



20TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Historic Philadelphia, Inc. Backgrounder

Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI), now celebrating its 20th Anniversary, was founded in 1994 by former 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 enhances the visitor experience and helps strengthen Philadelphia's tourism industry through interpretation and interaction, making our nation's history relevant and real. Historic Philadelphia, Inc.'s programs include the Betsy Ross House, Once Upon A Nation storytelling and Adventure Tours, Franklin Square, and the *Liberty 360 3D Show* in the PECO Theater.

From its inception, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. has managed the **Betsy Ross House**. HPI oversees all aspects of the museum operations at the historical site which hosts more than 200,000 visitors each year, making it the third most visited attraction in the historic district. 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 a premier audio guide of the historic home, renovated rooms and exhibitions, and new rotating 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 aimed 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, three major components of Once Upon A Nation were created:
 - 1) **Storytelling and Colonial interpretation** from trained actors and storytellers throughout Philadelphia's Historic District, bringing history to life right where it happened; and
 - 2) **One of a kind walking tours** where historic interpreters lead visitors on immersive walking tours, traveling back in time to interact with important characters from America's past.
 - 3) **The Benstutute**, where storytellers and History Makers are trained in the art of storytelling, Philadelphia and American history, and in customer service. Those enrolled undergo hours of studying, training, and rehearsing conducted by faculty and leaders from leading colleges and universities, historic sites, and theatrical venues.
- In 2006, HPI raised \$6.5 million for the renovation of **Franklin Square**, one of William Penn's original five squares just steps away from the Liberty Bell effectively extending the Mall experience. Award-winning Franklin Square features Philly Mini Golf, a restored vintage marble fountain, playgrounds, and the Parx Liberty Carousel. Awarded Best of Philly® two times by *Philadelphia Magazine* and one of the Five Coolest Playgrounds in the United States by Yahoo!
- In 2007, Once Upon A Nation expanded storytelling to a second National Park – **Valley Forge National Historical Park**.

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- In 2008, in partnership with Penguin and under the leadership of Editor Sandra Mackenzie Lloyd, HPI created an anthology of stories: ***Patriots, Pirates, Heroes, & Spies: Stories from Historic Philadelphia***. Comprised of twenty favorite stories from the renowned Once Upon A Nation Storytelling Benches, this book enables visitors to take these unique stories of Philadelphia's history home with them. That same year, the **Lights of Liberty Show** was brought under the HPI umbrella, where it was originally created before its debut in 1999. Also in 2008, the Betsy Ross House re-launched the **Flag Day Celebration**, with a street fair, exhibition of flags through the years, and the world's largest Post-It Note flag. The Flag Day Celebration continues annually in June.
- In 2009, HPI enhanced the food concessions at Franklin Square with **SquareBurger**, a permanent food operation selling specialty burgers, shakes, and other favorites to much acclaim. The facility is operated by a partnership with Starr Restaurants. That same year, HPI launched an annual fundraising event, **An Evening in Franklin Square**, to support the Square's operations. Also added in 2009, was a tribute to Abraham Lincoln's 200th Birthday with a special storytelling route for the Once Upon A Nation Storytelling Benches: *Stories from the Underground Railroad*.
- In 2010, HPI began a complete re-imagining of the Lights of Liberty Show and remodeled **Historic Philadelphia Center**. The Center is the headquarters for Historic Philadelphia, serving as the box office and providing tickets for HPI's tours, as well as the Betsy Ross House and Franklin Square. The Center, across the street from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, features the PECO Theater, serves as the departure point for HPI's immersive walking tours, and offers expanded retail operations operated by Aramark.

The Lights of Liberty experience was redesigned and debuted with digital 3-D technology, creating a new business model and the idea of creating two separate shows: a seasonal nighttime outdoor and separate year-round indoor attraction housed at the remodeled Historic Philadelphia Center. *The Liberty 360 3D Show* in the PECO Theater takes visitors on a patriotic adventure led by Benjamin Franklin in 3D, discovering the stories behind some of America's most beloved symbols of freedom. The 15-minute film surrounds the audience in the customized wraparound PECO Theater.

Also in 2010, with funding from American Express, the Betsy Ross House broke down the first of many plexiglass barriers within the House and the core exhibit, opening up the Nation's only **working 18th-century Upholstery Shop**. To this day, Betsy can be found working in her shop every day.

- In 2011, Franklin Square celebrated its **5th Birthday** and hosted the **Civil War Road Show**. The Betsy Ross House introduced a brand-new History Maker program in conjunction with American Heritage Chocolates, an **18th-Century Chocolate-Making Demonstration & Tasting**. Additionally, **four more barriers** were broken down throughout the House, and the exhibition, **Rally 'Round the Flag: Civil War Color Bearers and the Flags They Carried** was on display for the year.
- In 2012, the permanent event space, **The Pavilion in Franklin Square**, funded by the William Penn Foundation, opened as a year-round venue for birthday parties and corporate events. This new space doubled the amount of events that Franklin Square hosts each year. The Betsy Ross House developed a Colonial medicine garden, and a year-long exhibit, **Potions, Powders and Pills: Making Medicine at Home in the Colonial Era**.

Also in 2012, HPI created a **new education experience**, a highly educational Full Day Field Trip Experience, which sold out during the 2012-2013 season, reaching more than 6,500 students, including providing educational history programs for more than 2,700 students in underserved school communities at no cost to those students.

- In 2013, the **Franklin Square Electrical Spectacle: A Holiday Light Show** debuted as a new tradition for the holidays sparked by Benjamin Franklin's imagination funded by a grant from the William Penn

Foundation. Providing an original twist on typical holiday light shows, Franklin Square's Electrical Spectacle is designed specifically for the Franklin Square space, incorporating an electric 12-foot tall kite and key, highlighting Benjamin Franklin's famous electricity discovery in his namesake Square, and thousands of lights programmed to winter-themed music from The Philly POPS® conducted by Peter Nero. Also in 2013, The Betsy Ross House presented a newly updated audio guide and the brand-new exhibit, ***Flags to Riches: The Stories of Rebecca Franks and Betsy Ross***. It was presented in cooperation with the Naomi Wood Collection at Woodford Mansion, and examined the two sides of the American Revolution through the eyes of two ladies who lived it.

- In 2014, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. will debut **Colonial For A Day**, a program where children can don Colonial-period attire and immerse themselves in their Historic Philadelphia adventure. The Betsy Ross House will introduce a new exhibit: ***Navigating Night: Life After Dark in Colonial Philadelphia*** that examines nighttime rituals in the 18th century. Visitors will be able to find out how the colonists prepared for bed, slept, and other interesting facts about life after dark.

Historic Philadelphia, Inc.'s programs include the Betsy Ross House, Once Upon A Nation storytelling and immersive walking tours, Franklin Square, and the *Liberty 360 3D Show* in the PECO Theater. For all Historic Philadelphia, Inc. event information, call 215-629-4026, 877-462-1776, or visit www.historicphiladelphia.org to buy tickets online. Tickets available in person at the Historic Philadelphia Center, 6th & Chestnut Streets. Follow HPI at twitter.com/HistoricPhilly and twitter.com/FranklinSqr, on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/HistoricPhila> or <http://on.fb.me/FranklinSquare>, or on Instagram [instagram.com/historicphilly](https://www.instagram.com/historicphilly).

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