to NARA were both efficient and productive. We have also benefited from reading the informative, insightful, and fascinating blogs that he regularly distributes. For historians of U.S. foreign relations, archivists are unsung heroes. By honoring David Langbart with the inaugural Anna K. Nelson Prize for Archival Excellence, SHAFR takes a small—yet significant and long overdue—step toward correcting this oversight.



### United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

The new guidelines, *Visitors count! Guidance for protected areas on the economic analysis of visitation*, published by UNESCO and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) put forward a standard methodology for evaluating the impact of protected areas on the local economy. The guidelines aim to help national stakeholders, protected area managers and researchers count visitation and measure economic impacts consistently through a standardized approach. Developed by a team of international experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group (TAPAS Group), the guidelines aim to help management authorities fulfil international reporting requirements to global conventions. Access it at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2323>.

### Veterans Affairs History Office

Excited to announce that the VA History website is live at <https://www.va.gov/history/>. Engagement has been an early goal for the VA History Office (VAHO). The site provides a portal for external constituents, as well as an ongoing information resource for our internal supporters. We have established a steady feed of historical features and articles to showcase our

commitment to telling the VA story. I invite you to visit the Features page to catch up on all the stories.

### Veterans History Project

The Library of Congress Veterans History Project (VHP) observed Post-Traumatic Stress Awareness Month with a panel discussion on Wednesday, June 23, as part of a virtual program titled “Post Traumatic Stress & Music: The Healing Power of Song.” The discussion debuted at 8 p.m. ET through the Veterans History Project Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/vetshistoryproject>) where panelists and a moderator answered questions and addressed remarks in the comments section. The Veterans History Project has hosted PTS Awareness events since 2014. You can view more panel discussions at [loc.gov](http://loc.gov) and stories of service from veterans at [loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-w](http://loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-w)

## Internships in Federal History

### *The Federalist* Seeks Early-Career Professionals!

*The Federalist* needs graduate students and early-career professionals to participate in a feature on internships and early-stage career opportunities in the federal government: “Internships in Federal History.”

If you are a current or recent federal history student who served in an internship, fellowship, pathways, or similar appointment, and you'd like a short description of yourself and your work featured in an upcoming issue of *The Federalist*, please email the editor at [shfgfederalist@gmail.com](mailto:shfgfederalist@gmail.com). If you currently work with interns or other early-career individuals, please tell them about this opportunity to raise awareness about themselves and the work they do across the federal history community!





# The FEDERALIST

Society for History in the Federal Government Newsletter

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## Federalist Calendar

**Sep. 22–25, 2021. Northern Great Plains History Conference.** Annual Meeting. Eau Claire, WI. Visit <https://www.ngphconference.org/>

**Oct. 13–17, 2021. Oral History Association.** Annual Meeting. Cincinnati, OH. Visit <https://www.oralhistory.org/annual-meeting/>

**Oct. 22–23, 2021. Great Lakes History Conference.** Annual Meeting. “The History of Sociability.” Grand Rapids, MI. Visit <https://www.gvsu.edu/glhc/>

**Nov. 18–21, 2021. Society for the History of Technology.** Annual Meeting. “Environment, Infrastructure, and Social Justice.” New Orleans, LA. Visit <https://www.historyoftechnology.org/annual-meeting/>

**Jan. 6–9, 2022. American Historical Association.** 136th Annual Meeting. New Orleans, LA. Visit <https://www.historians.org/annual-meeting/>

**Mar. 23–26, 2022. National Council on Public History.** Annual Meeting. “Crossroads.” Montreal, Quebec. Visit <https://ncph.org/conference/2022-annual-meeting/>

**Mar. 31–Apr. 3, 2022. Organization of American Historians.** Annual Meeting. “Indigenous/American Pasts and Futures.” Boston, MA. Visit <https://www.oah.org/meetings-events/oah22/>

**Apr. 28–May 1, 2022. Society for Military History.** 88th Annual Meeting. Fort Worth, TX. Visit <https://www.smh-hq.org/annualmeeting/index.html>

**May 11–13, 2022. Center for Cryptologic History.** 18th Cryptologic History Symposium. “Icons and Innovation.” Laurel, MD. Visit <https://cryptologicfoundation.org/what-we-do/educate/conferences/symposium.html>

**June 2–3, 2022. Society for History in Federal Government.** Annual Meeting. “The Resiliency of Institutions.” Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education. Shepherdstown, WV. Visit <http://www.shfg.org/Annual-Meeting>

**June 16–18, 2022. Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR).** Annual Meeting. New Orleans, LA. Visit <https://shafir.org/content/shafir-2022-call-papers>

**July 21–24, 2022. Society for Historians of the Early American Republic (SHEAR).** 43rd Annual Meeting. New Orleans, LA. Visit <https://www.shear.org/annual-meeting/>

**Aug. 20–Aug. 27, 2022. Society of American Archivists.** 86th Annual Meeting. Boston, MA. Visit <https://www2.archivists.org/conference/>