



THE ARCHIVAL GEMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

By MICHELE M. TOURNEY

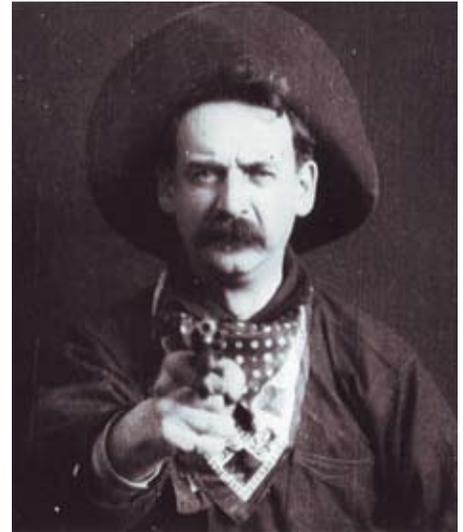
Filmmaker Ken Burns's latest documentary, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, chronicles the nearly 150-year history of the nation's parks, historic sites, and monuments. As in his other projects, Burns relied heavily upon archival materials—photographs, correspondence, first person accounts, and historic film footage—to tell the story of some of our nation's priceless places.

While enjoying this epic, it is easy to overlook that the very materials Burns used to tell the story are *themselves* national treasures. Burns's team found records of the National Park Service

(NPS) in the holdings of the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and numerous institutions throughout the country. But did you know that the NPS itself maintains many of its own historic collections? These materials—over 123 million items located at 295 park sites—are on par with those of the Smithsonian.¹ Individuals or institutions outside of the Park Service donated some of these items, but the bulk come from NPS resource management activities such as archeological digs, environmental conservation, and historic preservation and interpretation. Archival records make up the majority, followed by archeological artifacts. In

turn, NPS professionals utilize historical documentation like the collections at the Harpers Ferry Center in West Virginia to develop exhibits, write park histories, and generate reports that govern historic preservation projects.

Even parks that are known for their natural wonders hold extensive historic collections: Yellowstone National Park—the world's first national park—houses nearly



Courtesy of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park

Movie still from The Great Train Robbery (1903), produced by Thomas A. Edison, Inc. The photograph is one of approximately 60,000 items preserved at Thomas Edison National Historical Park.

3,000 linear feet of archival records and thousands of cultural objects and natural history specimens. The National Archives, recognizing the inherent value of this collection and its significance to the park, designated Yellowstone as the official repository for those records as part of its affiliated archives program.

However, like many park resources, these invaluable collections are at risk. In a 2008 review of NPS cultural resources

(Continued on page 3)



Courtesy of the National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection

This flag witnessed the opening battle of the Civil War. The Fort Sumter garrison flag undergoing conservation at Harpers Ferry Center, 1981.

HISTORY ASSOCIATES' WESTERN AREA OFFICE— TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE

By GABRIELE G. CAREY

Today outside the History Associates office the temperature is 33° with snow forecast for later this afternoon—and the temperature is 76° under sunny skies. Both statements are true, because History

Associates has an office in Southern California as well as its headquarters office in Maryland. The Western Area Office (WAO), now located in Brea, California, began in 1989 as a project office at the County of Los Angeles Hall of Admin-

istration and has been going strong for the past twenty years. Though the WAO is much smaller than the main office, it works on projects in all of History Associates' business lines—sometimes alone

(Continued on page 2)



OUR FAVORITE HISTORY BLOGS

One way that many of us at History Associates keep up with our professions is by following blogs devoted to historical, archival, or museum topics. These blogs may be about professional practice or the state of theory, or may highlight unusual documents and artifacts. Here are a few examples we find particularly interesting or useful:

Preservation Nation (<http://blogs.nationaltrust.org/preservationnation>)

The staff blog of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, this is a fascinating window into the work of people committed to saving the structures of the past for the future to enjoy.

British Toy Making (<http://www.vam.ac.uk/things-to-do/blogs/british-toy-making-blog/home>)

Archivists and curators at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London are engaged in a three-year project to digitize the archives of several British toy makers, and they are using a blog to post updates or interesting finds and to “crowd-source” answers to questions their work has raised.

Digitization 101 (<http://www digitization101.com>)

Written by a professor at the Syracuse University School of Information Studies, this blog features a lively discussion of challenges that institutions face when it comes to digitization and digital media.

Bibliodyssey (<http://bibliodyssey.blogspot.com>)

This blog typifies the excellent work being done by energetic non-professionals. Institutions all over the world are digitizing parts of their holdings, but many of these collections gather dust in lonely corners of the Internet. This blog posts the editor’s discoveries in these out-of-the-way sites.

Otis Historical Archives (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/medicalmuseum/>)

While not strictly a blog, this Flickr stream is an excellent example of an institution finding a creative way to bring its collections to light. Maintained by the staff of the Otis Historical Archives at the National Museum of Health and Medicine, part of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the stream displays public domain images from the history of American military medicine, many dating back to the Civil War.

Did we miss your favorite history, museum or archive blog? E-mail the link to Joe Neumann at jneumann@historyassociates.com. We will try to include it in an upcoming issue of HAIpoints.

TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE

(Continued from page 1)

and other times teaming up with our Rockville-based colleagues to handle projects around the country or across the globe.

The WAO’s director, Dr. Gabriele Carey, pioneered the office in 1989 when she moved from her former position as Orange County Archivist. Since then, she has applied her expertise in archives, historical research and writing, and museum interpretation to a wide variety of history, litigation, and records projects. She is ably assisted by Abigail Dixon, who started with History Associates in Maryland, and LeeAnn Erwine, who joined the office as an intern while in graduate school. The WAO team applies its training and project experience in history and information resources management to an interesting mix of client needs.

Historically, the WAO has worked on hundreds of projects. We have identified and organized historical records for various California cities, counties, universities, and state agencies such as California State Parks. We have found documents and written reports related to environmental, water rights, and land use litigation. We have also conducted historical records needs assessments for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and developed records programs for the City of Santa Barbara, among other public and private organizations. Recent projects have run the gamut from developing an archives program for a major toy manufacturer to conducting research in public and private water resource and tribal records in support of environmental litigation, developing records retention schedules for a California city



Courtesy of the Orange County Great Park Corporation

The sun setting over Orange County Great Park in Irvine, California. History Associates is working with the park to document its development and history.

to help the city more efficiently manage its information resources, and working with Oregon universities to plan cooperative strategies for preserving the state’s history in the face of budget challenges.

For twenty years our clients have enjoyed the local knowledge and global reach afforded by the History Associates presence in the West. Even as the virtual world shrinks the real world, clients continue to value our ability to collaborate as one company. While some of our staff members shiver, others bask—but we all work well together to assist our clients, whatever the weather report!



STAFF HIGHLIGHTS: JANET HOLSINGER

Janet Holsinger juggles two demanding jobs for History Associates. She is deputy director of our growing exhibits service line, contributing to projects like the National World War II Museum and the Normandy American Cemetery Visitors Center. She works with our clients and partners to ensure that museum visitors have a powerful, enjoyable, and educational experience. "It's challenging," Janet says. "As collaborators providing content and interpretation for multi-media presentations, we have to find ways to approach historical topics in new and fresh ways." As the company's training coordinator and "first influencer" for new staff, she applies her previous teaching experience in schools and museums to help her colleagues adapt their experiences and skills to the ways that we do history with our clients.

ARCHIVAL GEMS

(Continued from page 1)

programs, the National Academy of Public Administration found a backlog of nearly 68 million uncataloged items (55 percent).² Uncataloged items face a greater risk of loss and deterioration due to lack of proper storage and maintenance. Additionally, backlog prevents NPS professionals, researchers, and the general public from accessing these materials. Such problems are often compounded through staffing shortages when an archivist or curator retires or transfers without a replacement.

History Associates has considerable experience in working with NPS professionals to address these challenges. Since 2001 we have partnered with eleven sites to reduce their backlogs through various projects. History Associates archivists have written processing and file plans and conducted records surveys. They have cataloged books and photographs and have processed and cataloged archival collections for sites from Fort Union Historic Trading Post on the North Dakota/Montana border to Independence National Historical Park in downtown Philadelphia. With each project, History Associates helps the NPS to mitigate further risk to its invaluable collections.

We know that many of you share Burns's and our enthusiasm for the national parks, and as you might imagine, our archivists and historians relish the opportunity to help preserve and present "America's Best Idea."

¹ National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), "Saving Our History: A Review of National Park Cultural Resource Programs," October 2008, 38, http://www.napawash.org/pc_management_studies/NPS_Saving_Our_History_Oct2008.pdf (accessed 1/14/2010).

² NAPA, "Saving Our History," 39.

THE BEST CLIENTS IN HISTORY

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE:

developing standard operating procedures for agency document handling and serving as the center's as-needed records management service providers.

ORANGE COUNTY GREAT PARK:

continuing to staff historical programs that help the Great Park fulfill its educational mission and document its evolution from a military facility to the country's largest regional park.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

returned to the Geography and Map Division to continue rehousing and correcting bibliographic information for more than 24,000 United States subject and region maps.

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE:

conducted documentary research and oral history interviews in support of an update of Professor John B. Hattendorf's 1984 history entitled *Sailors & Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College*.

SCHERING-PLOUGH CORPORATION:

researched and wrote a brief illustrated book recounting more than 150 years of discovery and innovation for the pharmaceutical firm in advance of its merger with Merck.

CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA:

developed records retention schedules and a municipal records program for the city and its departments.

A MAJOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY:

continued doing research for an exhibit relating to the history of a major multinational pharmaceutical firm, including reviewing company records in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

LITIGATION RESEARCH:

continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC.



For nearly thirty years, clients have turned to History Associates to tell their stories, preserve and manage their records, and answer their historical questions.

Histories

Books, websites, and oral history projects

Exhibits

Multimedia content development, image and artifact research, and scriptwriting

Interpretive Planning

Planning, research, writing, and mapping for any historic site

Historical Research

Research and analysis for litigation, regulatory compliance, and public relations

Archival Services

Appraisal, organization, description, and management of historical materials

Records Management

Records inventories, surveys, files management, and retention schedules

History Associates serves clients nationwide and around the world.

Copyright © 2010 • History Associates Incorporated



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The 2010 United States Census will be the first ever to use handheld computer technology, but did you know that the census has a history of technological innovation?

- In 1888, Herman Hollerith won a Census Bureau contest to design a more efficient tabulating machine. In response to the success, Hollerith founded the Tabulating Machine Company in 1896, known today by what name?
 - A: IBM
 - B: General Electric
 - C: Hewlett-Packard
 - D: Digital Equipment Corp.
- For the 1950 census, the Census Bureau commissioned a new technology: the first civilian electronic computing device. This massive computer weighed 16,000 pounds and filled a room. What was the name of this computer?
 - A: ENIAC
 - B: ERMA
 - C: UNIVAC
 - D: EDVAC

- In 1986, the Census Bureau was the first federal agency to use this storage format to publish the results of 1980 and 1982 surveys. By 1990, all census material was published in this method.
 - A: 5¼-inch Floppy Disk
 - B: Zip Drive
 - C: 3½-inch Floppy Disk
 - D: CD-ROM



A Census Bureau worker using a tabulating machine, ca. 1908.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

E-mail your answers and contact information to Jason Gart at jgart@historyassociates.com. Correct responses will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 amazon.com gift card!

Congratulations to Ms. Pam Peterson of UBS WM-Americas. She was the winner of the Summer 2009 Website Survey contest.

HISTORY ASSOCIATES INC.
300 N. STONESTREET AVE.
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850
T 301.279.9697
F 301.279.9224
WWW.HISTORYASSOCIATES.COM

THE BEST COMPANY IN HISTORY®

History Associates INC.



PRST STD
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Terra Alta, WV
Permit No. 46