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**RUTH LILLY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
AND ARCHIVES**

National Council on Public History

Records, 1977-2002

Mss 021

National Council on Public History Records, 1977-2002

Mss 021

17.7 c.f (17 cartons, 9 pamphlet boxes, and 11 audio cassettes)

ABSTRACT

The National Council on Public History (NCPH) was formed in 1979 to meet the needs of historians practicing history outside the traditional realms of academia. The NCPH acts as a mechanism for bringing this diverse group of professionals together through programs; a scholarly journal, *The Public Historian*; workshops and seminars; and an annual conference. A membership organization, governed by a board of directors and operated by an executive secretary, the NCPH continues to serve a diverse audience.

This collection contains correspondence, minutes, reports, papers, publications, and audio tapes.

ACCESS

This collection is open to the public without restriction with the exception of *The Public Historian*'s manuscript records. Manuscript records less than 20 years old are closed. The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

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ACQUISITION

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HISTORICAL NOTE

The creation of the National Council on Public History (NCPH) in 1979 symbolized the changes in the historical profession during the 1970s. As the number of available teaching positions in the nation's colleges and universities became more limited, a growing number of historians found employment in historical societies, museums, governmental agencies, private businesses, and other venues outside of traditional academia. By the late 1970s these practitioners of "public history" (a phrase coined by Robert Kelley of the University of California, Santa Barbara) wanted a professional organization that would address their concerns and interests. The establishment of NCPH met this need.

The movement towards an organization for public historians began in 1978 when G. Wesley Johnson organized a public history conference in Phoenix. Johnson, Kelley's colleague in the History Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), was involved with the public history graduate program that Kelley had started at UCSB in 1976. The Phoenix meeting, funded by a grant from the Arizona Humanities Council, brought together people from many parts of the country who were involved in public history. The success of the conference created interest in holding a national conference the following year.

The 1979 meeting, called the National Conference on Public History, met in April in Montecito, California, near Santa Barbara. UCSB hosted the event, which received financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over sixty people attended the conference. The attendees expressed a desire to create an organization that would promote and support public history and its practitioners, so a steering committee was set up to explore the feasibility of the idea.

The steering committee met in the main seminar room of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. on September 14, 1979. The committee voted to organize a new professional organization, to be known as the National Council of Public History (NCPH). G. Wesley Johnson would serve as the acting chairman. The group appointed five study committees to work out the details for setting up NCPH and to plan the second National Conference on Public History, to be held April 18-20, 1980, in Pittsburgh. The study committees would present their recommendations to the full steering committee at the second conference.

At its April meeting the steering committee voted to adopt a council structure for NCPH rather than make it a membership organization, in part due to concerns of whether there would be enough people willing to join NCPH to make it a viable membership organization. The steering committee became the Board of Directors of NCPH and increased its membership to 32 members by adding two people from each of the five study committees. Each member made an annual payment of \$100 to be on the Board. The bylaws adopted in December, 1980, formally codified this arrangement. The bylaws also established the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, composed of the chair, the vice-chair, the secretary, the treasurer, and three members of the board. G. Wesley Johnson became the first chair of NCPH and served two terms

in the position. An amendment to the bylaws in September, 1990, changed the position titles to President and Vice-President. The individuals who have held the position of Chair or President have been:

G. Wesley Johnson	1981-1983
Larry Tise	1983-1984
Jack Holl	1984-1985
Noel J. Stowe	1985-1986
Michael Scardaville	1986-1987
Arnita Jones	1987-1988
Barbara J. Howe	1988-1989
Theodore J. Karamanski	1989-1990
David Kyvig	1990-1991
Brit Allan Storey	1991-1992
Martin Melosi	1992-1993
Philip Scarpino	1993-1994
Patricia Mooney-Melvin	1994-1995
Jeffrey Brown	1995-1996
Diane F. Britton	1996-1997
Jannelle Warren Findley	1997-1998
Dwight Pitcaithley	1998-1999
Michael J. Devine	1999-2000
Alan Newall	2000-2001
Patrick O'Bannon	2001-2002
Rebecca Conard	2002-2003
James Gardner	2003-2004
Sharon Babaian	2004-2005
William Bryans	2005-2006

The bylaws also created an associates category. Associates were not members of NCPH but could subscribe to the NCPH newsletter and to *The Public Historian*, NCPH's official journal.

The Public Historian actually predated NCPH. The Graduate Program in Public Historical Studies at UCSB, using funds provided by the Humanities Division of the Rockefeller Foundation, published the first issue in the fall of 1978 with G. Wesley Johnson as editor. Additional money from the Rockefeller Foundation supported the publication of subsequent issues until the subscriber base and other revenues grew large enough to cover costs. The University of California Press became the publisher of *The Public Historian* in 1981. Johnson remained the editor of the journal until 1987. His successor was Carroll Pursell, who served as editor until leaving UCSB in 1989. The third editor was Otis L. Graham, Jr., who held the position from 1989 until 1997, followed by Shelley Bookspan from 1999 to 2002. She was succeeded by Anne Marie Plane, who served as editor from 2002 until the Spring 2004 issue

when she and Mary E. Hancock became co-editors. In 2006 Randy Bergstrom became the editor.

The first issue of *The Public Historian* to have the NCPH's name included in it was Winter 1981. The arrangement of joint sponsorship of the journal by the NCPH and The Society for History in the Federal Government has a turbulent history. Sponsorship gave the two relatively new organizations a connection to a professional journal, but the definition of sponsorship was unclear. The Society for the History in the Federal Government ended its sponsorship in 1982 and the NCPH became the only sponsor. By the mid-1980s, both the NCPH and the University of California Press had different ideas about the original meaning of the sponsorship. Throughout the 1980s, ownership of the journal was debated. During these debates, NCPH considered publishing a separate journal. Cost, the long history with the University of California, and the overall quality of *The Public Historian* made the idea of a new journal unfavorable. The contracts were rewritten in favor of a joint sponsorship and ownership of the journal by the NCPH and the University of California Press.

The growth of NCPH in its early years soon created the need for a staff person who could handle the day-to-day operations of the organizations. In April, 1981 the Board established the position of Executive Director. Philip Cantelon, a member of NCPH's first Board of Directors, accepted the unpaid position and served until 1983. In that year Board Member Donna Munger of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission took over the administrative work of NCPH with the title of Executive Secretary.

Important changes took place in NCPH during 1984. An amendment to the bylaws converted NCPH from a council into a full membership organization. The Board of Directors voted to create the Executive Secretariat, an administrative office run by the Executive Secretary that would handle all of the general business operations of NCPH. The position of Executive Director was discontinued. The Board requested that interested institutions submit proposals for hosting the Executive Secretariat, and in April, 1984 awarded the office to West Virginia University (WVU). Barbara J. Howe, director of WVU's public history program, became the Executive Secretary.

The Secretariat remained at WVU until 1987, when it was moved to Northeastern University in Boston. R. Wayne Anderson became the Executive Secretary and held the post until 1989, when Susan Keats took over the position. In 1990, the Secretariat moved to Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), its current location, with Elizabeth Brand Monroe assuming the position of Executive Secretary. An amendment to the NCPH bylaws in 1992 changed the position's title to Executive Director. David Vanderstel succeeded Monroe in 1994, and John Dichtl, the current Executive Director succeeded him.

NCPH's 1980 articles of incorporation stated the purpose of NCPH was "to encourage, represent, promote, and foster educational and other activities relating to public history in the United States." One of the means used to meet these objectives has been the annual meetings.

Beginning with the 1979 and 1980 meetings that played an important role in the creation of NCPH, the organization has held annual meetings where sessions and workshops deal with both the theoretical and practical sides of public history. In 1986, NCPH held its first jointly sponsored annual meeting with the Organization of American Historians (OAH). The two groups continue periodically to hold joint annual meetings. NCPH has also held joint meetings with the Society for History in the Federal Government, the Southwest Oral History Association, and other historical organizations.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records of the National Council on Public History are divided into five series: Board of Directors Records, Administration Records, Conference Records, Program Records, Publication Records, and Audio Cassettes. For initial research of the overall activities of the NCPH, the records of the Board of Directors is the best place to look. The Board records cover the longest period of time containing the most valuable information. Details about the specific issues discussed in the Board records can be found through the other series.

Board of Directors Records, 1979-1999, contain the minutes of the board of directors meetings, committee reports and minutes, and correspondence. These minutes include attachments of reports, important correspondence, and agreements. The files related to the committees contain the minutes of committee meetings and reports. The committee files are arranged alphabetically and include the Program Committee, Finance Committee, Local Arrangements Committee, Publications Committee, Nominating Committee, Membership Committee, Curriculum and Training Committee, and Cultural Resources Management Committee. The length and frequency of the reports depended greatly on the activity of the committee.

Administration Records, 1979-1998, contain correspondence, reports, financial information, and official documents maintained in the office of the Executive Director of the NCPH. The documents important to the founding of the organization are found here and include the articles of incorporation, bylaws, and other official documents. For further information regarding the founding of the NCPH, the correspondence files located in this series should also be consulted. The correspondence includes details related to how the organizational structure was determined and problems related to the programs and activities of the NCPH from the point of view of three NCPH officers. The records also include the membership directory, a list only compiled in 1989 and 1993, and documents dealing with the policies and operation of the offices of the NCPH. The financial documents include a financial status report covering the decade of the 1980s, correspondence, annual financial reports, and tax returns. For the most complete financial picture of the organization, both the annual financial reports and the tax returns should be consulted.

Conference Records, 1980-2001, contain programs, schedules, and reports to the Board from the NCPH Annual Conference. The programs give an account of the sessions, speakers, workshops, and tours given at the conferences. The final reports compiled by the program committee consolidate the information about the conference including finances, conflicts and resolutions, and impacts of the conference.

Program Records, 1980-1997, contain correspondence, grant proposals and applications, oral histories, workshops, surveys, and scripts. These files contain brief accounts of the types of activities and services performed by the NCPH. The survey files include copies of the original survey forms containing the initial questions and the final reports. These surveys of the organization's members include topics such as participation in NCPH activities, member characteristics, and the trends within a member's particular institution.

Publication Records, 1977-2002, contain the files of *The Public Historian*, *Public History News*, and other publications sponsored by the NCPH. Included in the records of *The Public Historian* are copies of the journal's accepted and rejected manuscripts with correspondence and editorial comments, the files of the editorial board, reports from the press, and records of negotiations between the University of California Press and the NCPH about the status of the journal. These groups are arranged alphabetically with the manuscript files arranged separately, divided into accepted and rejected papers, and organized chronologically. This is the largest portion of the collection and detail the editorial process and viewpoints of the association. Manuscripts less than twenty years old are not open to the public.

Audio Cassettes, 1979-1994, contain recordings documenting the creation and development of the organization with interviews of individuals instrumental in its formation.

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