

**Historical Society of Pennsylvania and
1838 Black Metropolis**

**Public History Teach In
Using|Doing|Teaching
Black History**

**Friday, April 25-26, 2025
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
1300 Locust Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107**



Friday April 25

4:30-6:30

Community Resource Fair

- POWER Library
- Jubilee School
- Reet Starwind
- CADO
- Amy Cohen, author of *Black History in the Philadelphia Landscape* (available for sale)
- Drexel University College of Medicine, Legacy Center Archives
- African American Genealogy Group of Philadelphia
- Stenton

Friday April 25

6:30-8:30pm*

Key Note

Arrived, New Names **Nell Irvin Painter**



Historian and artist Nell Irvin Painter will present "Arrived, New Names," as the keynote address Friday evening. Sharing insights about her commissioned artwork focused on William Still's *Journal C* of the Underground Railroad, she will set the tone for exploring how creative projects can share complicated and compelling histories. In her talk, she will dive into her research on 19th century anti-slavery movements and the interwoven literary, political, and artistic work of Black communities.

Schedule at a Glance

Saturday April 26, 2025

8:00-8:45

Registration and breakfast

8:45-9:00

Welcome and Purpose of the Conference

9:00-10:15

Panel 1: Grassroots History & Community Preservation

10:30-11:45

Panel 2: Art, Writing & Storytelling as Historical Interpretation

11:45-1:00pm

Lunch

1:00-2:15pm

Panel 3: Personal Passion to Tell Untold Histories

2:30-3:45

Panel 4: Education & Public Engagement

4:00-5:15

Panel 5: Walking Tours, Mapping & Local History

5:15-5:30: Wrap up and next steps

Saturday April 26

9:00-10:15am

Panel 1: Grassroots History & Community Preservation

◆ **Synopsis:** This session highlights the importance of community-driven efforts to preserve, protect, and share Black history in **historic sites**.

Shamele Jordon and Linda Shockley, Lawnside Historical Society

- Sharing the inspiration behind the Lawnside Historical Society and the Peter Mott Underground Railroad Museum in Lawnside, NJ—a historically Black town founded by free people escaping enslavement.”

Dr. Abdul-Rahim Muhammad

“New Africa Center”

- Discusses the work of the New Africa Center in Philadelphia to preserve and present the history African American Muslims, with a focus on education, public engagement and cultural preservation.

Samuel Still, Dr. James Still Historic Site and Education Center

- Presents the legacy of Dr. James Still, 19th century herbalist and brother of abolitionist William Still, and current efforts to preserve the James Still Historic Site and Education Center.

Laura Keim and Stephanye Watts, Stenton Museum

“Inequality in Bronze” project

- Presents the "Inequality in Bronze" project, a community-based effort to recognize and honor Dinah, an enslaved woman who saved the house during the Revolution.

Moderator: Faye Anderson

10:30am-11:45am

Panel 2: Writing & Storytelling as Historical Interpretation

◆ **Synopsis:** This panel explores how **artistic expression**—through literature, digital media, and performance—brings Black history to life and fosters deeper engagement with historical narratives.

Octavia McBride-Ahebee, educator and writer

“Dreaming in Black Spaces; An Unexpected Journey of Love”

- Reads from her short story, which explores the historical connection between the Haitian Revolution and Philadelphia’s free Black community.

Pamela Mays McDonald, retired fine arts museum director, Mother Bethel AME Church Historical Society

“Judith Jamison Memorial Tribute: An Inspirational Upbringing at Mother Bethel AME Church”

- Screens and discusses a 7-minute memorial video tribute to Judith Jamison and her connection to Mother Bethel, as well as efforts to preserve Black history through digital media.

Mona R. Washington, playwright/librettist/attorney

“Freedom... and Equality?”

- Presents monologue as an exploration of the terms and concepts of ‘freedom’ and ‘equality.’

Reet Starwind, curator and poet

“Interpreting family legacies through Poetry”

- Presents *Camden Invincible*, a project using poetry and art to interpret family legacies and community stories.

Alisha Laws, LCSW, creative historian

“Visual Artwork”

- Shares digital artwork and research centered on William Still and his role in the Underground Railroad, using creative visual storytelling to make history accessible.

Moderator: Morgan Lloyd

1:00pm-2:15pm

Panel 3: Personal Passion to Tell Untold Histories

◆ **Synopsis:** This panel focuses on **personal research projects** that have resulted in sharing little-known stories with the public.

Tyler Diaz, student, 1838 Black Metropolis scholar in residence
“Uncover Francis Johnson’s Northeastern Tours of 1838”

- Presents original research on Francis Johnson’s 1838 Northeastern tour—the earliest documented tour by a Black bandleader—highlighting early Black musical excellence and cultural mobility.

Faye Anderson, Director, *All That Philly Jazz*,
“Mapping Moses Williams’ Philadelphia”

- Shares her campaign to commemorate silhouette artist Moses Williams, one of the earliest Black museum professionals, through a historical marker and walking tour initiative.

Michael Clemmons

- Discusses ongoing work to uncover and share the history of Stephen Smith, a wealthy Black abolitionist and businessman in 19th century Philadelphia.

Michael Kearney, independent researcher
“The Ganges Families History Project”

- Presents the *Ganges Project*, detailing the stories of Africans freed by the USS Ganges in 1800, placed under the guardianship of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, and indentured out in the region—each given the surname “Ganges.”

Moderator: Michiko Quinones

2:30pm-3:45pm

Panel 4: Education & Public Engagement

◆ **Synopsis:** This panel explores **innovative ways to teach and engage the public with Black history**—whether in classrooms, digital spaces, or community programs.

Rann Miller

- Discusses strategies for teaching Black history across formal education settings and in public facing platforms.

Amy Jane Cohen, author,

“Case Studies in Public Engagement”

- Shares case studies of Black historical interpretation at sites such as Independence Hall, Stenton, and Freedom Fighters’ Way, emphasizing public history in contested spaces.

Ms. Michelle S. Allen, community researcher, Jahyonna Brown, undergraduate community researcher, Haley Kowal, JoY Lab Operations Manager, Drexel University School of Education, West Philadelphia High School Alumni Association and West Philadelphia High School,

“If the Stairs Could Walk and the Walls Could Talk: The Story of the West Philadelphia High School Preservation Project”

- Presents the West Philadelphia High School (WPHS) Preservation Project, a collaborative intergenerational effort between WPHS youth and JoY Lab to document the school's legacy and cultural impact

Dennis Gregg, board member, 339 Manumission Project

“339 Manumissions and Beyond Project”

- Presents the 339 Project, which traces genealogical records and family stories of people manumitted by Quakers, shedding light on early paths to freedom.

Moderator: Richard White

4:00pm-5:15

Panel 5: Walking Tours, Mapping & Local History

◆ **Synopsis:** This panel focuses on **local history initiatives that use tours, mapping, and public history projects** to engage communities with Black historical narratives.

**Judith Robinson, president, NORTH to the WORLD,
“North Philly- The Lay of the Land”**

- Presents an ongoing history project uncovering North Philadelphia’s rich Black history using deeds, wills, and maps to tell community stories.

**Paul Schopp, Assistance director, South Jersey Culture & History Center at
Stockton University**

“Uncovering Black Enclaves Across the South Jersey Landscape”

- Shares research on free Black enclaves in 19th century South Jersey, and how mapping these communities brings visibility to long-overlooked local histories.

**C. Adrienne Rhodes, founder and Eric Zino, library director, Preserving Black
Haddonfield Project**

“The Preserving Black Haddonfield History Project”

- Presents a comprehensive community history initiative in Haddonfield, NJ, including a walking tour map, oral histories, and digital storytelling.

Carolyn C. Williams, Independent researcher

**“William G. Harvey and his entrepreneur’s life in Center City Philadelphia,
1847 to 1993”**

- Discusses William G. Harvey, a free Black North Carolinian whose his parents sent him to Philadelphia in 1839 to learn bootmaking. This research discusses his entrepreneurship as a shoemaker and bootmaker, Civil-War era restaurateur, real estate investor, and role in the Black elite from 1847 until his death in 1893.

Moderator: Melissa Benbow Flowers