



About Historic Philadelphia, Inc.

Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI) was founded in 1994 by Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, then Philadelphia's mayor, and charged with marketing, promoting, and providing programming for Philadelphia's Historic District, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the experience of both area residents and out-of-town visitors. A nonprofit organization, HPI seeks to offer programs that:

- add visual appeal to Philadelphia's Historic District and bring history to life,
- educate participants about American history, including the American Revolution and the important role Philadelphia played in the events that shaped our nation, and
- develop experiences and cooperative marketing efforts that positively impact the city's economy by extending visitors' stays and increasing the number of attractions seen.

From its inception, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. has managed the **Betsy Ross House**. HPI oversees all aspects of the museum and gift shop operations at the historical site which hosts more than 300,000 visitors each year, making it the fourth most visited historic attraction in the city. The Betsy Ross House, 239 Arch Street, has been open to the public as a museum and memorial since 1898 when it was funded by the privately organized American Flag House and Betsy Ross Memorial Association. Atwater Kent, who funded early 20th century renovations and purchased adjacent properties that now serve as the House's courtyard, donated the property to the City of Philadelphia in 1941. Today, a visit to the Betsy Ross House includes courtyard attractions, a premier audio guide of the historic home, and new hands-on exhibits for visitors of all ages.

As the offerings changed throughout Philadelphia's Historic District with the additions of the Independence Visitor Center, National Constitution Center, and new Liberty Bell Center, so did the need for a way to navigate the rich treasures there. In 2005, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. and Governor Rendell launched a major new heritage initiative called **Once Upon A Nation**. This project aims to enhance and expand heritage tourism on a regional scale by leveraging Greater Philadelphia's historic people, places, and events to develop a unique "living history" experience for area residents and visitors alike. Once Upon A Nation aspires to have people interact with history in such a way that they will find value and inspiration in its message within their own lives.

During the 2005 season, two major components of Once Upon A Nation were created:

- 1) **storytelling and Colonial interpretation** from Benetstitute-trained actors and storytellers throughout Philadelphia's Historic District, bringing history to life right where it happened; and
- 2) **Heritage "Adventure Tours,"** where Colonial interpreters lead visitors on unique walking and trolley tours, traveling back in time to interact with important characters from America's past.

In 2006, HPI put a \$6.5 million investment into the renovation of **Franklin Square**, one of William Penn's original five squares just steps away from the Liberty Bell. Award-winning Franklin Square is an outdoor amusement oasis located in the heart of Historic Philadelphia, featuring Philly Mini-Golf, a restored vintage marble fountain, playgrounds, and the *Philadelphia Park* Liberty Carousel. After a day of experiencing the



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treasures of Philadelphia's history, putt through some of the city's most famous icons, take a ride on brand new hometown horse heroes Afleet Alex or Smarty Jones aboard the carousel, or enjoy a rest next to the restored – and restorative – fountain. Additional summer activities include a 60-ton sand sculpture, free balloon animals, and a Once Upon A Nation storyteller. In 2007, Franklin Square was awarded Best of Philly as Best Playspace for Kids.

In 2007, Once Upon A Nation expanded programming to its second National Park – **Valley Forge National Historical Park**. The collaboration included storytelling and Adventure Tours in the Park during the spring, summer, and fall.

In 2008, the **Lights of Liberty Show** was brought under the Historic Philadelphia, Inc. umbrella, where it was originally created before its debut in 1999. This award-winning nighttime sound and light show was born of a desire by the tourism community and then-Mayor Ed Rendell to add an evening attraction to the Historic District's landscape with the ultimate goal of generating overnight-stays by tourists, who viewed Philadelphia as a day-trip or rest stop on the road from New York to Washington, D.C.

The Lights of Liberty Show takes visitors on a moonlit journey through Independence National Historical Park, walking in history's footsteps with head-turning 3-D surround sound and a lightweight wireless headset, redesigned in 2007. The show's soundtrack includes a stirring original musical score played by Philadelphia Orchestra musicians with dramatic celebrity narration by Walter Cronkite, Ossie Davis, Charlton Heston, Whoopi Goldberg, David Morse, Claire Bloom, Frank Langella and others. The show is set in five acts, from the Stamp Act Protest in 1765 through the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and told in the words of the famous patriots and ordinary citizens who raised their voices against tyranny. Stunning hand-painted images and dazzling special effects are projected up to 50' high onto some of America's most historic buildings. Franklin Court, Carpenters' Hall and the 2nd Bank of the U.S. are transformed from normal daytime buildings into glorious illuminated scenes illustrating the story of our nation's birth. The finale is at a brilliantly-lit Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence scrolls up in grand 5-story illumination and everyone sings "God Bless America." *The Washington Post* praised the show saying it "revitalizes the story of the Revolution" and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called the Lights of Liberty Show "A hands-down winner!" Whoopi Goldberg narrates a children's version and the soundtrack is also available in Spanish, German, Italian and Japanese.

For the duration of the 2008 season, the Lights of Liberty Show will continue providing the first ambulatory sound and light show of its kind in the world, journeying through Independence National Historical Park in a moonlit telling of the American Revolution. HPI has invited world-class exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum to look at Lights of Liberty in the scope of the growth in the historic district and examine future possibilities, to see how it may be re-envisioned to make it complimentary to the new array of visitor experiences that have been created in the past decade. Mr. Appelbaum is already intimately familiar with several major institutions in Historic Philadelphia, having designed the exhibits at the National Constitution Center and brought the storytelling idea to the Once Upon A Nation offerings.

Throughout its existence, **Historic Philadelphia, Inc.** has and will continue to enhance the visitor experience and help strengthen Philadelphia's tourism industry through interpretation and interaction, making our nation's history relevant and real.

For further information, visit www.historicphiladelphia.org or call 215-629-4026.

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