HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC HISTORY COMMUNITY
An Oral History

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PROJECT

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HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY
An Oral History

A Project

By

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Department of History
Abstract

of

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Statement of the Problem

No broad spectrum oral history exists of Sacramento’s public history community. This oral history project surveys the economic impact to Sacramento’s public history community during the recession that began in 2008.

Source of Data

Resource materials were obtained at the California State University, Sacramento; University of California, Davis; the Sacramento Central Library; California State Office of Historic Preservation; a variety of online news and governmental sources; and from the narrators themselves.

Conclusions Reached

The Historic Sustainability: 2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey has interpreted and preserved oral histories from members of the Sacramento region’s public history community during the national recession that began in 2008. The interviews provide valuable information for the historical record.
DEDICATION

To my daughters, Laura and Susan for their encouragement and patience,

and to Dr. Lee Simpson for her unwavering support.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Project Significance

Sacramento is home to a vibrant public history community that has grown over many decades. Its origins can be traced back to the legislative charge in 1849 ordering the preservation of governmental records, or the restoration of Sutter’s Fort in the 1890s by the Native Sons of the Golden West.\(^1\) Preserving the past of a city with the unequaled folklore of found gold, has always been important to local residents.

Post World War II growth in the city led to a newly founded Sacramento State University (CSUS) and with it, a Professor of History who founded the first historical society focused on researching and publishing unexplored tales from the city’s past. In tandem with growing interest in local history, the 1960s saw a new movement towards preservation of historical sites and properties. Federal, state and local governing bodies established legal mechanisms to reduce destruction of these sites and began to acknowledge significant landmarks of Sacramento’s past. The general public, members of the state government and academic historians from the University began to form groups that acknowledged and preserved the region’s rich history.\(^2\)


Sacramento’s growing public history community expanded exponentially in the 1980s, when CSUS began offering a Public History Master’s concentration. The ubiquitous term “public history” began to identify an academic field of study; a career path; a course of action; an expanding network; and a way to define why and how history is important to its locality. It is the prerogative, therefore, of the students of CSUS’s sentinel Public History Program to continue to define and delineate contemporary issues within the field.

The most predominant issue from 2008 to 2010 is the recession. Like the nation, Sacramento has been experiencing the backlash associated with the recession beginning in 2008. The impact of this economic crisis on a local level has been disseminated for site specific venues such as the financial dilemma facing State Parks or the closure of West Sacramento’s History Museum. However, the repercussions within the broader context of Sacramento’s public history community are unknown. It is imperative to record and preserve the stories of Sacramento’s public historians during this time. This oral history survey documents the remembrances and experiences of individuals working and volunteering within Sacramento’s public history community. The data gathered from research and the oral histories will record the personal experiences of the narrators and address the issues and solutions faced by a range of practitioners. This will provide future information for tracking patterns and trends within the public history continuum for future researchers, academia and the general public.

This record is intended to provide valuable information for those venues directly affected and emphasizes the need to record the ‘current history’ of organizations that
preserve and protect history. It is not the intent of this project to conduct an in-depth analysis of each organization’s financial status or to address every issue presented by the interviewees. Although it is too late to avert the crisis, the paradigm change that accompanies economic hardship can produce unprecedented collaborative opportunities within the fields, some of which are described below.

**Project Objectives**

The primary objective of the Historic Sustainability project was to create an oral history record of individuals working or volunteering within the Sacramento public history community during the recession that began in 2008. The project had two goals. First, the author sought to identify different types of public history venues within the Sacramento region. The second goal was to preserve the memories and recollections of the narrators in audio and written formats that would be accessible to future researchers, academia and the general public.

**Methodology**

A preparatory review of oral history projects was conducted at the CSUS Library, which proved helpful in developing a rough outline. To achieve the project objective, a three-phase approach was established and each phase consisted of several steps. During Phase One, the author reviewed course texts, handouts and notes from Dr. Chris Castaneda’s Oral History Seminar (Spring 2008). The next step was to identify public history venues in the Sacramento region. The author and Dr. Lee Simpson selected five possible fields: historic preservation, historic/environmental consulting, library/archives, historical societies and cultural heritage (State Parks) venues. Consulting with experts in
each of the fields aided in developing a pool of potential narrators. In order to limit the
scope of the survey and create a quality end product, the narrators were chosen for either
their institutional knowledge or expertise in their field and/or their connection to the
CSUS Public History Program. A latent component of this project is to establish the
education and work paths that lead narrators to their particular field in public history.
Lastly, a list of core questions was developed including:

- Has the Recession affected your field?
- If so, how?
- What solution(s) have been considered and/or implemented?

Phase Two encompassed development of the interview process. Contacting and
soliciting narrator participation was the first step. The interviews were begun using a life
history approach and types of questions (open, closed and leading) varied to allow for
maximum narrator input. The seven interviews juxtapose similar types of organizations
(two State departments, two historical societies (one is also a museum), a rare book room
in a public library and two consulting firms) identifying their experiences and responses
to the recession from their individual perspectives. Phase Three was spent compiling the
research, transcribing and reviewing the interviews (or having them professionally
transcribed) and combining of all materials into a final project. The information gleaned
from the interviews was presented in a neutral manner without commentary.

It is important to note that the findings for each venue (and interview) are the
result of research prior and after the interviews. No information was included that took
place in the field after the date of the actual interview. It was not the intent of this report
either to conduct an in-depth analysis of each organization’s financial status or to address
every issue presented by the interviewees. Lastly, each of the interviews provide personal data that delineates the narrators’ paths into the public history arena, however, this information has not be analyzed as the objective of the project lie outside of this information.

**Review of the Oral History Literature**

In addition to reviewing the notes and texts required by Chris Castaneda’s Spring 2008 Oral History course, the author reviewed contemporary literature in the field. Procedural guides provided a basic understanding of project development. The first text reviewed was Edward D. Ives book, *The Tape Recorded Interview.*³ Ives devotes his practical book to important components of organizing and completing oral history interviews. This includes technical information such as using recording equipment, identifying different types of recording formats and archival methods. His non-technical information addressed paperwork (release forms, contact and thank you letters), interviewing techniques and transcription. Ives was both a folklorist and historian and his contribution to the field lies in his emphasis of documenting the lives of ordinary people within the context of their cultural traditions. For Ives, the historical record is best imbued its eye witness’s personal nuances as they share their remembrances.

Paul Thompson’s, *The Voices of the Past* also provided a systematic approach to designing an oral history project. Like Ives, Thompson promotes capturing the views of the common man though for educational purposes. He promotes organized projects that fill the gaps of history by personalizing its characters and recognizes oral testimony as

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vital supplements to written documentation. Thompson states that historigraphical training helps to formally establish a scholarly methodology for oral history, which is mandatory in academic pursuits.\(^4\) Tracing the roots of oral history from a preliterate transmission mechanism to academic field of study, he also explores is the issue of evidence provided by oral histories (factually proving something happened, a subject that will be discussed later in this chapter).\(^5\) Thompson asserts that that oral history provides a unique opportunity to seek historical evidence “exactly where it is wanted” thus capturing history from those that experience it.\(^6\)

Two items of importance were taken from these two readings. First, is the issue of providing agency to common person. The second was locating contemporary historical information to fill a gap using oral history as the medium. The locus of the Historic Sustainability project is recording evidence from the Sacramento public history community and its narrators, while significant in their fields, might have otherwise not have been a part of the historical record.

Further exploration of oral history’s place in education was established by reviewing, Barry Lanman and Laura Wendling’s, *Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians: An Anthology of Oral History Education*. Lanman and Wendling have topically organized a collection of articles relating to the application of oral history in the classroom. One of the articles reviewed provided insight for the Historic Sustainability project as it spoke to the age old question of evidentiary value, a skill set honed through

\(^5\) Ibid, 26.
\(^6\) Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 190.
historian’s academic studies. The credibility of historic evidence is crucial in legitimizing scholarly works for all historical disciplines.

Ronald Grele’s, “Values and Methods in the Classroom Transformation of Oral History” asserts that a graduate course in oral history, is in fact, a course in historiography that must address three essential questions: “how are the documents created, how are they interpreted and how are they presented.” In this article, Grele synthesizes the work of a variety of authors to answer his questions. One in particular resonated an important point for consideration, how scholars in training can utilize interdisciplinary perspectives to add dimension to the historical record. Grele looks to the work of an Italian oral historian, Alessandro Portelli as an example of an interdisciplinary approach. According to Grele, Portelli adds a literary component to oral history by steering away from the issue of historic accuracy (whether the testimony is credible by academic standards) instead, he focuses less on the events and more on the meaning of the narrator’s story. In addition, to the meaning is that ability of an oral historian to interpret the nature of the memories being shared. Portelli strives for a more subjective, interpretation of the events discussed in oral histories in tandem with facts provided by the narrators. For Portelli, oral history ‘best’ practices are emulated by a democratic process that frees the genre from the rigor of historical accuracy by validating is literary content. This does not mean, however, the importance of an oral history is

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just a tale. Author Trevor Lummis in his article, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence” he stated that oral histories are validated by “reliable information” and by the degree to which the narrator’s experience is “typical of its time and place.”⁹ Lummis argues that the degree to which oral history evidence is valid depends upon the issue that the oral history is addressing (or attempting to achieve).¹⁰

While the Historic Sustainability project focuses on the economic impact of the recession within a public history community, it is a perspective piece rather than quantitative assessment. The transcripts of the narrator’s are representative of each individual’s perspectives of the recession in relation to their experiences. Information provided by the narrator’s was not checked for factual accuracy, yet stand as credible assessments of the situation. The narrators’ participation in the Historic Sustainability project expands the historical record by engaging public participation in discussing the effect of the recession in Sacramento’s public history community.

The final literature review dealt with the issue of compliance standards, an essential component to professional field work. The online “Principles and Best Practices” of the Oral History Association aided in conceptualizing quality control.¹¹ Structured expectations for an oral history project are an important reminder of the responsibility of an oral historian in presenting professional quality projects that are useful to future researchers. The standards play two roles, first to act as a resource for

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¹⁰ Ibid, 274.
oral history projects. Secondly, to administer a set of criterion that promotes projects that are carried out in a professional manner. Some of the “Best Practices” involve seeking oral history training; researching the chosen narrator’s and subject matter prior to development of questions; securing a written agreement with the narrator to interview them and release of information; and “striving for intellectual honesty.” ¹² Administering of standards helps in legitimatizing oral history as an academic enterprise.

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¹² Ibid.
Chapter 2
HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The author researched literature of the current recession and its correlation to the public history industry in order to become familiar with the topics of discussion. The information provided in this chapter address a fundamental component of the Historic Sustainability project, the trajectory of the economic crisis. The following information outlines financial aspects of the recession and illuminates the trickle-down effect from federal government to local entities.

What is Public History

The term “public history” was coined in the 1970s to describe historians working (or volunteering) outside of academia. As of 2008, approximately 93% of public history practitioners work in venues outside colleges and universities in a vast array of positions such as government agencies, consulting firms, historic organizations (libraries, archives, etc.), museums, and nonprofit historical organizations.  


14 Kelley, History of the Sacramento County Historical Society.
A decrease in funding for any public history venue jeopardizes the jobs (of practitioners as well as an informed historical record. This information is pertinent to understanding the economic impact of the recession to the region’s public history community. Sacramento’s public history practitioners (paid and volunteer) work in a variety of fields such as historical preservation, cultural resource management (CRM), managing historic sites and parks, museums, libraries and historical societies.

**The Economic Crisis**

In 2007 the United States began experiencing an economic downturn within the banking, manufacturing and housing industries. In December 2008, the National Bureau of Economic Research (the federal agency responsible for categorizing our economic condition) finally acknowledged what most Americans had known for some time that the United States was officially in recession.\(^{15}\) Nationally (and worldwide), this crisis is considered to be the most severe recession since The Great Depression of 1929.\(^ {16}\)

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research the recession officially ended in June 2009, a subject that continues to be hotly debated in the media as private industries continue to fail and government deficits grow.\(^ {17}\)

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In response to the rapidly declining economy, President Barack Obama initiated a proposal in 2008 to jump-start spending. The proposal would provide federal stimulus funding for projects incorporating short and long range goals aimed at saving and creating jobs. On February 17, 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 was signed into law earmarking $787 billion dollars of federal monies for a wide range of programs, grants and benefits extension.\(^{18}\) The projects spurred by this stimulus initiative that overlap public history, are those associated with the governmental functions that monitor federal and state preservation laws. Any project in the built environment (such as the building of cell phone towers, building or residence repair, demolition, etc.) that is funded through federal funds must be reviewed by the Office of Historic Preservation to ensure compliance with federal and state mandated preservation law.

One such law is Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The act states that federal funds cannot be used in projects that will damage properties listed on (or have the potential to be listed on) the National Historic Register. Any federal agency (or agency sponsored by a federal agency) must research the area identified as the “project area”, identify any historic properties, consider the effect of the proposed action on any identified site, and consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer.

(OHP) on ways to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects.\textsuperscript{19} Construction, rehabilitation, restoration or development projects created by the stimulus funds during the recession (ARRA) require Section 106 review because they pose a threat to historic properties. Some of the ARRA projects that require Section 106 review are those affiliated with home energy efficiency, infrastructure projects to transportation (highway and bridge construction and repair), mass transit and rail project and public housing improvements.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{California’s Budget Problems}

California is the third largest state in the United States, and since 2009 it is considered to be in the worst financial condition with over $29 billion in debt.\textsuperscript{21} The state’s rapidly declining economy and increasing debt is echoed in its budget deficits (the difference between spending vs. revenue) for the past two years. In essence, the state has been living beyond it means and its deficit has grown from $7 billion in 2008 to $20 billion as of October 2010.\textsuperscript{22} Some of the issues that have compounded this problem were declining tax revenues, the real estate market meltdown, credit defaults, increasing unemployment and the lowering of the state’s credit rating (the ability to pay back loans).

\textbf{The Dilemma in State Parks}

California is devoted to conserving, protecting, preserving and restoring its natural resources including its cultural resources holdings. State Parks and Recreation manage this inventory, which includes historic buildings, historic parks, Native American

\textsuperscript{22} “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.”
sites and structures, and museums that interpret California history. For the purpose of the Historic Sustainability project, two administrative units within Parks and Recreation were evaluated because of their significance in Sacramento’s public history community. First, is the Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks, which is responsible for overseeing seven historic parks and museums in Sacramento. Second, is the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), the department responsible for administering the review processes required by federal and state historic preservation laws. OHP also assists in the identification, evaluation, and registration of historic building and sites.

In May 2009, Governor Schwarzenegger recommended closing 220 State owned parks to save $213 million over a fourteen month period. The dispute over State Parks and Recreation’s funding seems relatively small in comparison with the state budget deficit of $19 billion and the reasoning for the proposal, was that parks were a non-essential function within the state. After many contentious months of wrangling with Park’s advocates, the Governor’s May 2010 revision fully restored funding to State Parks.

The question of whether to close state parks spawned a ballot initiative for the November 2010 elections. Proposition 21 would levy an $18 vehicle license fee to raise

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25 “Office of Historic Preservation.”
upwards of $500 million annually for State Parks. The revenue raised through the initiative would be dedicated to State Parks and wildlife conservation. In return, State Parks would offer free parking and entry into their 278 parks, in addition to other state owned lands and wildlife areas. The Capital District would also have benefited from the revenue generated by Proposition 21 if passed.

The impact of the state’s budget crisis has had negative repercussions in the form of budget cutbacks and forced work furloughs for state employees. The budget cutback for the 2009/2010 fiscal year totaled approximately 18% of each department’s budget for both the Capital District and OHP. Work furloughs (unpaid employee leave) decreased the work week for state employees. This measure was enacted by the Governor in March 2009 to reduce payroll costs, forcing state employees to take three days off per month equating to a 15% decrease in pay. Initially State employees were told that the furloughs would represent only a 10% pay cut forcing two days off per month, which the staff could choose for themselves; however, within weeks of the initial announcement, it became three Fridays per month, which represented a 15% pay decrease.

Other Public History Venues

Sacramento is home not only to the state capital, but it is also the seat of city and county governments. Sacramento’s city and county governments thus have also

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28 “Proposition 21.”
29 Ibid.
experienced budget shortfalls that have resulted in departmental reductions and layoffs. Two of the venues in the Historic Sustainability project are directly affected by these issues, the Sacramento History Museum and the Sacramento Room of the Sacramento Central Library.
Chapter 3

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Based on the research data and information collected from the oral history interviews, the Historic Sustainability project was established. Seven narrators participated in this survey. The first two identified in this chapter, Milford Wayne Donaldson and Cathy A. Taylor, manage separate administrative units of State Parks and Recreation. Donaldson is the California State Historic Preservation Officer and his interview provided an in-depth look at the economic struggles facing the Office of Historic Preservation. Cathy Taylor, District Superintendent for California State Parks Capital District, elaborated on the difficulties of managing Historic State Parks and Museums in light of the State’s severe budget deficit.

The third narrator in this chapter, Janessa West provided insightful information regarding program development for the Sacramento History Museum. The Museum exists through a unique collaboration of city and county funding. West is the City of Sacramento’s Public Programs Coordinator and Living History Coordinator. The fourth interviewee is Mary A. Helmich, a member of the Sacramento County Historical Society. Helmich shared the creative solutions that the Society has implemented to ensure financial survival. The fifth interviewer in this chapter, Jim Brewer, is a long time member of the West Sacramento County Historical Society and Museum. Brewer’s testimony outlines the collapse of financing and location for the Museum and the struggle to maintain the collection. The final two narrators, Patricia Ambacher and Melisa
Gaudreau, are employed by historical and/or environmental consulting firms in the Region an industry that works closely with the historic preservation community.

State Funded Agencies

California State Historic Preservation Office

Milford Wayne Donaldson, California’s State Historic Preservation Officer

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) provided for a network of historic preservation offices in every state to spearhead state preservation initiatives and help carry out the nation's historic preservation program. The act established the role of State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), a position appointed individually within each state. In California, the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) resides within the Department of Parks and Recreation and in 2004 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger appointed Milford Wayne Donaldson to the position. The responsibilities of the SHPO under the National Historic Preservation Act include: state-wide historic preservation planning; state-wide survey and inventory of historic properties; nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); administering the federal historic preservation Grants in Aid program; assisting local governments in developing historic preservation programs and become certified to participate in the national program as Certified Local Governments (CLG), advising and assisting in federal, state, and local historic preservation projects, participating in the review of federal, state, and local undertakings that may affect historic properties (Section 106 Review), providing public
information, education, training, and technical assistance in historic preservation.\textsuperscript{33}

A national and state regulatory agency that monitors preservation law is imperative because historic and cultural resources lie both below the ground buried in archaeological deposits and above ground in the built environment. These resources are under constant threat of destruction by burgeoning population growth and urban development. Section 106 of the 1966 National Preservation Act obligates federal agencies to take into account the effect of their projects already listed on properties already listed on the National Historic Register or those that could potentially be listed.\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to federal laws are state mandated laws. Which include Sections 5024 and 5024.5 of the California Public Resources Code and those established by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).\textsuperscript{35}

There are thousands of federal actions that take place in the United States annually and to meet these requirements, agencies using federal funds must identify historic properties, consider the effect of the proposed action on any identified sites, and consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) on ways to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects. The Office of Historic Preservation is responsible for reviewing submittals for the Section 106 process prior to the start of construction on a project.\textsuperscript{36} OHP has only 30 days to respond to a Section 106 review otherwise, the

\textsuperscript{33}“Office of Historic Preservation.”
\textsuperscript{36}“National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA; Public Law 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470).”
project can proceed without their input. Although OHP is just one of many agencies that must sign off on construction projects before they can begin, the Section 106 review is imperative in protecting the historic environment.

The SHPO’s across the United States are structured differently; in California the office is under the umbrella of State Parks and Recreation. Although the State is experiencing a severe budget crisis, OHP is somewhat insulated due to their dual federal function. California’s Office of Historic Preservation is funded through a 55/45 match. This means that the federal government contributes 55% of the office’s yearly budget and the state must match those funds by 45%. Unfortunately in a declining economy this has resulted in a shrinking budget for California but the impact to OHP is limited because the State is obligated to maintain their 45% funding for the department.

Donaldson’s primary concern was the impact of furloughs on his employees’; in respect to morale and ability to handle work flow. The furloughs shortened employees work week and removed three days per month (a 15% cut in pay for employees). The shortened work week increases tension as the flow of work in the office continues at the same pace. OHP is broken up into five units: Review and Compliance, Local

37 Ibid. Thomas King, Cultural Resource Laws and Practice: An Introductory Guide, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004), 81-95.
38 Milford Wayne Donaldson, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
Government, Architectural Review, Registration Unit and Fiscal and Grants. Of these five, Review and Compliance and Local Government have been the hardest hit by the furloughs.

Both of the units provide project review for several thousand undertakings a year that take place in the built environment. The term ‘project review’ referrers to the process in which OHP ensures compliance of federal (Section 106) and state preservation laws. (Sections 5024 and 5024.5) The agencies proposing projects are solely responsible for submitting well researched proposals that meet the appropriate criteria for the appropriate federal or state law. OHP reviews these proposals to ensure compliance and assure that they are planned in ways that avoid or minimize adverse effects to historic resources.

In tandem with the decreased work week is an increase in project review submittals. The increase of non-ARRA related submittals are coming mainly from federal agencies that are still thriving. The two largest are Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that supports the telecommunication industry booming industry (currently entrenched in erecting cell phone towers) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) whose projects include a variety of renovations to lower income housing. The vast majority of project submitted to OHP for review since November 2009 (80% of submittals), represent the normal work flow that OHP

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39 “Office of Historic Preservation.” See OHP website for a description of each unit’s functions.
40 “Review & Compliance.”
41 “National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA; Public Law 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470).” State mandated reviews such as CEQA or Sections 5024 and 5024.5 of the California Public Resources Code have been
42 “Review & Compliance.”
experiences. The other 20% are projects federally funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and include projects in transportation, residential energy efficiency upgrades and health care facility rehabilitation.

During his interview, Donaldson expressed concern for OHP’s ability to handle an increase in the existing project review load by projects associated with federal ARRA stimulus funding. Donaldson felt an increase in workload due to ARRA review submittal would be reaching an understaffed and overwhelmed regulator agency (OHP). He aptly expressed his concern stating that the unprecedented increase in ARRA projects, in addition to forced work furloughs could create the “perfect storm” for OHP. This situation never came to fruition though. Yet in January 2010 California’s Inspector General, Laura Chick, sent a letter to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger stating that OHP’s had an enormous backlog of ARRA projects that needed review. Chick requested that more staff be made available to accelerate OHP mandated review process. A media blitz followed that headlined news of bureaucratic delays plaguing stimulus funded construction thus preventing desperately need jobs for Californian workers.

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45 Milford Wayne Donaldson, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
46 Steve Micksell, Regular Quarterly Meeting of the State Historical Resources Commission Agenda, October 30, 2009. Mikesell is the Deputy Director of the Office of Historic Preservation and was updating the Commission on OHP’s status in weathering the recession. The Perfect Storm, IMDB: The Internet Movie Database. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0177971/ The term refers to perfect conditions for a catastrophe.
The result was an order from the Governor to make ARRA project reviews a priority.\footnote{Donaldson, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”} This has left review submittals from agencies outside of the ARRA stimulus funding on hold while they wait for approval of their projects from OHP. Chick’s involvement, while not exactly factual, promoted involvement from several of the federal and state agencies that work with OHP. Several agencies such as Cal Trans, USDA and Western Area Power Administration have since funded positions in OHP for dedicated reviewers to handle the review their submittals. Among the many benefits for these agencies is the ability to shorten the review response time from OHP. The drawback for OHP is that these dedicated reviewers are not able to help with the backlog of submittals from approximately fifty-three other agencies. The imposed furloughs and the State hiring freeze continue to hamper OHP’s ability to resolve the backlog of unfinished project reviews.

**California State Parks, Capital District**

Catherine A. Taylor, District Superintendent for California State Parks, Capital District

Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks are under the umbrella of California State Park’s Department of Parks and Recreation. The department encompasses three Museums and six State Historical Parks:

- California State Capitol Museum
- California State Indian Museum
- California State Railroad Museum
- Governor's Mansion State Historic Park
- Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park
• Old Sacramento State Historic Park
• Railyard 1897 State Historic Park
• Sutter's Fort State Historic Park
• Woodland Opera House State Historic Park

According to the State Parks website, “collectively these facilities preserve and interpret the heritage of California’s Capital City, and illuminate the many forces that have shaped Sacramento and the Golden State.”

In the six years Catherine Taylor has been in the position of District Superintendent, she has reorganized these nine, once wholly individual sites into a collective that share resources and a singular budget. This common pool of monies has reduced expenses overall; however, they have not shielded the Capital District Department from severe State budget cuts. State Parks and Recreation received heavy cuts in the 2009/2010 fiscal year, which filtered down into both Historic Preservation but also to Capital Districts. In October 2009 the impact to the Capital District was evident in a Public Notice announcing service reductions had become necessary. Three state historic parks and one museum have closed to the public on Monday as of November 1, 2009.

The Governor’s Mansion State Historic Park, Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park, California State Indian Museum and Sutter’s Fort State Historic Park were affected by the move. Taylor’s statement in the public notice indicated that the

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50 “Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks, Sacramento.”
51 Taylor, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
adjustments were done in an effort to preserve the venues, sentiments that were echoed in her interview for this project.\textsuperscript{53}

At the time of this interview (December 2, 2009), the 2010/11 California budget has not been passed and the fiscal impact to State Parks and Recreation looked grim. This was resolved in October 2010 when the budget was finally signed a record 100 days late.\textsuperscript{54} Although no estimates have been revealed, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made a telling statement a year ago when he stated, “The question we have to ask ourselves is, is it pensions or is it parks?”\textsuperscript{55} (For more additional information regarding State Park’s budget, see Chapter 2).

Similar to the state Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), the Capital District is in need of increased state funding; however, unlike OHP they do not receive federal monies. According to Taylor, her department was subject to a decrease of state funds by 25\% last year. In order to accommodate the loss of funding, Taylor has had to make difficult choices such as cutting back on the district wide maintenance that handles housekeeping, repairs and mechanical engineering. In addition events and program budgets have been reduced and state employee furloughs have created staffing shortages. Many of the venues in the Capital District are now closed on Mondays to absorb some of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[53] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
the budget deficit. This decrease has been created a backlog of maintenance project, staffing.\textsuperscript{56}

Taylor’s hope for the future, especially for the 2010/11 state budget was the passing of Proposition 21 on November 2, 2010. The measure would have given California vehicles free admission to the state parks in exchange for a new $18 vehicle license fee and would have been specifically dedicated to state parks and wildlife conservation. It was estimated that Proposition 21 would raise approximately $500 million a year for State Parks and Recreation. Unfortunately the measure was defeated on November 2, 2010.

\textbf{City and County Funded Agencies}

\textbf{Sacramento Room, Sacramento Central Library}

Clare Ellis, former Head Librarian

The Sacramento Central Library opened the doors to a special collection in 1995. Its new Sacramento Room became home to a rare book collection developed by Head Librarian, Clare Ellis. The collection “highlights include Sacramento city and county histories, city directories, yearbooks, maps and photographs; books by local authors and music by local artists, California profiles; the records of the Sacramento Public Library; and fine press and book arts.”\textsuperscript{57}.

\textsuperscript{56} Taylor, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.” “Proposition 21.”
Sacramento’s Library Association was founded 1857 and in 1879 it was purchased by the City of Sacramento, it was then turned into a public library. In 1966 both city and county libraries merged and in 1993 the Sacramento Public Library Authority was established as the governing body. "The Sacramento Public Library Authority is the fourth largest library system in California serving the public in the City and County of Sacramento as well as the cities of Citrus Heights, Elk Grove, Galt, Isleton and Rancho Cordova. The Sacramento Public Library operates 27 libraries, which includes a Central Library in downtown Sacramento, has over 300 staff members, a collection of 2M volumes, and a budget of $36M. More than 500,000 residents have a library card and over 6M items are circulated annually." 

Throughout her two decades as the Sacramento Room’s head Librarian, Ellis has continued to add to the collection by materials and acquiring books and other materials related to the Sacramento region. The monies allotted for collection development is allocated in the Sacramento Public Library Authority’s budget which is comprised of county and city funding, donations, fines and penalties, interest from investments, revenue generated by assessments and specific tax initiatives. Although no specific budget figures were discussed during the interview, the author’s research found that city and county funding to the Sacramento Public Library Authority was cut in the same manner as that discussed in the interview with Janessa West (Sacramento History

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Museum). The 2009/2010 funding from the city was dropped 15% and the county by 10% from the previous fiscal year.\textsuperscript{61}

According to Ellis, the Sacramento Room has experienced the recession through shrinking budget funds allocated for purchasing books. As the essence of the collection is meant to chronicle the history of Sacramento/California, Ellis has continued to add to the collection yearly by purchasing material that is connected with either Sacramento or California, specifically Northern California.\textsuperscript{62} An example of this is William T. Volkmann’s book, \textit{Grave of Lost Stories}. Volkmann is a writer and artist that was born and raised in California, he and his family are Sacramento residents. The book Ellis purchased for the Sacramento Room’s collection is a special edition that includes marble, cow teeth, snake bones and Volkmann’s artwork. She stated that unique items such like Volkmann’s book as well as other (historic telephone directories, etc.) draw audiences.

Just as Ellis retired, the Library has begun digitizing items from its collection such as photographs, maps and the historic telephone directories.\textsuperscript{63} Ellis stated that the Sacramento Room’s challenge in future would be finding the manpower to continue with the project.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Clare Ellis, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA,” April 19, 2010.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
Sacramento History Museum
Janessa West, City of Sacramento, Public Programs Coordinator and Living History Coordinator

The Sacramento History Museum is a wonderfully complex pairing of shared resources. Technically the Museum is under the auspices of the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation a private non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Sacramento’s rich history of the early gold mining period; drawing together a modern community firmly tethered to a rich and exciting past.⁶⁴ The Museum is also part of the City of Sacramento, Department of Convention, Culture and Leisure and its budget derive from both city and county funding.⁶⁵

Just prior to the onset of the recession HOSF, the Sacramento History Museum and the Center for Sacramento History (an archive formerly known as the Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, aka SAMCC) were joined under the leadership of an Executive Director, Marcia Eymann. The move in management also provided a shared budget and allowed the Museum to release their curator position. According to West, the move made sense, as the collection shown at the Sacramento History Museum is owned by the Center for Sacramento History.⁶⁶

A creative combination of funding has allowed the Sacramento History Museum to survive in during the recession. The budget for the museum is a combination of funds;

⁶⁵ Janessa West, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
⁶⁶ Ibid.
60% from the city and the county and 40% from museum generated revenue.\textsuperscript{67} The city also provides in-kind assistance through discounted rent (in a city owned building) and free telephone, utilities and internet connectivity. Revenue generated by the Museum includes museum admission, store sales, fundraisers and currently, proceeds from new city tour named the “Raised Street, Hollow Sidewalks Tour”.\textsuperscript{68} The tour was developed by a CSUS Public History graduate student as the culminating project for the degree and the Museum procured a loan from the city to sponsor the tours.\textsuperscript{69}

Narrator, Janessa West technically wears “two hats” in her position. First, she is the Public Project Coordinator for the Museum and secondly, as the Living History Program Coordinator for HOSF.\textsuperscript{70} The types of programs Ms. West coordinates includes education programs and living history programs such as the Gold Rush Days, a four day reenactment over the Labor Day weekend, and the Civil War event at Gibson Ranch in Elverta.\textsuperscript{71}

According to West, the Museum had a rich budget for programs until last year when funding from the city dropped 15% and 10% from the county.\textsuperscript{72} According to West, these cuts forced the Museum to close on Mondays and Tuesday and cut back on staffing, utilities and supplies. West’s other duty as the Living History Coordinator has also struggled during the recession trying to solicit and maintain volunteer. West stated

\textsuperscript{67} Marcia Eymann, “Telephone Interview by Author,” November 3, 2010.
\textsuperscript{68} West, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
\textsuperscript{70} West, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
that the lack of funds needed to develop special programs attracting tourism has affected both the Museum and the Living History Program.\textsuperscript{73}

West worries about the economic future of city and county funding however, the collaborations with other like-minded groups’ pools marketing and assistance with special programs such as the Living History Program. Additionally, the Old Sacramento merchants are providing support by getting involved in the school programs and the walking tours.

**Non-Profit Agencies**

**Sacramento County Historical Society (SCHS)**

Mary A. Helmich, SCHS Member and past President

Mary Helmich provided one of the unique perspectives as a narrator in the Historic Sustainability project. Ms. Helmich has worked and volunteered within Sacramento’s public history community for several decades. For the purpose of this project though, her expertise as a member of the SCHS is the selected focus.

The SCHS was organized in 1953 with a mission to preserve local history and to promote public awareness of its significance and relevance.\textsuperscript{74} Their inception took place during a time when no regional historical societies existed in the area. Throughout the years the Society has continued to provide common ground for a diverse membership base that includes public history practitioners, academics, a broad range of professionals and the public. The Society’s importance in the region stems from its ability to shape

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Joseph McGowan, “Notes to Ourselves,” *Golden Notes* 1, no. 1 (June 1954).
how history has reached a broad public audience, which in turn has advanced historical literacy and popularized interest in the subject. They have accomplished this in a collaborative wide-reaching manner through special events, programs, activities, collaboration with other organizations, and most importantly, through its publications.75

The Society is best known for publication of history articles written by its members in the *Golden Notes* and the *Sacramento History Journal*. The literary style of the initial *Golden Notes* booklets lasted from 1954 to 1987 and matured into a more professional academic interpretive periodical, the *Sacramento History Journal* from 2001 to 2006. Additionally, the SCHS has continuously maintained a newsletter for its membership known as the Golden Nuggets. These documents best reflect the Society’s mission to preserve the past through the written word.76

SCHS’s source of income has changed over the years though the one constant remains its member’s yearly dues. The membership base has expanded and contracted over the years, as has its budget. In addition to dues, the SCHS has gleaned revenue in several ways:

- Special Events
- Activities and Programs
- Donations
- Publications

In their 56 years of operation, the Society has added to the historical record of Sacramento by collaborating with brethren entities such as State Parks, Historic Landmarks Commission, the City Cemetery Association, the Sacramento Old City

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75 Christy, “Sacramento County Historical Society.”
Association and local neighborhood associations to promote contemporary remembrance of Sacramento’s past. Their ability to adapt to the ebb and wane of membership, funding and community need has allowed them to survive the half century.

According to long time member and past President Mary A. Helmich, the Society is currently experiencing economic hardship primarily due to the lack of revenue generating projects. In addition, a waning membership base has been unable to attract younger members to carry the SCHS mission into the future. As all history venues in the region suffer from the economic slump, the potential loss of progress associated with preserving and maintaining local history needs to addressed and evaluated for possible solutions.

Helmich and current SCHS President William Burg have identified a need for collaborative and cooperative partnerships that would allow for joint funding of projects and publications. This would not be just a temporary fix to tide the SCHS through the recession, instead it would allow for a paradigm shift that reflects modern society’s ideology of sustainability (ability to endure).

Alluding to a potential partnership with another historic organization, Helmich and Burg both spoke of a possible partnership with the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation (HOSF), which manages and operates the Sacramento History Museum in Old Sacramento State Park. A cooperative agreement with HOSF would allow SCHS to utilize its most valuable asset, the ability to reach a wide audience. Although the

77 Helmich, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
78 Taylor, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
79 Helmich, “Interview by Author, Sacramento, CA.”
details of this arrangement were not disclosed (and quite possibly have not yet been
determined) it would appear that the possibility for a future arrangement may be
established.80

**West Sacramento County Historical Society and Museum**

Jim Brewer, Historical Society Museum Director and Vice President

Sacramento’s neighboring city to the west is West Sacramento and although their
names suggest familial ties, they are in separate counties divided by the Sacramento
River. From the banks of West Sacramento’s side of the river, the Sacramento skyline
looms high and colorful.

West Sacramento was founded in the mid 1800’s during the gold rush though it did not
fully incorporate as a city until 1987, and while Sacramento proper boasts a population of
1.3 million, West Sacramento is closer to fifty thousand.81 This comparison is crucial to
understanding the challenges that history and/or art venues in West Sacramento face in
contending with California’s capital city. Sacramento has approximately twenty-nine
museum related locales; West Sacramento had one, which closed its doors in October
2009 after losing its location and city funding.82

The West Sacramento Historical Society Museum and Welcoming Center
(WSHS) was formed and run by the WSHS, a relative newcomer in the public history
sector. Established only sixteen years ago in 1993, the Society parlayed a collection of

80 Ibid.
82 “Sacramento Museum Guide,” *Sacramento Association of Museums*,
artifacts, documents, photographs and ephemera into an operational museum. The
community donated the vast majority of the museum’s collection including valuable
records and photographs from the Port of Sacramento. The WSHS’s stated mission is to
preserve, protect and promote the history of West Sacramento and East Yolo County.\textsuperscript{83}

The Museum opened in 2005 in the city of Bryte, California and did well for its
first several years according to Museum Director Jim Brewer.\textsuperscript{84} Several factors added to
its eventual decline. At first the Museum was run entirely by volunteers making for high
position turnover. Second, the neighborhood it was in was at an economic disadvantage
and became home to a burgeoning homeless population, which aided in declining
attendance. Even more disheartening was the lack of city support to find a new home for
the collection once the decision was made to seek a new site. Society members located
an uninhabited ‘city owned’ property and actively pursued a deal with the city that would
allow the WSHS to rent the facility for greatly reduced rent. Although the issue was not
something that would normally be heard at a City Council meeting, the proposal for
relocation ended up on the consent calendar agenda and was surprisingly rejected by the
Council at the last-minute. The Society having already proffered its notice to vacate in
addition to the lack of funds to provide monthly rent, had no choice but to pack up their
collection and move out.

Although deaccessioning its collection was not considered, rehousing the largest
items (the three fire engines) was of great concern. Ironically the fire engines are now
stored in the originally proposed location. The balance of the collection has been

\textsuperscript{84} Jim Brewer, Interview by Author, West Sacramento, CA, November 20, 2009.
temporarily rehoused in board members’ homes until a permanent warehouse site can be procured. The Society was able to procure display space within the new West Sacramento Community Center currently under construction. The physical location is also home to a new branch of the city’s library and a newly ordained community college campus that is an extension of Sacramento’s Los Rios Community College District. The proximity of the three buildings forms an impressive compound. When complete it is easy to imagine the area bustling with activity.

Brewer stated that the WSHS cannot compete with Sacramento museums and are not sure they want to shoulder the responsibility of a dedicated museum location. For the time being, they will make use of small vignette cases to display smaller, themed exhibits in local business, libraries and the community center (once it is completed). In the future, the WSHS would like to establish an oral history program to record the stories of the community’s oldest members and will be upgrading their website to create a more interactive experience.85

Privately Funded Agencies

ICF International (Formerly Jones and Stokes Consulting)

Patricia Ambacher, Architectural Historian

ICF International (formerly known as Jones and Stokes) is a well known consulting firm in Sacramento. Within the historic and environmental consulting industry, the company provides a broad range of services for historic preservation, environmental and cultural resource projects. ICF International acquired Jones and

Stokes in 2009, which was Sacramento’s oldest and largest environmental consulting firm. The original firm specialized in environmental resource management for the transportation industry (Caltrans), energy and water projects.86 The narrator for the Historic Sustainability project was Patricia Ambacher, an Architectural Historian for the firm. Ambacher brings a unique perspective to this project as a former graduate from CSUS’s Public History Program and as a former Historian for the Office of Historic Preservation.

According to Ambacher, the firm has felt an impact from the recession. Prior to being acquired by ICF International, Jones and Stokes laid few workers. Currently the companies is feeling a limited economic impact, as many of the company’s projects have been active for several years and are not dependant on current budget (federal, state or city) approval for funding. In fact, the firm has been busier than they were in 2008. Some of the projects the company has received are ARRA stimulus funded projects; however, ICF’s rate schedule is steep and makes low-budget ARRA projects impractical.

ICF’s acquisition of one of Sacramento’s largest consulting firms will allow diversification of the services it offers which will aid in procuring future projects. Jones and Stokes was a multidisciplinary consulting firm and provided a wide range of natural and cultural resource management and planning service.87 Its clientele included federal, commercial, state and local governments. The firm provided consultation on planning infrastructure improvements and mandated government programs such as Section 106

projects. ICF wanted to expand consulting in the region and was drawn to the established clientele base of Jones & Stokes. Ambacher stated that diversification of services allowed consulting firms to adapt to contemporary need and is the key to surviving long term and coupled with the advantage of being in the capital city of California (the hub of state government) should prove beneficial to the firm.

Page and Turnbull, Inc.

Melisa Gaudreau, Senior Associate

Page and Turnbull is a San Francisco based architectural and preservation consulting firm that specialize in historic preservation, materials conservation, and historic documentation. Their architectural services emphasize the conservation of existing buildings and include rehabilitation, restoration, relocation, reconstruction and adaptive use. It was the first consulting firm in San Francisco to dedicate itself specifically to preservation and they have additional offices in Sacramento and Los Angeles. 88

The firm is comprised of three studios (or departments) Architectural, Cultural Resources and Materials. The Architectural Studio manages historic rehabilitation design, repairs and less frequently new construction in historic districts. The Cultural Resources Studio employs historians, cultural resource experts and cultural resource planners who work on historic assessments, historic structures report, historic resource evaluation, tax credit reports, nominations to the National Register/California Register, and Section 106 documents. The Materials Studio assists the firm with technical

analysis, investigation and recommendations for specific products and techniques to utilize in a project or repairs.

According to Page and Turnbull Senior Associate, Melisa Gaudreau, the company has not suffered from any severe work shortage though they have noticed a tapering off of projects in the construction and development industries; especially in those led by private entities. The projects that continue to sustain themselves are those associated with federal agencies such as National Parks (National Parks Service) and the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Gaudreau acknowledged one current Page and Turnbull project that is receiving ARRA funding, Sacramento’s Rail Depot project. At the time of this interview in December 2009, the funds for this project had been frozen for eight months even though the City of Sacramento had told Page & Turnbull that project was ready to proceed.

Gaudreau’s input on the subject of the recession was succinct and she pointed out that during periods of national/state economic slowdowns grant monies either can dry up or be put on hold. An example of this would be the Railyard redevelopment project in Old Sacramento that the firm as done consultation for. The project has stopped and started several times over the past year and a half due to funding problems. In fact, the original developer, Thomas Enterprises went into default and property was resold to an investment firm, Inland American Real Estate on October 23, 2010 and is anxious to

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89 Melisa Gaudreau, Interview with Author, December 3, 2009, Sacramento, CA.
move forward with the project.\textsuperscript{90} Like Ambacher, Gaudreau echoed the sentiments that diversification of services allowed consulting practices to adapt to the financial climate and take advantage of the contemporary needs of the community.

**Key Findings**

**Historic Preservation**

In late 2009 OHP experienced a rise in project review submittals (primarily non-ARRA projects). The result was an understaffed and overwhelmed regulatory agency that quickly acted to resolve the problem. Interference from California’s Inspector General, stating OHP was backlogging ARRA projects, while not true did provide ensure state government attention to the fact that OHP needed more staff to keep up with their project review process.\textsuperscript{91} Federal mandates exist to protect the nation’s cultural and historic resources; however, if handled poorly, could pose significant threats to historic and cultural places. Federal and state intervention was necessary (and implemented) to ensure that the OHP’s financial needs have been adequately addressed. As of November 2010, OHP is still experiencing some backlog of review projects though additional staffing from outside agencies is helping somewhat.\textsuperscript{92}

Those industries that intersect with historic preservation such as consulting firms are proving to be a key factor in economic stabilization for the government and private sector (OHP and consulting firms) that assist and monitor redevelopment activity within


\textsuperscript{92} *Weekly ARRA Summations* - 3/8/10 through 10/28/10.
the boundaries established by federal and state preservation law. The benefit of these public history related venues in the Sacramento region are directly related to positions and business created within both government and private industry to support this necessary function.

**State Parks, Capital District Museums and Historic State Parks**

The State budget cuts during the 2009/2010 fiscal year resulted in a 25% cut in the budget of the Capital District. Although the cuts were managed by downsizing open hours and at the cost of important maintenance and staffing, future cuts in the 2010/2011 might eliminate some of its museums and historic parks. Although the 2010/11 California budget recently passed in October 2010, the exact figures have yet to be released. In addition, Proposition 21, which would have provided much needed funding for State Parks (and in turn the Capital District), was defeated on November 2010. The future of the Capital District financial survival has yet to be ascertained.

**Historical Societies / Museums**

These venues are the most economically vulnerable as they tend to rely on narrow bases of support to survive such as membership dues, donations, fund raising events or museum entrance fees. The narrators for the two historical societies acknowledged the need a more diversified base of revenue to stabilize and maintain their organizations and both are in the process of adopting unique solutions to address their financial issues. Of the two, the SCHS is more financially stable and have just begun to publish historical books again, which should bring revenue from sales. The first new publication in twenty years was released in February 2010. The book was written by SCHS member Ed Carroll.
who is both a graduate of CSUS’s Public History M.A. program and a Historian for
OHP. The new series of publication will be modest but professional (including both
academic research and local history), more polished than the Golden Notes yet not as
expensive to publish as the Sacramento History Journal.

The WSHC has quite a bit more to do, starting with properly archiving and
rehousing their collection from its current locations in member’s garages. It would be
beneficial for the Society to consult with professional archivists and librarians to learn
how to identify, arrange, describe, accession, and preserve their collection. Consulting
and researching archival practices would be an inexpensive way to begin this process.
The WSHC has begun the process of developing cost effective ways to display items
from their collection in West Sacramento’s new Community Center. Setting aside the
idea of relocating the entire museum has relieved their financial burden.

The Sacramento History Museum has a range of funding from both city and
county sources, which may possibly dry up if the economy continues in a downward
spiral. In their favor, they have established wide reaching collaborations and cooperation
with similar groups that can combine for future projects.

Library, Rare Book Room

The Sacramento Room of the Central Library was the venue least affected by the
recession. The Library’s budget is derived from a variety of city and county funding and
the only short felt was that of collection development.

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94 Gregory S. Hunter, Developing and maintaining practical archives: a how-to-do-it manual, 2nd ed. (New
Within a preservation context, cultural and environmental consultants (CRM) are contractors employed by agencies or individuals to evaluate, document and advise on nomination for the various historic register, projects that qualify for Section 106 compliance or other state mandated historic preservation laws. According to the 2008 Survey of Public History Professionals, consulting firms employ a mere 3.4% of public history practitioners, it is possible that that percentage is higher in Sacramento because it is the hub of state government. This increases their opportunity to work with state and local governments as clients. The firms that employed the narrators, Page and Turnbull and ICF International are actively involved in Sacramento’s local history community and known for their commitment to preservation of the past and make them attractive to government and non-government clients.

According the narrators, Ambacher and Gaudreau, their firms have experience limited economic impacts from the current recession due to long term projects subsidized prior to the onset of the recession. Both narrators promoted the idea of diversifying services for their fluctuating economy.

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95 Dichtl and Townsend, “A Picture of Public History: Preliminary Results from the 2008 Survey of Public History Professionals.”
Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The Historic Sustainability oral history project was initiated out of the desire to record the voices of Sacramento’s public history community during a nationwide financial crisis. Limited resources hindered the number of interviews that could effectively be recorded and transcribed (all equipment and supplies were provided by the author for completion of the project. Additionally, the author financed professional transcription of the interviews). The seven narrators provided both rich personal and institutional memory. This project stands as a first attempt at capturing the experiences of the region’s public historians in a broad format, a foundation that could easily be expanded upon in the future.

The author spent approximately 70 hours researching and reviewing material, preparing questions, and contacting subjects for interview. The interview lengths varied. Those individuals with institutional memory in their field (Jim Brewer, Wayne Donaldson, Clare Ellis, Mary Helmich and Catherine Taylor) tended to be longer interviews lasting between one to two hours. The interviews with Melisa Gaudreau and Janessa West lasted approximately 40 minutes. The interviews took approximately 6 hours to complete.

All of the interviews took place in locally, which alleviated the need to travel. Transcription of the interviews was provided by an outside professional source, which estimated approximately four to six hours per interview per hour totaling approximately
36 hours. Editing and indexing the interviews took approximately 10 hours per interview totaling 48 hours.

The Historic Sustainability oral history project met with the objectives and goals established by the author. First, it recorded subjects within the Sacramento region’s public history community during the Recession. Second, it will preserve these recollections and experiences in both audio and written format. The information gathered by the author can be made available for further researchers, academia, and the general public.

Recommendations

Although significant information has already been gathered from the chosen participants, there is a need for a broader range of testimony from public history venues within the scope of the project area. Harvesting this information will aid in preserving the historic record of the field during the 2008 nationwide recession. Given that the project is meant to chronicle the economic impact experienced by public history venues during the current recession, continuation should be implemented as soon as possible to keep the time range consistent. In addition, follow-up interviews would help track and preserve the information and could be conducted in several different ways: through a secondary interview, telephone interviews or through written surveys.
APPENDIX A

ORAL HISTORY with PATRICIA AMBACHER
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Patricia Ambacher

May 11, 2010

By

Sharon J. Kelley
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<td>Biographical Summary provided by P. Ambacher</td>
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<td>Interview History</td>
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<td>Release Form</td>
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<td>Session, April 19, 2010</td>
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<td>[Audio File 1]</td>
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<td>00:00:13 Personal background information - Attended California State</td>
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<td>University, Sacramento History, B.A. and Public History, MA;</td>
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<td>00:01:30 Focus in M.A. became clear after taking a C.R.M. course [Cultural Resource Management];</td>
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<td>00:01:35 Worked as a consultant in a computer technology firm, Bearing</td>
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<td>00:01:59 Decided to go back to graduate school;</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:02:26 Preferred to work in Public History field – Hired at JRP</td>
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<td>Consulting as a Historical Consultant – JRP specialized in Section</td>
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<td>00:03:04 Went to work for California Office of Historic Preservation as</td>
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<td>a Historian – Worked in OHP’s Registration Unit and with the State</td>
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<td>Historical Resources Board;</td>
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<td>00:03:28 Hired by ICF Jones &amp; Stokes as an Architectural Historian –</td>
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<td>Office is primarily focused on environmental work – NEPA, CEQA and</td>
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<td>Section 106 projects – transportation authority projects (Caltrans);</td>
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<td>00:04:34 Impact of 2008 Recession – No real slowdown because of larger</td>
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<td>projects that spanned several years though some project won have yet</td>
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<td>to begin – Work projects have increased since 2009;</td>
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<td>00:05:18 Effects of American Recovery and Reinvestment Fund (ARRA) in</td>
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<td>00:05:55 Foreshortened turn around time for projects – Delimited</td>
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<td>timeframe impedes in-depth research and analysis of project proposals</td>
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<td>– Unknown impact for future historic significance;</td>
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<td>00:10:15 Most interesting projects;</td>
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<td>00:13:17 Past connection with O.H.P. helps in current position;</td>
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<td>00:13:59 Missed opportunities due to company rates, not cost effective</td>
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<td>to bid on smaller projects;</td>
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Industries hardest hit within Public History most affected by current recession – Historical Societies - research facilities due to shortened hours and increased costs for services.
Patricia Ambacher

Patricia E. Ambacher, MA is an qualified historian and architectural historian under the United States Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (as defined in 36 CFR Part 61). She is well-versed in CEQA and has surveyed and evaluated properties in accordance with Section 15064.5(a)(2)-(3) of the CEQA Guidelines for a variety of public agencies including. She has served as the lead historian responsible for cultural resource investigation in compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA for various agencies. Ms. Ambacher prepares a variety of technical reports including HPSR/HRERs, HABS, HALS, FOEs, HPTPs, Initial Studies, and EIRs. She also conducts archival and historic research to establish appropriate historic contexts for the evaluations of a multitude of properties. Ms. Ambacher received her B.A. in History and M.A. in History, with an emphasis in Public History from California State University, Sacramento. She has worked as a historian and architectural historian in both the public and private sectors.
Interview History

Narrator:

Patricia Ambacher

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University,
Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

May 11, 2010
10:30 a.m.
California State Historic Preservation Office (OHP)
1416 9th Street, 14th Floor
Sacramento, CA  95814
Twenty minute session

The narrator and interviewer met at the OHP offices and sat in a conference room.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light
editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of
redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as
two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator
editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and
are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:

The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA
format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J
Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:

2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento's Public History Industry

An Oral History Thesis

California State University, Sacramento

Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

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Signature of Narrator: Patricia E. Ambacher
Dated: 9/24/2010

Narrator's name as he/she wishes it to be used: Patricia E. Ambacher

Narrator's Address

Narrator's phone number:

Signature of Interviewer: Sharon J. Kelley
Dated: 9/26/2010

Interviewer's address:

Sharon J. Kelley
P.O. Box 19783
Sacramento, CA 95819

Interviewer's phone number: (602) 380-5070
Kelley: Today is May 11, 2010 and I’m interviewing Patricia Ambacher from ICF International, formerly Jones & Stokes. Good morning.

Ambacher: Hello.

Kelley: Can you tell me a little bit about your background, specifically your educational background?

Ambacher: I got my BA in history at Sac State, and then took about three years or so off and went back and got my master’s degree in history with an emphasis in Public History at Sac State.

Kelley: And did you have a focus in the public history program?

Ambacher: Originally, I thought I wanted to go into archives and took the archives class cured me of that. And really, once I actually took the research and the CRM class, that was when I was like, “That’s what I wanted to do.” after I took that class. So I said I--that was what really--it ended up being my focus.

Kelley: And did you have internships that you had to do?

Ambacher: We were required to do an internship at--I worked full time for a different consulting firm and there was no way I could take off, so they set up some oral history internship with one of the professors at Sac State in helping do those and transcribe them, so--

Kelley: Good and what about your work history?
Ambacher: I worked prior to going to grad school, I was working as a consultant in a completely different field. It was a global--basically a global systems and computer technology. It was called Bearing Point. It’s now gone out of business, but it was a spinoff from KPMG Consulting which was a spinoff from KPMG which was one of the big five accounting firms. So we did a lot of state and local government systems implementations and that’s what I was doing when I decided to go back to grad school, and then that--I continued doing that through grad school.

Kelley: Once you were out of grad school, what happened?

Ambacher: I decided that I wanted to--I really didn’t like my job, but it paid well enough that I didn’t have to take loans out to go back to grad school. So I did that for about another month or so, and then did a little bit of contract work and decided it’s time to actually try to use my degree. I wanted to get really into the field, so it took about six months before I was finally hired on with JRP Historical Consulting and I worked for them for about--just shy of two years.

Kelley: And what did you do for them?

Ambacher: I was a historian for them and it was CRM work. We did a lot--they specialized primarily in Section 106 work, so I was doing surveys, writing up DPR 523s, research, a lot of projects, but most--strictly 106. They didn’t do a lot of CEQA work at that point.

Kelley: Where did you go from there?
Ambacher: From there, I actually came and worked here at OHP and I stayed here. I worked here in the registration unit, helping with the four registration programs and staff to the State Historical Resources Commission for three years before I left.

Kelley: You were a historian?

Ambacher: I was a historian. I was hired in as a one.

Kelley: And you were--once you left here, where did you go?

Ambacher: I was hired to go--and I worked--it was ICF Jones & Stokes and now we’re completely bought out, so now we’re officially just ICF International and it’s a much larger global--they do everything, but our emphasis in our office is primarily environmental work.

Kelley: Do you work for the cultural resources and architectural history section?

Ambacher: Yes, yes.

Kelley: Can you tell me about the types of projects that your department works on?

Ambacher: We do a variety, my section, we work very closely with the transportation section, so we do a lot of CEQA work, a lot of large environmental projects, big Caltrans jobs. So we do a lot of NEPA, CEQA and 106 projects. We have a lot--most of our--most of the projects that I’ve been on recently, actually for the most time I’ve been there has been Caltrans projects of some sort or transportation authority projects.

Kelley: Has that slowed down at all because of the recession that started in 2008?
Ambacher: Not really. I mean, we’ve still been pretty fortunate because we had some large projects that were on the books that were over--that spans several years, so we haven’t seemed to--too many projects come to a halt or--we’ve had a few that started--we’ve won the work, but we haven’t been able to actually start the work and the contract hasn’t been signed because funding has been cut off. But for the most part, it’s been--it’s grown compared to last year, where we were last year at this time, but it’s been fairly steady for us. We’ve been actually rather lucky.

Kelley: Can any of that be attributed to the ARRA fund, the stimulus funds?

Ambacher: Uh-huh. I actually I just finished an ARRA Wells project that we did where we have to go out in survey for well sites for to be in Stanislaus county, and there’s a couple of other rural counties for some well water projects that they’re doing. And we haven’t had too many of those come in, yet mostly we’ve just getting Caltrans projects, highway widening, its overpasses, that kind of thing.

Kelley: The well project, what federal agency was that under the umbrella of?

Ambacher: It was the--I believe at the Bureau of Reclamation. So we had a very short time frame. We had 45 days to finish everything which meant fieldwork for week, and then we have three days to turn around in the administrator a draft report and the whole entire finalize report after we get comments back that’s due on the 19th. So the whole process was a quick 45 days which we don’t normally have that quick to turn around. It’s usually
several, several months for these kinds of--for most of the ones on six projects, months to years.

Kelley: When you have a shorter time frame like that because of the stimulus funds, does it affect the project in any way? Would you feel that it would be a more cohesive project took a longer amount of time, you had more time to spent?

Ambacher: Well, it was a different project because I’m used to--very rarely do the historians and architectural historians have projects where we’re just recording resources and not doing any analysis and not doing any research to determine possible significance or eligibility for the National Register. And on this project, we were just out there to record. It was do your survey and we were just literally recording segments of the like Delta Mendota Canals, irrigation ditches, but to me it was very difficult because it’s like they--the project automatically assumed that everything was eligible but in that there will be no adverse of facts in order to meet the time frame to get this money. So that was a little different because majority of that--archeologist do that a lot in our office, but the historians usually don’t have just where we go out and record the physical attributes of the resource. We usually are doing the research and everything beyond that. So some of this...

Kelley: But is that--
Ambacher: --stuff that I’ve recorded it’s like, well, for all I know that irrigation ditch could have been dug last month. I have no idea how old it is because it’s just something the rancher created for because it was all almond and walnut orchards that where we were.

Kelley: Do you think they’ll have an impact in the future?

Ambacher: That particular project or the way these are run?

Kelley: Not having the opportunity to do a more investigative--

Ambacher: It’s hard to say with the resources we were doing. I mean, I have yet to find an irrigation ditch that has been eligible. Personally, I would love to see that we never have to evaluate such things I can’t because it’s very rare that I have found--I don’t know if one that any of my co-workers or anybody has ever found that it’s eligible or it wasn’t have any integrity because it’s designed to change and evolve. So I don’t know that it doesn’t really--I think we’re always going to have those until we get a programatic agreement with some of these agencies and with the SHPO that we don’t have to evaluate them, but--

Kelley: And you see that continuing, these types of projects because of the ARRA funds or aside from the ARRA fund?

Ambacher: I think both. I think they will always that because even if we got into a Caltrans project and if we’re doing it through--I mean, I have a project coming up for Caltrans that’s in any--part of it--the project doesn’t have a more rural agricultural setting, and we’re going to have to go out further
out away because it’s going to be an elevated freeway. So chances are we’re going to have some irrigation features and ditches that are in there because it’s Ag land [agricultural land]. So I don’t know if that’s ever going to away. I wish it would but those--

Kelley: What are some of the other federal agencies that are generating projects for ICF International to the ARRA funds?

Ambacher: For the ARRA funds, this is the only one that I’m aware of it at the moment and I haven’t gotten too involved in stuff going on in our climate change and in those areas. We do a lot of Army Corps of Engineers projects and a lot of the ARRA projects have also been--the archeologists have been doing them, so this is--right now this is the first one that I’ve had to work on.

Kelley: Okay. So moving beyond ARRA, what are some of the interesting projects that you have on the horizon for your organization?

Ambacher: We’ve got a--well, right now, we’re wrapping up the Historic American Landscape Survey for the Doyle Drive Corridor which has been an interesting project. So we’re wrapping that up hopefully in the next couple of months.

Kelley: Where is that located?

Ambacher: That’s in San Francisco and they’re at the Presidio and we were tasked with--not--we weren’t doing an entire landscape survey of the entire Presidio. We were doing it strictly through the area of potential effect for
the Doyle Drive project. So it’s a little challenging because we were looking at a very linear feature and looking at—the majority of what changed in the landscape in that area of the Presidio really happened as a result of Doyle Drive being constructed. So we had to talk about sort of the layers of the Presidio’s history without repeating the entire history of the Presidio because it’s so well-documented and there’s Defender of the Gate and things like that that there’s no need to repeat the history of the Presidio. So that has probably been one of the more recently—the more interesting, the more challenging projects, and so we’re just—right now we should be getting comments back from our Caltrans contractor—or Caltrans contact to start responding to that to get it finalized.

Kelley: What are some of the most interesting projects that you’ve worked on since you’ve been there?

Ambacher: Doyle Drive was a fun one. I’ve had just some smaller—we had smaller ones for this—actually for the city of Davis that I just worked on, just evaluating and applying their local criteria as well as CEQA and National Register and we—I worked on a historic district for the city of Suisun which was part of a—Solano Transportation Authority in Caltrans project. They are widening 80 and 680 and Highway 12. And that was fun to actually identify a potential historic district and—that had like 95 contributing buildings to it, so that one was enjoyable. And that—most of them—they’ve been your—kind of the run-of-the-mill Caltrans projects, I
haven’t—I’m working on high speed train right now in the Anaheim leg and that’s been a challenge because it’s highly controversial. And in our project area alone I have 14 moved buildings and you don’t usually get that, so that one’s been kind of fun and we actually had some that we found individually eligible and some outstanding buildings in Anaheim and in Fullerton that we’ve been able to call out, so that was kind of fun. I don’t usually get this. I usually get not eligible, not eligible.

Kelley: Your past connection with the Office of Historic Preservation, has that helped you in the position that you have now?

Ambacher: I think so. It’s also nice that I’ve had these people to still call on for—to pick their brains on issues and things like that, but it also, I think, has helped—and the fact that you work at SHPO, you kind of understand. You know the other side of what we do and how that works and how to move through the process from that side and what OHP is looking for when we’re submitting documents and things like that to help it go more smoothly.

Kelley: Any missed opportunities that Jones & Stokes, well since you’ve been working there that you see that the company could’ve taken and didn’t take?

Ambacher: I think we’ve missed some opportunities just in--because of our cost. We’ve lost some work that were for smaller projects because--especially now that we’ve been bought out by a much larger global company, it’s
more difficult to go after some of the smaller jobs that are out there because the cost of even putting together the proposal for it isn’t even--to throw my staff time on it. So we’ve lost out on some smaller jobs that other firms have gotten that I don’t think were as qualified as what our staff would have been to and I think we would have done a better job and given this--most of them were cities and counties and I think we would have given them a more usable planning document than what some of the other firms do because they don’t have the same reputation as our staff does. And I just think--

Kelley: And it looks like--I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt you.

Ambacher: Oh, no. I’m saying--and it’s strictly just because of cost and our rates, and even with our reduced rates, we can’t a firm that only has 25 employees. Their cost--they don’t have the overhead that we do, so we don’t--some of them we haven’t been able to go after them which is unfortunate.

Kelley: It seems like the recession is going to continue on especially for cities and counties with the federal funds now are drying up. It looks like they’re going to have a more difficult time in their governmental functions. Do you think that’s going to cause problems for you being able to bid on jobs that they have in the future?

Ambacher: I think it won’t because I don’t think again our rates is going to be to high and even--we’re only allowed to go down in a certain reduced multiplier on projects. And when it’s only for the cities, a $50,000 job, that’s a big
job for a city. But for us, that’s nothing because we’re used to bidding on million dollar jobs and 100,000, 200,000 kind of projects. And I think it’s unfortunate because the cities, they have to--they’re having to postpone I think some of their projects that they want to do but they don’t have the funding to do it, and even if when they were to get something allocated out of 50,000 or 25,000, that’s a huge chunk for them. And hopefully they’re getting what they paid for. But we just won’t be going after some of that which I think is sort of short sighted too because I think some of the smaller projects are also what’s going to feed larger companies at some point. Not everybody is going to have a million dollar jobs.

Kelley: You have quite cohesive history and public history, what, if any, are the agencies that you have seen that have been the hardest hit within the public history venues Sacramento from this recession?

Ambacher: I would actually think some of the historical societies and the libraries and the places they do research, they have to reduce their hours or they have had to go to such a limited staff that that’s causes them to now have to go to appointments where you can’t just walk in anymore. I think they have been hit very hard and it’s made it difficult just even trying to do research. I mean, just with the furloughs alone that the state has had, it’s like, “Oh, I got to do research at the State Library--oh, wait. It’s a furlough Friday. We can’t--we have to wait till Monday.” And I think those smaller agencies, I think those who’ve had--I’ve really felt it because we just
noticed reduced hours and where they’re charging for staff now when they
didn’t used to charge for copies or their time in order to try to recoup some
of what they’re missing in their budgets.

 Kelley: For anybody going back and looking at this rural histories I am recording
right now for this thesis maybe 30 or 40 years from now, is there anything
you feel would be important for them to know about this recession time in
Sacramento?

 Ambacher: I think it’s hitting everybody a little differently. We--last year, it was a
little bit harder on our company, we did have layoffs. Luckily, the cultural
staff only lost one person, and it was strictly a matter last of last to hire
first to fire kind of thing. It really didn’t have anything else to do with just
that and we didn’t have as much work at that point. Whereas other firms,
I think are thriving in the other areas of our business because we are so
diversified with climate change and other aspects of the environment,
environmental work. We’re not getting hit quite as hard as somebody that
just specializing in a 106, or preservation, or restoration, and that kind of
thing. I don’t know. I see--for us, I see the trend only going to positive
because it’s more money comes in from the Feds. I think more contracts
are going to be led, and there’re going to be I think this crazy schedule of
had to turn it around this quickly. But I think a more streamline processes
some of the environmental review maybe isn’t necessarily a bad thing
either. So I think it’s going to be a wait and see. I think for those firms in
Sacramento, you’re also in good position because we’re here where the state government is, and where Caltrans, and that kind of thing. So I think some of the firms are in better off because you’ll hear about these things I think quicker than you would if you’re in another places. So I think it’s going to be a wait and see.

Kelley: Well, thank you for your insights and I appreciate your cooperation.

Ambacher: Glad to do it.

Kelley: Thank you.

[Audio File end at 0:20:01]
APPENDIX B

ORAL HISTORY with JIM BREWER
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Jim Brewer

November 20, 2009

By

Sharon J. Kelley
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[Audio File 1]

00:00:15 Personal background information, education;
00:00:57 Own a technology business (software development);
00:01:16 Involvement with West Sacramento Historical Society (WSHS) –
    Background of the WSHS – WSHS Museum collection and collection
    development;
00:04:40 WSHS Museum closure – Problems with location and staffing – City
    funding was eliminated due to recession that provided reimbursement for
    rent – Fundraisers for Museum;
00:08:11 New city owned locations were considered to house Museum collection
    after closure providing an affordable lease – City of West Sacramento
    declined the lease;
00:12:46 WSHS negotiated gallery space in the new West Sacramento Community
    Center to showcase some of their collection – Gallery space to be more
    technologically advanced and electronically interactive;
00:14:50 Potential solutions considered – A bookmobile to showcase WSHS
    historical collections of West Sacramento and the Port of Sacramento for
    schoolchildren – Static portable displays – Promoting smaller gallery
    vignettes in alternative locations;
00:20:51 WSHS Museum smaller collection items currently housed in member’s
    home and garages – Larger items (fire trucks) housed by the City of West
    Sacramento;
00:21:41 Concern for collection deterioration; without proper housing – Fundraisers
    to finance costs;
00:24:13 Audience – Goals for audience development – Previous audience for
    Museum – Donations to assist schools in fieldtrips to the Museum;
00:27:37 Shift in perspective with Museum closure and economic downturn.
[Audio File 2]

00:00:11  WSHS biggest hurdles to overcome.

[Audio File 3]

00:00:11  How WSHS benefits the community.
Jim Brewer

Jim Brewer is on the Board of Directors for the West Sacramento Historical Society (WSHS). As a long time member, he has been active in development of the Historical Society as a member, President and former Director for the WSHS Museum. Mr. Brewer’s company, Web Services West, development and hosts the WSHS webpage. West Services West is a home based business that specializes in software development, web page design, providing updating and hosting services.
Interview History

Narrator:

Jim Brewer

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

November 20, 2009
12:00 p.m.
Arthur F. Turner Community Library
1212 Merkley Avenue
West Sacramento, CA 95891
40 Minute Session

The narrator and interviewer met at a library and sat inside in an enclosed meeting room, the recording was stopped and restarted three times.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

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California State University, Sacramento

Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

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Signature of Narrator: Jim Brewer
Dated: 11-20-2009

Narrator’s name as he/she wishes it to be used: Jim Brewer
Narrator’s address:

Narrator’s phone number:

Signature of Interviewer:  Shanna Watters
Dated: 11-20-2010

Interviewer’s address:
P.O. Box 1972
Sacramento, CA 95814

Interviewer’s phone number: (652) 380-5070
Kelley: Good morning. This is Sharon Kelley. Today is Friday, November 20, 2009, and I’m interviewing Jim Brewer. Good morning.

Brewer: Good morning.

Kelley: Mr. Brewer’s from the West Sacramento Historical Society. Mr. Brewer, can you tell me a little bit of information about yourself?

Brewer: Well, I’m a resident, born and raised in California, and spent most of my life in the State of California, although I’ve traveled in aspects of military service that I was in, but also ended up living in the States of Oregon and Washington. Primarily I’m an I-5 person here, Highway I-5.

Kelley: And you worked in the area?

Brewer: I have worked in the area. I have my own business, and with technology that we have today, I’m able to work out of my home. My partners are in other states, so we can collaborate and do software development, is what we do.

Kelley: How did you get involved with the West Sacramento Historical Society?

Brewer: I think I was the last one at the meeting one time, and so by default then you get selected. But, seriously, it was not something that we really started out being interested in history, but as I saw the story of West Sacramento, listened to some of the docents as they were describing what we had in the museum, it became a compelling story, and over a period of a year, year and a half, found myself totally immersed in it. Unfortunately, we’re drowning right now, but beyond that, I have never looked back. It’s been a great experience.
Kelley: How long has the Society been in business?

Brewer: The Historical Society has been around--I think it’s our sixteenth year. The museum was in operation for five years, and we just closed it last month.

Kelley: Were you involved with the museum when it opened?

Brewer: I wasn’t. We weren’t residents here. We’ve been here five years, so just about the time it was opening up, and about a year later I joined, have been there ever since, day and night, it seems like.

Kelley: The Historical Society had a collection, and they had enough of a collection to be able to open an actual physical location to showcase it.

Brewer: We did, and the collection was actually initiated through one of the founding members of the Historical Society, Virginia Stevens and her husband, who were longtime residents and educators in West Sacramento. They traveled extensively through South America and somewhat in Europe, and during those travels collected historic manuals, artifacts, and just pictures galore. They gave that to us, and when Virginia passed away, the home was a part of her inheritance that she gave to the Historical Society, and we used that to open the museum with. That was her desire and that’s what she wanted to do, and we’ve done it for the last five years.

Kelley: Do you have materials, documents, and ephemera from West Sacramento that you present as well?

Brewer: Well, starting with her collection, we have been able to acquire other elements, collection, three of which are fire trucks. Two of those were actually built here
in West Sacramento out of spare parts and some parts that migrated or found their way across the river back over to West Sacramento. I think they came out of the old rail yard, repair centers over there. But, to us, they’re beautiful little antique fire trucks. Another one was purchased for here. So these fire trucks are a major part of our collection and Virginia’s collection.

We also now have or are in possession of the Port of Sacramento Collection. So when the ownership of the port transferred to the City of West Sacramento, they encapsulated all of that and gave it to us, the flag and the founding documents and the minutes and all the things that they didn’t have to have in order to keep the port going. We got everything else, and we still have that in our collections.

Kelley: The museum made a decision this past year to close its doors. Did it own the building that you had the museum in?

Brewer: No, we weren’t the owner of it. We were a leaseholder and we had a five-year lease with three years’ lease and with two option years. The city had a grant they had received that reimbursed for our rent, so that was how we were able to sustain ourselves for the five years. The location of the museum was such it was in a redevelopment area. It was an underserved part of town.

Kelley: That’s Broderick?

Brewer: That’s Broderick area. So the idea was that the museum would help generate some traffic and help generate some community interest, which we did. We did fairly well during the first two years of its existence. What really had to happen, which did not happen, was we probably should have transitioned to a full-time...
staff or a part-time paid staff position that could just entirely focus on the
operation of the museum and be absolutely responsible for the fundraising and
things that would be around that. But as an all-volunteer based, that probably
just didn’t get the proper attention that it had to have.

There, in a very short period of time, we stepped through three directors, I,
myself, being the last one, of the museum. They just burn out immediately,
because it’s a very rough area. In part, now, because as the economy has
changed on us, the influx of homeless people began to have a serious impact on
us, because our doorstep is also a place for them to stop, and it’s very difficult to
come to the museum and step over people, and it was very difficult. Our
docents were elderly, and, for the most part, that was uncomfortable for them as
well, so it was just an uncomfortable environment. We wouldn’t get enough
support to overcome that.

Kelley: Does the City still provide some funding for the Historical Society?

Brewer: Not any longer.

Kelley: How long did that go on for?

Brewer: For that five years of the lease period for the museum.

Kelley: So that’s the only time then that the Historical Society has been funded.

Brewer: Right.

Kelley: Was that the only funding that you had?

Brewer: Other than that and the occasional fundraising opportunities that we had.

Kelley: What were some of the fundraising opportunities?
Brewer: Well, these would be membership appreciation dinners. It would be pop bottle drives, just normal small-change kind of operations; it seems like, in retrospect. At the time it seemed like a major undertaking because it took all the regular volunteers to ramp up to go get something done, and that return on that probably wasn’t what it needed to be to sustain it. I mean, that was the bottom line.

Kelley: What type of membership base do you have right now?

Brewer: Right now, at our last recollection, it was 110 members. Again, part of the times is that people have needed to focus elsewhere, and so the historical societies and needs of historical preservation is one of the casualties of the loss of focus there. It’s very difficult to be focused on history when you’re worrying about everything today. So that’s just the reality of where we are.

Kelley: The decision to close your doors also meant that you had to relocate the physical aspects of your collection.

Brewer: Well, it’s a little—yes. The answer is yes. We’ve had to readjust to this. But there is a story leading up to that, is going back two years ago, two and a half now, is that we began, with cooperation with some city staff, investigating ways to survive the lease. We knew the lease was going to terminate. That was okay with us too. We needed to find a better home for it. So we had tried to focus in other locations that the city owned, and we found some. One was called the Lisbon Firehouse, and there’s the Third Street Firehouse, which is right across from where the museum was today. So we kind of focused in on the Lisbon as being the place we could go to. In its heyday, the Lisbon Firehouse was a
community center. Kids would get a Friday morning meal on the way to school, and they would get their shots there, and there were a lot of activities because it was an all-volunteer firehouse at that day. Then two of our fire trucks were built for that firehouse.

So we said, “This is a great place for us.” It was just being used for storage by the Parks and Red Department, and so we thought everything was pretty much on the up and up, that would be good for us to take over and lease that in a long-term lease, and we would, in time, begin restoring it and we’d put it back to where it was and end up with a nice community asset. Well, there’s lots of reasons why that didn’t happen, but the bottom line is that it didn’t happen, and that cost us about a year and a half of expectations and planning and presentations, and the end result was that was not a decision the city gave us. They said we had to go back and do some more work, so it just kind of threw us in a bit of turmoil.

Kelley: Is there any reason in particular that they decided not to allow you to go into Lisbon?

Brewer: Well, I think the one remark that was given to me that I remember, because I was making one of the presentations, was, “What is your return on the investment to the city if we give you this super favorable lease?” Which we were getting a lease, which was super favorable. It was a dollar a year for fifteen years, which we justified having a lease like that because with a permanent lease, that gave us the credentials for a permanent home, and by
having a permanent home, then we would be eligible for different kind of granting, funding sources. But on a shorter-term lease, you’re not eligible for them, so you couldn’t improve the building on a three-year lease or a five-year lease.

Kelley: Where would this grant money come from for the funding that you’re talking about?

Brewer: The Indian casinos had indicated--we had two of them that had been interested in us, that they might help us in some of these areas in retrofitting these buildings, because, fortunately for us, our bright community is also the birthplace of some of the members of those Indian communities. The chairperson of one of the tribes is very interested and bright. But we just never were able to get a deal. We never could get the lease.

The sad part of that little story is the building burned down here about a week ago, two weeks ago. We’re not sure it’s totally destroyed, but we’ve lost it as for all practical intent and purposes. So that was for a building just being not occupied, and we have the other firehouse in the same kind of condition. So there needs to be something done with these firehouses. Anyway, that’s a whole ‘nother story.

Kelley: They didn’t want to lease because they wanted economic gain from it?

Brewer: Well, I mean, I’m not throwing stones at anyone, but the problem was, to the people that were this condition that was looking at it, was they couldn’t see a return. How would they differentiate the Historical Society and the value it was
going to be giving back to the community by giving us this favorable lease? How would they differentiate that from some other nonprofit who might be coming to them with the same kind of proposal? Why wouldn’t somebody else get it for drug rehabilitation or homeless shelter or something? Why not give it to them for a dollar a year? I understand the argument. It was just a difficult argument to be trying to make when we weren’t prepared for that. That was not something we had thought about.

Kelley: From the time that you realized or the Society realized that that wasn’t going to happen, what led up to--

Brewer: Where we are today?

Kelley: Yes.

Brewer: Well, after exploring a lot of other opportunities and reaching out to our business communities, trying to find and trying to negotiate with our current landlord, trying to find a place to move and take the collection and the fire trucks and stuff, there’s been good cooperation with the business community. I’m not complaining about that part of it at all.

At the same time, what was happening is we were building a new Community Center in West Sacramento, and we’re going to participate in that as a Historical Society, we’re going to have a gallery in there, and that’s a pretty expensive proposition from our viewpoint. So we need to marshal our monies up for that.

Kelley: What would you have to pay for?
Brewer: Well, we’re guessing we’re going to invest somewhere around forty to fifty thousand dollars to equip the gallery, to put the video displays in, and do all the things that should happen there to tell the story of the Port of West Sacramento, the story of West Sacramento in general, and all of that, and make it more interactive. We’re sitting in the middle of a new library here that is very interactive and lots of computer technology, we’re thinking, and that will be the same thing over there at the new Community Center.

Kelley: So what you’ll be showing will tend to be more vignettes of things, smaller?

Brewer: Yes, and it’s consistent with--I think you were here a few weeks ago and went to the temporary library and you saw one of our mobile displays.

Kelley: Yes, right.

Brewer: When the Lisbon Firehouse became not viable for us, we knew we weren’t going to be able to get that without a change in city policy, which we’re working towards. We still believe historic preservation is a good thing to be doing and we need to have that focus, but the timing just wasn’t right. We need to get those policies put in place. That when that decision was reached, then we also at the same time began thinking about different ways to relate the stories of history and how else can we do it, because with our museum not there, the very real prospect we weren’t going to have a museum, that where we could bring kids there on a bus and let them walk through and tell them the story, that’s not going to be possible. This stuff is going to be in a warehouse.
So when we addressed that in real terms, we realized what we could do way out on the horizon someday is maybe put it into a bus and take it to them, think of it like a Bookmobile, and we’ll just take it to every school, set up shop. The kids will get run through there, like you get your shots in the old days. Fold it all up and go to the next school and we’ll do our story. That was one way of thinking about it.

Another way is make it more electronic or interactive, more of a web-page kind of an experience. Another way of thinking about it is taking one like you saw, which was a static display in a case, and take the case and move it throughout the community, and we just have a lot of these little cases. We’ve taken the ladder, because that was something we could afford, and we have one at the La Bou restaurant over here that talks about the railroad that used to be here.

Kelley: I’ve seen that.

Brewer: We have the one that was in the temporary library, but it talks about Mr. Turner and his history, which is this library we’re sitting in now, is named after him, so that’s over in the West Sacramento Land Company’s offices now, temporarily. We’re in the process of putting a Highway 40 display in at the Les Schwab tire dealership out on Harbor. So we have some old tires and some artifacts that were collected off of Highway 40, put them into a display. We’re going to haul it over to their place of business, and he’s given us an area, so we’ll put it up there.
In two of our schools we have displays on learning, an antique typewriter and pencils and an old chalkboard, pieces of it that we have off of some rural schoolhouses that were here. There’s a chunk of the chalkboard that we were able to salvage. We’ve made displays of those and put those in schools, and probably the first, second, and third graders, generally speaking, will find that more interesting than the older school kids. So we’re just taking the museum, taking each little piece of it, and we just put it out in somebody else’s building, but it’s still our museum. We just think of West Sacramento now as our museum.

Kelley: Have you had people contact you after seeing it, asking if they could have one of the cases for a short period of time? Has it generated interest, is what I am asking.

Brewer: Well, let me answer that a little bit differently. The answer is no one has directly said, “Gee, we want our case too,” whereas before it was like, “No, we don’t really have the space for it,” is, “Yeah, I think we can make space for that.” And now we have people who are willing to let us try it out in their place, whereas before there was no willingness, because they’ve seen it, they’ve seen it work, we have some track record now. Generally the space we want to put one of these displays is in probably one of the higher traffic areas of their business. So that’s a serious business decision for most of them.

We haven’t been real forthcoming in some of the opportunities here simply because of our own inability to get these displays together. We’re working on
one now that would--there’s a West Capitol Raceway out there. The display
that is currently at City Hall that depicts that raceway is going to go away
sometime in the month of December. We’re going to take it back. We’d like to
refurbish that and put it somebody else, somebody else like maybe Les Schwab
that maybe their business would benefit from somebody who was interested in
racing. They’re also going to buy tires anyway. So that may be a place they
would show up at, or at least pay attention to while you’re waiting for your tires
to get changed or replaced or whatever’s happening. So we’re just having to
think out of the box in a real sense of it.

Kelley: And keep your collection in the public eye.

Brewer: Yes, keep it out there. Then, again, another major step we’re doing is taking the
things that we have that have always been in these boxes that are stored in the
back room somewhere that we never seemed to have found the time to bring out
and work out and pull apart and look at them and see what’s there, we’re finding
now that without this museum hanging over our head--and I don’t mean that in a
negative sense, but it is a big responsibility for an all-volunteer group to
undertake. That’s a lesson learned, that if you can find a way to pay for
someone, that’s the best way to do it, and even that’s problematic in that it’s
difficult everywhere in these economic times. That’s just the bottom line. So
you have to do things a little differently.

But taking all the things out and putting them into an office setting, which is
where we are now, that we can take a box out of our storage, bring it to a
location like we were sitting, take the box apart, look at everything, take pictures of things that are valuable and begin putting those up on the Internet or putting them into the Community Center electronically, and if it’s really, really important, somebody seem something in that image that we’ll put on the website or that we’ll put on one of these mobiles, on these interactive displays, if they see something very interesting there, they’ll contact us. We’ll have everything indexed, which we do now, all researchable. We’ll go find that box again, back in our lockers somewhere. We’ll bring it out to you, and then you can actually look at the real document. So that’s our goal.

Kelley: Where did you move the physical collection to?

Brewer: I guess I may have earlier left an improper impression. The city has given us use of a piece of property near where the museum was, called Little Parish Garage and we store our fire trucks and all of our artifacts in there. We’ve cleaned out some spaces. We’ve got the roof--with all the rain we’re having here today, we’ll see if it leaks or not. But we put things in as dry a spot as we can for a temporary location.

So we’re trying to raise funds over this next year to meet the needs of our new Community Center, to meet the needs of our archives, and to get them into a safe location, taking the most sensitive--and I mean by that the things that will deteriorate if they’re not protected by humidity--

Kelley: So you’re talking environmental control.
Brewer: --and environmental control, and taking those and finding a home for them separate. So there will be these three major costly exercises that we’ve undertaken.

Kelley: So on one hand, you have enormous pieces of equipment that definitely need housing, and then you have, on the other hand, very fragile documentation that needs environmental control.

Brewer: Yes.

Kelley: What type of fundraising are you talking about to be able to [unclear]?

Brewer: Well, as an example, we were talking this morning that we can have hosted dinners, have speakers come in that are of interest to our community, and invite them to come in as early as this coming July 2010. We’ll be in the new Community Center in our gallery, and in there is going to be a black box theater. We have a big multipurpose meeting room where food can be served that we’ll have use of that will seat--I think it’s around 250 people. So we will have a venue that we can meet. We could do significant fundraising there.

Kelley: You’ll have speakers come in there, and then you would charge for the dinner or--

Brewer: We’d have speakers. We belong to the Sacramento Museum Consortium. I probably don’t have the right name there, but it’s Dr. Bob. In that consortium, we have twenty-two museums.

Kelley: You’re talking about Dr. Bob LaPerriere?
Brewer: Yes. The group that he kind of manages, we meet quarterly, and in this group, every time we go there, I’m totally amazed, there’s so many talented, interesting people that have stories to talk about, just the ones that show up, and they refer to all the others that are left at home that are still talented and interested in history and that. So there’s a very large reservoir of untapped talent, is how I’m seeing it, all the way from character reenactments, the just regular old read-out-of-a-book storytelling kind of stuff, to actually full-blown theatrical excursions. All of those are going to be possible, and every one of those would come with a ticket or a price we would charge a fee for. Or maybe in some cases we’ll forgive it because it’ll be so important to the community. That would be something we would bite the bullet on.

Kelley: Who do you think your biggest audience base is? What age group would you say?

Brewer: Our focus and our goals are to reach the younger groups, the third to the fifth graders, somewhere in that bracket. Our president, Geri Winkfield [phonetic] is a retired teacher out of West Sacramento, and that’s a special spot in her heart, and she and I have had great success these past couple years in reaching out to our school district. We were able to get some funding so we were able to pay for the school buses to come to the museum. I think we had almost seven hundred children, all from West Sacramento, but some from as far away as Elk Grove, that came here to see what we had in our museum. At the time, our museum was themed. There was some generic, general interest, West
Sacramento stories, but more specifically we had the Sikhs of West Sacramento, the Latinos of West Sacramento, the women of West Sacramento. So each one of those themes brought with it its own little interest group. The Sikhs of West Sacramento was absolutely embraced by the Sikh community. We’re the home of the largest Sikh temples in northern California, and there’s 15,000 members of our temple here. They’re from all over the Sacramento region, and they celebrated the fact that there’s somebody here locally that’s telling their story. We thought we did a good job. They thought we did a good job. It was a great, great effort. That was the kind of things that we were looking towards for the Lisbon fire house to be a place to stage these things and then take the advantage of our new resource to us, which would be the new Community Center, the galleria that we will have, and then the black box theater, the big meeting rooms. We could stage all that over at the Lisbon and then, come to there, and bring it there and set it up like a traveling show, almost. That won’t happen now.

Kelley: The funding that you were talking about for the schools and paying for the buses to bring children from school to the museum, where did that money come from?

Brewer: Volunteers. Just plain old donations. The Sikhs were able to help us with some of that, because it was their children that were coming to us as well. Their Sunday school classes would also include a trip to the museum when they were in town. The school district was just simply reimbursing their school buses.
Elkhorn never asked us for that. Somehow or other, they had a funding source for it, and they were just happy to come and see us.

Kelley: At this juncture, now, the museum has actually closed.

Brewer: Yes.

Kelley: You have your items stored in various--

Brewer: Well, we have until the thirtieth of November to get them out of the museum and over into storage, and so we’re actively doing that right now. Even as we speak, there’s two or three people over there right now moving things. I think when the raining stops; they’ll be outside doing stuff.

Kelley: The Society and the museum, with this focus on the museum, that whole paradigm has shifted and given you new opportunities. Do you see it as something that was inevitable? Do you think it would have happened had the economic downturn not happened? It sounds like it’s been a plus for you to be able to shift gears and move into a more contemporary--

Brewer: Well, I think there would be a debate whether it was a plus or not. To me, I see it as an opportunity, because as soon as it was recognized at the museum that we were capable of sustaining was not the museum the community wanted or needed, that was the bottom line. We couldn’t get our attendance up, because, again, there’s a lot of other focuses. There’s a lot of other points of failure there, I guess is the way to say it. There were a lot of other things going on at the same time, and the museum just wasn’t going to survive there. It became obvious to us towards the end, and so that’s when we started looking.
But that presented us with an opportunity. We had to look for a new opportunity, and we found it, and that is dispersing of these collections throughout the city. Now, instead of having a single address, I can rattle off five or six different addresses where our museum is now. So I’m thinking of it more like a multiple-branch museum than just a single branch. So when I talk to the consortium, I’m the only one that’s got five branches. Well, that’s not a true statement. Some of the others have a branch, but they’re funded. So I brag it up. I’m a salesperson at heart, and here we go. You just have to look at it from a little different prism, I think.

Kelley: That’s a unique perspective, instead of it being dispersed.

Brewer: I think I’m the only one, and I may have talked to Tom Lewis [phonetic], our--

[Audio File 1 ends at 29:03]

[Audio File 2]

Kelley: In conclusion, what do you see as the biggest hurdles that the West Sacramento Historical Society has to overcome at this point?

Brewer: Well, probably several, some of which I’m certainly not aware of yet, but will come to us as we get to them. But having come from the museum and a place to go and present our story and changing from that kind of thinking pattern that we’ve had for these last several years and the years leading up to that five years of the museum’s existence, what we need to begin thinking of how to address this diverse nature of what our museum is now going to be looking like and those challenges that that’s going to bring to us. We need more places to put
our mobile displays. We need a more consistent funding source. We’re not
paupers by any chance, but we need to preserve the resources that we have, the
financial resources we have. We need to grow those, and we’re going to grow
those through fundraising events. We’re going to talk to senior citizens about
the benefits of giving us money, in bequeathing the money to us in their
donations, and the advantages that we might be able to offer and work with
them on towards financial planning. That’s, I guess, pretty standard stuff. But
we have some really dedicated people that have thought about us in the past.
We want them to continue to think about us.
Without the museum, it’s just a bigger museum, and like I was telling you, I’m
thinking of this museum now, instead of just being a single branch with a single
address, I’m thinking of it more in the terms of a multi-address museum with
lots of branches, where every businessperson in this community has the ability
to house some of our mobile displays. That will help drive in traffic, because I
will bring those visitors to their office and I will explain the benefits of their
office in participating with us. I’ll be the one to sing the praises of that
businessperson.
We have them in place right now. We have La Bou’s, which has our display,
and we set up an office right next door to him and their location, and we’re
going to be very active, very partner-generated with them to pull things up that
he’s very interested in history. Mr. Turner has got one of our displays there in
his office. The Les Schwab Tire Center has a display in their office, in their
facilities. We’ll keep them fresh. We’ll keep them current so that their clientele will see something new once or twice a year. It won’t be the same old thing year after year. I think by doing that, we’ll not only get the story out, but it’ll make people aware that history and history preservation is important, but it will also help raise funds for us. They’ll see the importance and perhaps reciprocate with donations, participation too, but donations.

[Audio File 2 ends at 3:11]

[Audio File 3]

Kelley: How does the West Sacramento Historical Society benefit the community? Brewer: Well, I think through our efforts, there’s a couple dimensions to it. One is, and foremost in my mind, is that we’re a group of volunteers, that we’re there because of our love of history, first, but even deeper than that, I think, is the love of West Sacramento. All of us are either longtime residents or have moved here and just embraced it heart and soul. What we can take from that is the lessons that we’re seeing every day. We have people reach us through our website. Some story, we had an old safe that came out of one of our warehouses here several years ago, and that safe we documented when it was opened, because it was a special kind and it had some nitroglycerin or something in the door. We recorded it, it was put on TV, and we celebrated that we had done that. It was a great event. Well, the benefit of our existence now, and we’re seeing this in the terms of the Internet and this interactive kind of thing we’ve talked about, is that somebody in Ohio, a little community in Ohio, their fire department or police
department had the same kind of safe. They were presented with the same kind of problem, is nobody had the combination to it, and how do you open it. So, searching the Internet, we were the one hit they found that had an answer. So they were able to contact us through our website, and we were able to put them in touch with our local police department and the Yolo County hazardous materials people, and they were able to talk peer to peer and gave them the specific instruction how to get into the safe in a safe way, in case there had been something in there. Wasn’t anything in their safe, and I don’t know what the contents had in it, but their story is that story.

And there’s other stories like that. We’re in possession of the Port of Sacramento collection of materials. I’m talking now with a group who are studying the delta and the canal, and they’re looking back into history in the 1900s era up to the 1930s. Well, we have some—we don’t know if it’s in our collection, but several of us who have talked about this particular topic believe that in the workup material that was making up the initial workings of the port, putting it together, getting the canal built, that in those documents there’s references to the kind of materials this group is looking for. So that value then is very important to West Sacramento and the survival of the port, and, more importantly, if you think downstream, down to the delta area.

Final story is we have a group of people that is a family. They’re dispersed throughout the United States now. I don’t think anybody is out of the United States, but their family is dispersed. They were based here and they were one of
our pioneer families. We have information in our collections, in our archives, that we’re the only ones that have it. I’m not going to give you the name of who it is, but they can’t agree among themselves as to who should be in charge of it. Well, they’ve trusted us. We’re in charge of it. Each and every one of them can come, any mix and pairs, however they want to do it, and they can look and see their great-great-grandfathers. The remarkable thing, when you see the grandkids, great-grandkids, next to that picture, there’s no doubt where they came from.

Kelley: So it’s their history.

Brewer: It is.

Kelley: Historical societies are the framework that our civic communities are built on, and especially important, and I certainly hope that West Sacramento continues to broaden its perspective on incorporating history and the Historical Society’s materials into its active community. You certainly have an awful lot to offer this community.

Brewer: Well, thank you, and I thank our Society. They’re dedicated volunteers, and they’ve worked hard.

Kelley: Thank you very much.

Brewer: My pleasure. Thank you.

[Audio File 3 ends at 4:34 ]
APPENDIX C

ORAL HISTORY with MILFORD WAYNE DONALDSON
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Milford Wayne Donaldson

October 23, 2009

By

Sharon J. Kelley

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[Audio File 1]

00:00:12 Personal Background Information – Life long interest in built environment – Introduction to redevelopment and conservation in Europe – Education – Move to San Diego – Involved in Redevelopment in San Diego - 1966 National Preservation Act – Involvement in new preservation movement;

00:08:32 Honored by the American Institute of Architects, first preservation architect to receive a fellowship;

00:10:38 Went back to CSU, San Diego to get History and Public Teaching MA in order to teach preservation - Teaching architecture/preservation classes at California Polytechnic, San Luis Obispo;

00:11:51 Views on progress of preservation industry – Promoting issue of sustainability;

00:14:09 New paradigm for preservation thinking – Transnational focus and forms of communication – U.S. Green Building Council;

00:19:00 Sustainability as a way of life – Natural environment – Disposability and obsolescence – Communication and the Internet;

00:34:04 Sustainability in the built environment, reuse vs. rebuilt;

00:38:03 California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) budget - State vs. Federal match based funding – Economic impact of budget cuts – Goal was not to cut staff;

00:46:20 Different constructs for State Historic Preservation Offices – Umbrella agency of California State Parks and Recreation;

00:48:04 Negative impact of mandatory State furloughs – Increased workload due to Stimulus funding (ARRA) – Problems in the Section 106 process due to Stimulus funded projects;

00:52:56 FCC cell tower example -Solutions, streamlining Section 106 process – Minimum compliance;

00:59:48 Affect of delayed Section 106 processing to private industry – Collaboration with State and Federal Agencies to provide staff to OHP to expedite their Section 106 projects;

01:03:04 SHPOs sponsored federal bill to offset backlog of projects associated with ARRA funds - Perfect storm, worst budget crisis;
01:04:48 Economic impact will create cultural shift – Running out of natural resources.
MILFORD WAYNE DONALDSON, FAIA

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE

On Wednesday, April 7, 2004, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced the appointment of Milford Wayne Donaldson as the State Historic Preservation Officer. Mr. Donaldson was sworn in during ceremonies held at the State Capitol on April 9, 2004. The SHPO serves as chief administrative officer of the Office of Historic Preservation in Sacramento and as Executive Secretary of the State Historical Resources Commission. During Mr. Donaldson's tenure as SHPO he has streamlined Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act, has led the national initiative towards the sustainability and greening of historic resources. Mr. Donaldson has reached out to the California Tribes, initiating four summits to discuss common ground issues and advocates tribes to become Tribal Historic Preservation Offices. Mr. Donaldson was appointed Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation by President Barack Obama on June 1, 2010 for a three year term.

Prior to his appointment as SHPO, Mr. Donaldson had served as president of award winning Architect Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, since 1978, specializing in historic preservation services. He is licensed to practice architecture in California, Nevada and Arizona and holds a certified license from the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards. Mr. Donaldson is affiliated with several historical and preservation organizations and is a past president of the California Preservation Foundation (CPF) and past chairs of the State Historical Building Safety Board, the State Historical Resources Commission, and the Historic State Capitol Commission.

Previously an instructor at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, he continues to lecture at California community colleges and universities. Mr. Donaldson holds a Bachelor of Architecture and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. He engaged in post graduate studies at Uppsala University, Sweden, and received a Master of Science degree in Architecture from University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, and a Master of Arts degree in Public History and Teaching from University of San Diego.

Over the last thirty-five years, Mr. Donaldson has established himself as a leader in Historic Preservation and adaptive reuse of existing structures. His depth of knowledge unites nineteenth century building methods with state-of-the-art twenty-first century construction technologies. In 1991, The California Council of the American Institute of Architects acknowledged Mr. Donaldson for his statewide leadership in the interpretation of the State Historical Building Code which allowed the rehabilitation of historic buildings for affordable single room occupancy hotels. In 1992, Mr. Donaldson was inducted into the College of Fellows by the American Institute of Architects.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation engaged Mr. Donaldson to assist California cities in disaster damage assessment of historic buildings following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. A commendation was awarded by Governor Deukmejian to Mr. Donaldson for his efforts. Later, in the 1992 Eureka and 1994 Northridge Earthquakes, Mr. Donaldson lent his expertise to save historic buildings from unwarranted demolition. His efforts continue today as a Trainer in Emergency Response for the California Office of Emergency Services' Disaster Service Worker volunteer program.

Over 3000 projects have been completed by Mr. Donaldson’s firm, now known as Heritage Architecture & Planning, mainly throughout the western portion of the United States, including working with the California State Office of Historic Preservation, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the National Park Service, the California Department of Transportation, the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the Department of Water Resources, the California Conservation Corps, the United States Marine Corps, the United States Navy, Environmental Protection Agency and many cities and counties.

Interview History
Narrator:

Milford Wayne Donaldson

Interviewer/Editor:

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Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
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Interview Time and Place:

October 23, 2009
11:00 p.m.
Office of Historic Preservation
1416 9th Street, Room 1442-7
Sacramento, CA 95814
One and a half hour session.

The narrator and interviewer met at the narrator’s place of business and sat in his office.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:

The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:
2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento’s Public History Industry
An Oral History Thesis
California State University, Sacramento
Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

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Signature of Narrator: [Signature]
Dated: [Date]

Narrator’s name as he/she wishes it to be used: Milford Wayne Donaldson
Narrator’s Address: [Address]

Narrator’s phone number: [Number]

Signature of Interviewer: [Signature]
Dated: [Date]

Interviewer’s address:
Sharon J. Kelley
P.O. Box 18783
Sacramento, CA 95819

Interviewer’s phone number: (602) 380-5070
Kelley: This is Sharon Kelley. Today is October 23, 2009, and I’m interviewing Wayne Donaldson from the Office of Historic Preservation. Good morning.

Donaldson: Good morning, and for the record, it’s Milford Wayne Donaldson. That’s what I always go by.

Kelley: Okay. To get just a little bit of background information, can you summarize what you think are the highlights of your wonderful résumé? What do you think are some of the most important things that you’ve done?

Donaldson: Sure. Let me back up a little bit, because I think it’s important to understand the context and sort of where I got from. As a young child, very young child, at seven years old, I always wanted to become an architect. I was always interested in more or less how architecture fits within the environment, especially in more of the natural environment, because I also grew up a Boy Scout and did a lot of camping and stuff and I liked that type of vernacular architecture for some reason. I think that’s why I wanted to be an architect, not really knowing that most of that stuff was not built by architects; they were just simply built by the people that lived on the land and stuff, and maybe that’s why it was so great.

So as I was coming up, I really kind of was doing my studies in terms of what’s happening now direction. In other words, I was looking at long-span structures, cable-net structures. I became really interested in what Buckminster Fuller was doing. I was looking at biological structures,
structures that could actually be built that would be alive and grow and stuff.
That’s what eventually my master’s thesis was, that I got overseas, in
Scotland. So I was kind of focusing on that particular function. I was
interested in flight, I was into hang gliding and that type of lightweight
structure, rotations, inflatable structures, doing experiments in walking on
the water. I did an inflatable hang glider. So I was kind of looking at that
focus.

In my first trip over to Europe, I stayed at the University of Uppsala in
Scotland, and I remember my professor, when we were sitting in a building
that was built in 1325, which was an old surgery auditorium, and these are
the ones where you’re in these wooden boxes and there’s a marble slab, and
the guy would then go through and do his teaching, and that’s when that first
that building was built, which was really pretty incredible when you think
about it. And I was remarking at the marble steps that went up and how
worn they were on the inside of the spiral staircases that went up, and he
says, “Oh, those stairs have probably been replaced five or six times over the
life of the building,” and I’ll never forget that, because it hit a chord of
preservation in me, even though I was not focusing on what was referred to
as preservation at that time, because when I was going to school, it was way
before the National Historic Preservation Act, which would have been 1966,
and a lot of the downtown stuff was going through redevelopment, which I
thought was really cool. A lot of new towns in Sweden, and I was visiting,
so I was kind of in that focus. But, you know, I’ll never forget that statement from him.

Then when I went back on my second go to the University of Strathclyde in Scotland and I was interested in really kind of focusing on, again, part of my cable-net constructions and everything, I had a chance to go down to Frei Otto and work with him at the University of Stuttgart. He was building the Munich Games at that time. They came in 1972. So I had a chance to work down there, but in doing so, I had a chance to go to Munich and go to a lot of these other places and travel throughout Europe. I had a chance to go to Russia during the Cold War. As I kept seeing old buildings, I just kept saying, “Gosh, this really feels kind of good.” But my focus was still on kind of the cutting edge of this certain form of architecture.

So then I came back to the States, I determined to work for an architect of considerable signature and this was Bob Moser in San Diego. In fact, he’s considered now to be the master architect in terms of a lot of the forties and fifties and sixties [1960s] architecture, still alive at ninety years old. But I decided to work for him to kind of understand the business of architecture, but when I opened my architectural office, the downtown--what became known as the Gaslamp Quarter--had all the old buildings, it reminded me a lot of the European towns and it felt good to go down there. So I was one of these adventurous architects that opened up my office in an area that had twenty-four porn shops, three rescue missions, and it was scheduled to be
demolished by the Central City Development Corporation to put in a new shopping center by Arnie Hawn [phonetic] in the late sixties [1960s] and early seventies [1970s].

So getting down there, I got in a group with a lot of owners and residents down there and even a lot of the call girls and everything else that were really interested in keeping their neighborhood together. You know, it’s where you could get a meal for $1.25 and stuff like that. So I was working with a bunch of the owners and then started working with the Planning Department to see if we can’t save this. Then the National Historic Preservation Act came out in 1966. People were becoming more aware of their downtowns and preservation of this, because before then, we had what we called our preservation petting zoos, you know, where we were trying to save houses so that the city or county would give us a piece of property where we could gather these homes and put them there, and I was responsible for some of the earlier moves of trying to rescue these houses that were going to be demolished. But, you know, they were just putting a fake or pseudo street line, and there are all different kinds, from a Jewish temple to a Craftsman house, to a Victorian house, to some sort of a small cottage pioneer house. And everybody has them. Every city and county has them. Usually heritage parks is what they’re called.

But when I was downtown and I was trying to do some cutting-edge stuff, all of a sudden guys asked me to start working on some of these older buildings,
and I didn’t really know what I was doing, but we did some research and we were lucky, because the Gaslamp Quarter had a hundred and twenty contributing buildings. So I always consider myself to be, oh, like Marshall or somebody else, you know, that I’m on this gold field and all of a sudden, you know, that all of this stuff played out. So we started off in it, and then I was really unhappy with the way some of the contractors were doing the work, so I got my contractor’s license, and that’s how I sort of entered preservation, got involved in a lot of the boards and stuff like that, got involved in a real fledgling organization called Californians for Preservation Action, and then it became California for Preservation Foundation, became a board member on that, got involved in a lot of other stuff, government appointees and things. So that’s how I kind of came up through the ranks. I really kind of backed into it. I didn’t go through school focusing on preservation, because there was no school. Columbia University had a program, but it was a very loose program at that time. Of course, now everybody has those types of programs and stuff. So that’s kind of how I backed into it. Then I just decided that this is really what I want.

Kelley: That’s amazing.

Donaldson: So that’s it in a nutshell in terms of how I got kind of into the program.

Kelley: Starting from the beginning and working your way up in a fledgling area, I’m sure established a structure for other architects to follow and the
Donaldson: Yes, and it was nice to be honored by the American Institute of Architects, because I was really the first preservation architect to get a fellowship. Bruce Judd, as you probably know, from Architectural Resources Group in San Francisco, got his a year after. So it was kind of new territory. Even when I was nominated, there wasn’t a category for preservation at that time. So they put us in the design category, which was the most prestigious category to get your fellowship in. Now there’s a whole section for it and it’s clearly defined, because that’s basically an industry for a lot of people. They actually went to either the fifth-year program or they graduated with a preservation degree or they went and got their master’s right after and then entered into architectural practice and preservation architecture. So it was kind of fun, not really knowing what you’re doing, but kind of, in a way, establishing guidelines, secretaries, interiors, qualifications, and everything else, not really knowing it. I mean you’re just kind of living through it, but at the same time, you’re making history as you’re doing it, but you’re not aware that you’re making history.

Kelley: Being there at the inception.

Donaldson: Right, but you’re not really aware of it. It’s not like historians. To a certain degree they realize as they’re going through life that it’s important to
document because they are making history and they want to make sure that as you go back and you study, you leave this trail. What I tell young students is that as I’m going through life and I’m working on these various structures, I look at these structures as being a strata in the earth of a certain time. In other words, this is an 1882 strata, and that as I’m digging down and working in the strata and stuff, my work now will be frozen in time. It’s not like I’ve done a shopping center and then forty years later it’s demolished and it’s all gone. These structures now that are noted to be historic, I’m going to be locked into that strata forever.

So the nice thing is that you’re leaving a legacy of structures and your work in there, so I’m not really worried about it from a preservation standpoint, but I did go back and get my master’s in history and public teaching from the University of San Diego. I was probably the oldest one there. I got it in 2000 because I felt it was important because I was doing expert witness and everything else, and even though I was grandfathered in, I wanted to make sure that I met that criteria. So I actually went back and did that and it was kind of fun.

Kelley: And you taught?

Donaldson: Yes, and I taught. I’ve taught in all the universities, pretty much every university here. I taught full-time down at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo for two years.

Kelley: What did you like to teach?
Donaldson: Mostly fifth-year research programs and first-year design. I like to get students when they first come in, and then I like to get the more mature students at the end to work on their fifth-year projects.

Kelley: That’s amazing.

Donaldson: Yes, it was a lot of fun.

Kelley: The way you describe it, preservation really is this synergy, this living energy that perpetuates built-up momentum and perpetuates. Are you happy with the direction that preservation has gone in?

Donaldson: Well, I’m very happy with the way preservation is going. I think the challenges that we always continue to meet are the challenges whenever we have rapid growth. When we normally don’t have rapid growth, the challenges are not as bad because people are now trying to reuse their existing structure regardless of whether it’s historic, and very little work in demolition is done. But when large amounts of money are pumped into the system, like in the sixties [1960s], for instance, then a lot of things start to fall by the wayside, because they figure that’s new.

The other philosophy that we’ve been pushing for many, many years, at least fifteen years on my side, is the sustainability issue and protecting historic buildings, understanding that the sustainability of historic buildings is really how it’s going. Climate change, but also reinvesting a lot of stuff not going to landfill. But it goes way beyond historic. We need to get past the concept of sustainability, because I think sustainability gives you a false feeling that
once you’re focusing towards that and you’ve sustained yourself, then that’s all you have to worry about, and that’s not really true. There’s other things like rehab and resiliency and everything else, because we find that, just like people, when things affect them in the negative way, we’re usually strong enough that we can bounce back. We have enough resiliency to come back. So I look at every kind of dip economically as we’ve just been through this pattern before, but we need to look way towards the end and make sure that what we’re saving as part of our culture we hold onto that and don’t give that up just because we happen to be in the bottom of the trough or we’re at the high end where everything’s going--

Kelley: Right now, with the crisis that’s going on not just nationally but worldwide, do you feel that preservation is maintaining its standard, the preservation community, or are we going overboard with trying to maintain every structure?

Donaldson: Yes, I think that we need to have a new paradigm of thinking in preservation right now. I mean, we have enough laws and focusing that we are sustainable. We’re certainly getting the word out, a lot of lectures and everything else. But I think we’re sending sort of the wrong message out there, because the preservation, just the word itself means to preserve, to kind of lock in a place and keep forever, and I don’t think we’re getting the word out that we’re really not that. We’re very progressive in terms of saving our culture and saving our history, but there’s a whole new movement
out there, and maybe it’s a movement that reflects back to the sixties [1960s] when preservation was important and we could see the physical demise of our structures going down because of the large influx of the redevelopment monies that were coming into the cities and stuff.

And maybe what we’re seeing now, at least my feeling is, is we’re seeing a new ethical movement by the young that is looking at everything on a worldwide basis. They understand climate change and how this is affecting things. They’re now seeing poverty in emerging countries. They’re able to be involved in a time moment, just like when television first came out and it was broadcasting the Vietnam War, because it was the first time that a major war was being broadcast by television. So you would see things, even though they may be one day back, it’s not like a whole week back like in World War II. But now you’re seeing instantaneous involvement. In other words, you are involved, especially through the Internet and the connections and stuff. Whether it be Facebook or Twitter or whatever, it doesn’t really make any difference because everybody is so closely linked together now that I really believe that the young movement that we have now has a responsibility in terms of a sustainable culture that at least for our grandchildren and other folks, are like the [unclear] for seven generations out, you’re really now looking at how you affect that.

The preservation movement has not really got itself integrated with that, and I think a good example is we have a National Trust conference, let’s say, just
two weeks ago in Nashville, and we’re able to have approximately twelve, maybe fourteen hundred people attend for a three-day exercise, and this is like the best of the best of the best of all the preservationists that gathered on this thing, with some really nice venues and everything else, but it’s kind of formula-driven right now, while next week in Phoenix we’re going to have the U.S. Green Building Council, which is promoting the LEED focus and the sustainability focus mostly in newer structures and how we deal with inner cities and everything else, 25,000 people. They have to hold it in the stadium, Al Gore’s the keynote speaker, Sheryl Crow will be leading all of the performance stuff, 40,000 members national that belong to this. When I got my Leed associate professional, I think there was 19,000 at that time. There’s over 100,000 now. So this is a groundswell. When you really go to these things, these are people that I see at the conference, which are older professionals, they understand it and everything. You see young, enthusiastic people, but they’re looking at the world, the whole globe in terms of looking at sustainability, how to keep neighborhoods intact, and live the quality of life that’s important to them.

Kelley: So, a transnational focus.

Donaldson: It is, and everybody’s tied together and it’s kind of interesting, because being on ICOMOS, you get the same feeling. I think the Internet has started to blend people together so much that really you feel as though when I get an e-mail from Switzerland or from South Africa or whatever else, I don’t feel
that I’m getting it from a foreign country like I did forty years ago. I feel like I’m getting it just from another person that’s part of this networking, that we’re all thinking on the same line. And I think that preservation has to get away from where they are now and really get involved. For instance, out of the 175 venues that they have at the U.S. Green Building Council meeting in Phoenix, three of those are dealing with historic preservation.

Kelley: What are some of the other ones?

Donaldson: They’re dealing with, for instance, slow food movements, being sustainable in what you eat during the season, in other words, slow food as you’re fixing your food again, getting away from the fast food, the recycling and all that sort of stuff. Permanent manufacturing stuff, where it goes back to the thirties to where, when you make a hammer, that hammer has unlimited life. It doesn’t have a life that’s supposed to sustain till thirty years or twenty years.

It was interesting that one of the guys gave a presentation, because a lot of this recovery money is being kind of shared with the 1930’s Great Depression and getting out of that, and one of the big papers that was presented to FDR was that we should manufacture things that have obsolescence built into it because we put more people to work by building that same thing over and over and over, rather than building it really good to last forever, and also that we’re using more materials to do that. In other words, we’re extracting more materials in order to make those things over
and over. I was thinking, gosh, that was really a main focus during the thirties. I really thought that was something that came post-war, where we had this abundance and we just made razors that would—you know, everything’s a throwaway thing.

So you had that kind of focus there. You’ve got focus on turning cities into forests, understanding that we have now separated ourselves from our natural environment. There’s going to be one paper given on—I think you heard from state parks—you can’t get young kids to go in the forest anymore. They think it’s full of lions and tigers and other things like that because they’ve grown up in an urban scene, or like people in L.A. that are teenagers that are living in East Los Angeles and have never seen the Pacific Ocean. So you’re getting this urban type of clientele, so we can’t take that to the natural environment, so take the natural environment back into the cities.

Kelley: Do you think it’s doable?

Donaldson: I think it’s doable, because that was kind of a philosophy in the sixties [1960s] with the Swedes. They could see that, so they would concentrate urban things, but everything would be woven in through, and you are no more than a quarter of a mile to a really unique preserve. When you really fly over the States, you can see that that could work. I think that’s all doable. But, again, it’s going to be a paradigm shift. Another paradigm shift is being a reuse culture. That’s going to be really tough.

Kelley: We are a disposable culture.
Donaldson: We are. How many shirts do we have to have? How many shoes do we have to have? I remember I gave a lecture on a shoe, just the manufacturing of a shoe with all of its parts from all over the world to come together, from rubber to steel, to leather, to cloth, to different type of stitching, to different type of glues and everything else. How much energy is put in just that shoe to make it work? Then we get fancy. How many RVs do we need? I mean, how much of that stuff do we need? I think that’s the culture that is really questioning those values now that are coming up.

Kelley: The cliché of consumerism. Has that been true of building too?

Donaldson: Well, absolutely, because that’s one problem that we are having with U.S. Green Building Council, is that they feel that buildings that are not particular addressing the sustainability of the environment and stuff should be demolished, and whether they’re historic or whether they’re existing buildings, that’s a real hard thing for us. Now, over the years, five years or so, we’re starting to change that, but we’re not changing enough because we’re focusing on historic buildings. We should be focusing on all older buildings and neighborhoods that they’re on and trying to keep the neighborhood together.

Kelley: If it’s in a vernacular setting, you mean?

Donaldson: Yes, and trying to find ways to do that, even older downtowns that were built in the sixties [1960s] and stuff. So that’s the focus that we should really have, because I’ve got to tell you, this attitude about where we’re
going in the future and how we’re going to protect it, because now the nice thing is we have enough research that we know how much oil reserves we think we have, even though there’s a big find in Siberia, which is now supplying most of Europe on that. But you look at the countries that have been around for a long time, China and Japan, Germany and England and these folks, they are five, six, seven years ahead of us for doing renewable energy research. We’re going to be doing a lot of solar stuff, as you know, that’s going to be out in the desert and stuff. But they have a paradigm shift on how they’re using it, and we have some examples of what we call net-zero buildings, in other words, those buildings are producing all the energy that they use, so they could actually be off the grid if they wanted to.

There’s a movement towards that and some of the newer stuff is being built, but the attitude with the U.S. Green Building Council, the only way to get there is wipe out these old ones and get to the new ones, when, in fact, they don’t basically figure in the life-cycle analysis. In other words, if we have an old building that has terra cotta or even aluminum, which is high energy and stuff, and we look at all of that embodied energy that was put in those buildings over the years, in other words, the extraction of the raw material to make raw aluminum into aluminum pieces and all that, and then all the energy to construct it and put it together and everything else, that’s embodied energy. When we take that building and we throw that away, we throw away that embodied energy.
For a new building to recapture all of the new stuff that it’s all that extraction, it’s usually sixty or seventy years out. So by that time, they’re old buildings already, and now they’re at least ground zero with the amount of energy they put in. So the attitude should be is not to build a building that is so bad that you know it’s not going to last. Unfortunately, the Department of Defense does that on a regular basis, because when I was doing jobs, they always wanted to know what the life of the building was, fifty years, seventy years, so they could program that in for replacement.

Kelley: They wanted you to limit an amount of time?

Donaldson: Yes, for replacement in terms of a new building. We need to get back to the cultural reuse and how we used to build buildings in the past, where they were meant to last forever. I mean, we had stone and brick materials, permanent materials that were built into these finished floors and stuff. Most of that you don’t get now. You get simple drywall and everything else. So I think that that attitude has to be of a paradigm shift and it has to be not just with historic buildings and the preservation of those; it has to be across the board to maintain it on a much larger, global scale.

That’s where I think the youth is coming today because that’s where they’re focusing. I mean, everything that we kind of talked about in the sixties [1960s] that was really good stuff and everything else, we kind of lost that because when the price of oil finally fell, if you remember the 1973 oil embargo, the price of oil went five times. So imagine if you’re paying two
or three dollars for gas. Would you pay fifteen dollars a gallon of gas? So a lot of changes happened then, the start of more efficient automobiles and everything else. We can see that, but we need to have a paradigm shift not to making better cars, burning less fuel and all of that; we need to think how we get around. If we follow France’s model, they just introduced two weeks ago--three weeks ago, because I gave a lecture two weeks ago--they just introduced 4,000 electric bicycles and 1,400 renewable energy or plug-in stations for that throughout the city, most of them along rail lines and bus lines and stuff like that, in those areas that you mostly frequent, the governmental buildings and stuff like that. You get a card and it’s very, very cheap. It’s almost nothing, I guess. It’s like two or three dollars for the whole month equivalent of what we would pay. You go in, you pull it out just like when you pull out one of those things when you’re down at the airport and you’ve got baggage. You put your card in there, you pull it out, you go wherever you want, and then you put it into a docking station wherever you go. You don’t have to bring it back. Then when you put it in, you put your card in and it stops the time. If you want to keep it overnight, then the time keeps clicking. Japan is now, at least in Tokyo, by the year 2015, all taxis will be electric, which is going to be a real challenge, because most electric cars are generally they go and come and stop and they’re not used very much.
taxis are used all the time. So it’s going to be a challenge. We’re going to see how a twenty-four-hour taxi, electric taxi, can do it.

But everybody’s moving towards that, but it’s not to make a more efficient gas-guzzling car like we have here, or even a hybrid. It’s how we actually travel and move around. For instance, what if we didn’t have any freeways? How would we communicate? Like a lot of people are saying, we don’t physically have to go to places anymore. We don’t really physically have to go to the bank anymore, and they wonder why bank branches are closing down and the buildings are being reused. Because people are just not going. So it’s not so much of physically going places anymore; it’s how we communicate with each other that’s the most important. We can communicate as we’re communicating now and we may be in different countries, but we can see one another, we can see the gestures through the normal channels. So that’s the paradigm shift and I think we’re finding that from young people. They’re now doing, they’re having a lawn, they’re growing their own food in the middle of a regular residential street. So when you drive down, you see people planting corn and everything else. I mean, it’s maybe simple, but in terms of their slow food movement, they’re eating the foods that are produced during the time. So you’re not importing oranges from Argentina and stuff like that out of season because you want to eat oranges all season. So you eat them in the summer, when they come, and you eat apples in the winter and that type of stuff.
Kelley: I know a little bit about the sustainability movement, and when I first read about it, the first thing that came to mind was nostalgia, trying to go back to some nostalgic golden period. The more I read about it and from what you’ve said, it’s more than just that. It’s a way of life that will leave a built environment and a structure for the oncoming generations.

Donaldson: Exactly, because the young folks that are practicing this now will have children that will practice it, and if the children practice it even more than the other ones. But you also are in a difficult political arena right now because if we are 5 percent of the world’s population and we’re contributing to almost 25 percent of the global warming, our green gases that we’re putting out, the CO₂, that shows that we’re just terribly wasteful and morally incorrect, and now we’re asking emerging countries for them to now start to cut back and not live the good life and everything else. So politically, they don’t really care. It’s like Iran that has the nuclear weapons. They could care less because they have it now, you know, and that was one of the problems in terms of getting the nuclear energy, that they said they wouldn’t get the nuclear weapons, but now they have them because other countries do. So it’s real hard and I don’t think it’s even proper for us to say, “Okay, we’ve had it really good, but you can’t,” because now China and billions of people are contributing more to the green gases and stuff like that.

Kelley: So setting parameters for other countries that we, ourselves, have not followed very well.
Donaldson: Exactly, which is just wrong. For instance, raising a cow for food is probably one of the greatest energy consumptions besides thousands of gallons of water and all of the feed and everything else, the steak that you have, even though it doesn’t cost much in terms of the natural resources to take to do that is incredible, and it’s what I call the difference between bad evil and good evil. Bad evil, we all know, the terrorists, these types of people, the murderers and things that you can identify, that are just simply bad to the core. That’s the bad evil. But the good evil people are the ones that are, keep selling the stuff, like for new cars and new RVs or whatever, that are consuming a lot of natural resources, especially petroleum-based resources, and they are really affecting it, but they don’t really care.

Buckminster Fuller invented a car that had three wheels, it was streamlined, it would carry nine people, in 1933. It was quickly shot down, not only by the car manufacturing, but also the people that made tires. I mean, instead of having four tires, now you have three, so you’re cutting that whole industrial thing back by 25 percent.

Kelley: I remember seeing the museum downtown, the Museum of History and Women in the Arts, they have an electric car there right now that was built in the early part of the--well, no, I guess it was mid-century, one of the first electric cars.

Donaldson: So anyway, let’s get off this sustainability stuff. But I think that if we don’t get onboard with this and stop harping on--even though that’s our task and
our duty and that was the presentation I gave at the National Trust, we have
to get off of that and really think about the more--we’re talking about
preservation of our history on a much more global scale and it just doesn’t
deal with qualified historical buildings.

Kelley: Even preservation needed strong parameters, from a mandate such as

[Section] 106. What do you think would need to happen in what you call the
public arena as far as setting criteria for people to follow, for architects to
follow, for preservationists to follow? What do you think would need to be
done in the built environment?

Donaldson: Well, you know, the 106 is good in a lot of ways, and CEQA is too, because
it kind of mandates that you have a project and you have to make a
determination of eligibility. You don’t have to list it on the National
Registry. You don’t have to get the party’s approval to make a
determination of eligibility. But I think what we need to do is move a little
bit beyond that and take a look at the collection of buildings that we have,
and that’s why I keep going back to the neighborhoods, the urban centers,
and take a look at that particular way that we’re functioning in terms of a
lifestyle, because if you start to follow the metrics too much, you get lost.
Because New York City is the greenest city that we have in the United States
because of its density. In other words, instead of having a whole bunch of
little tiny homes scattered out in San Fernando Valley, each burning their
own stuff, releasing their own gas and all that sort of stuff, New York City
crams them in a very efficient building. But is the quality of life, is that what we want for New York City? Now, you talk to a New Yorker, they love it because they’re living that urban scene like the new urbanists are.

But I think there’s somewhere in between that we can do that, and I think that’s where a lot of the younger folks are focusing on, and it’s because of their connection with one another. It’s not so much my generation. Where we had a tendency to want to be alone a lot and get out and surf our [unclear] and go camping and stuff like that with a few, they want to have this inter-matrix tie, and it’s because of the computer and everything else. So it’s a natural for them to then go and become into a five-story high-rise. But we’re looking at the old mercantile, where you’ve got your shopping down below, you’ve got your shops and your coffee shops that you can intermix, but you’re living in the same area and everything else, and you can walk to work. You’re not dependent upon the car to do it, you’ve got a lot of trees around, you’ve a park that your kids are coming up. You have the old standard mercantile neighborhood that’s almost medieval in style, but it fits the new.

So they’re not opposed to that kind of density that maybe my generation would be, and you can kind of see that in the old urban planning stuff, is that people worked downtown, but they lived out in the neighborhoods. That was the whole sixties’ [1960s] gentrification of the downtown
neighborhoods. All the new city plans and the urbanists now are doing it, but they--

Kelley: So movement more so than forcing people to do it.

Donaldson: Yeah, absolutely, but you can see that. So now if we have older urban downtowns like North Park, who’s a main street community, let’s tie all that back together again, because we have the infrastructure that’s there. There’s no need to flatten that out and start over because you have old things that maybe are not really contained together like you thought they would be. For instance, North Park has a gigantic building on the end that’s the old Firestone Tire thing. Well, people don’t shop that way anymore, so that’s been converted to really a nice coffee place that also then has movies and shows and stuff like that. So I think taking the design that we’re intending to do in the new centers, but then infiltrating those to the older core stuff, and you can see that. People like in North Park are really anxious to do it. Some of the old curmudgeonly building owners have been, “Ah, we’ve been through that thirty years ago,” but it’s not. It’s completely different this time.

Kelley: And it connects the past with the present, at least past methods of living into contemporary needs for living.

Donaldson: Right, and then eventually those buildings that come of age or whatever, then we can go through our standard and get them nominated and do all that and look at the tax credits, and I mean come back and do that. But my
problem is that a lot of those are getting trashed with new infill structures that may be green and may be sustainable, but we’re kind of ignoring the existing building stock that we have.

Kelley: In the Office of Historic Preservation, with that in mind, California Parks, our umbrella agency, just faced a 6-million-dollar cut, and I think I read somewhere that it was a total of 14 million overall.

Donaldson: Eighteen overall.

Kelley: Oh, eighteen overall.

Donaldson: We have another 4 that we have to find that’s outside of the General Fund.

The General Fund is 14 million.

Kelley: How does that impact OHP?

Donaldson: Well, we’re kind of fortunate in a way. We’re under Parks because we set the model when the National Historic Preservation Act created the SHPO position, along with the Office of Historic Preservation, but our funding source primarily comes from the Historic Preservation Fund, which is a federal fund. It’s about 55-45, with a 45 match coming from State Parks, so we’re not hit as hard as the rest of us are. We were hit and we had to find the money, but we were fortunate enough that generally we have a hard time spending our Historic Preservation Fund money because we’re out of sync with the federal budget. The federal budget is passed in September. Our budget is passed, of course, the first of July. So we’re always out of sync. We don’t know how much money we have until really about February. Then
we know how much we have in the budget, but now we’ve got to spend it because it is tied in with our state budget before June 30th. So we go into spending frenzy, making sure we don’t leave any money. I’ve struggled each year to spend it all, in fact go into the red if we have to. He tries, but we always leave some money on the table, not as much as we used to leave. So we’re fortunate enough to have a surplus. We had to contribute $130,000. We had $120,000 in surplus. We found 10,000 more from Eric’s program and we paid it off because I wanted to make sure that nobody got laid off, because that was the time we were going through the drill that also the administration was looking at for the next three years after this, 22 million dollars each year, and that would have resulted in massive layoffs and massive cuts and closures in parks and stuff.

Then somehow we’ll hear this, but don’t put it out, don’t write it, but the governor got so much push-back on closing parks, politically and stuff, because he’d go out and start talking about his green agenda and everything else. And I said, well, how can you close parks? When you don’t have much money, people, they don’t go and pay $70 at Disneyland and stuff. They’ll go to state beaches and state parks and use those. I mean that will be their entertainment for that time.

So I guess he really got tired of it and he decided that we in Parks weren’t doing a good job, so he yanked it out and went through his own Department of Finance, and somehow they found this 14 million, which we won’t know
until the 29th, when he gets this award from the National Lands Trust for saving state parks, which, as you can imagine, just irritated Ruth to no end. You know, all of a sudden now he’s solved the problems we were trying to do it. So how it affects us--

Kelley: Well, I thought that State Parks was a revenue generator for the state. I thought it was a major revenue generator.

Donaldson: They are, with 80 million visitations and all that sort of stuff, but somehow we didn’t present our case well or whatever. And this is a problem with all administrations. They try to be fair, shall we say, and when they do budget costs, they look at how much is coming out of the General Fund revenue and they say, “Okay, your proportion is 18 million dollars. You go find how to cut it.” But closing state parks, the only way that you cut money from a General Fund account is that it’s all tied--probably 95 percent of it is tied in to salaries. Because you get other money from spur funds and taxes and tobacco taxes and everything else that cannot be used for payroll. It’s just simply, by law, cannot be paid. So it gets in and it’s paying for the deferred maintenance and construction of the infrastructures and electrical and toilets and that stuff like that. So when you have to cut from the General Fund, then it gets really tough.

Kelley: Did OHP have--well, I shouldn’t ask if you did; I know you did. What was the strategy for dealing with the cuts specifically?
Donaldson: Just find the money and pay it. Because I didn’t want to lose anybody, I didn’t want to have to do layoffs.

Kelley: I know that you had to cut back the intern program. That was one of the things.

Donaldson: Well, the problem is that those got taken away from us. We didn’t have a choice. The intern program annuitants like Carol and Bob and these guys that would come in and help us out, all the annuitants got cut, park aides got cut, and then, of course, as you know, any of the contracts, for whatever reason, even though we’re not paying that money, but any of the contracts like you have with Sac State and all that, all of those got cut. So those we had no control of. So the only person position I cut was Kyle’s position, which was kind of a student intern up front, so that was the only one that got cut, and that one we had as a separate line item.

Kelley: I know that the state budget projects out a year when they do their calculations.

Donaldson: Right.

Kelley: What do you see as issues you might be dealing with next year?

Donaldson: Well, for our office, I think we’ll be okay. The problem that we’re dealing with right now, and this is a one-stop issue, as you probably heard Ruth present, and that was seven months then, now it’s six months and we still don’t know how the governor’s office is finding our 14 million. We have to cut 14 million now in six months, and as each of the months get closer to do
it, it gets compressed, so it’s a lot harder to do it. Imagine if we had to cut
14 million in one month. Well, that would just be a massive layoff for a
month. I mean, how else would we do it? We’d close all the parks and for a
month we would do nothing in terms of that. So that’s the problem that we
face, because we wanted to start the cuts, I think the first of August, and now
as we go through, as we play this debacle between the governor’s office and
ours, it just gets more critical.
We’re okay no matter what, because we already gave. We gave the money
and when we were told on the percentage, we cut. So we’re fine, and I think
in following years we’ll be okay too, because we are going to get some
additional Historic Preservation funds coming in, which means, then, that the
governor has to match that. If they want to take away that portion of that
match, we’ll still be okay.
Kelley: Where would those funds be coming from?
Donaldson: You mean from the state budget?
Kelley: The ones that will be matched. Where would those funds be coming from?
Donaldson: There’s a law already on the books of any federal funds that come in, if that
match, since that helps state government, is they’ll find the money for that,
and generally that’s from the General Fund, because what that does--and
that’s always been a push. In other words, imagine yourself, if you had a
certain payroll coming in, but all of a sudden somebody says, “I’ll give you
$100,000,” and let’s say your payroll is 60,000. “Okay, but I’ll give you
$1,000,000, but you have to half-match that. In other words, you’d have to contribute 50,000. I’ll give you 100,000.”

Now, even though you’re only making 60,000, of course you’re going to do it, because now you have $110,000. So that’s what the state government does. Any federal stimulus funds coming in, that’s why we have, I think, 50 billion stimulus funds coming in, almost all of those are matching funds. So obviously that’s why everybody is ponying up to get it. It’s just the way it works, and we’re lucky to have that. The other folks out there in State Parks don’t. Again, we just happen to be under State Parks. There’s other SHPO offices that are under historical societies, Trade and Commerce, libraries. I mean, they’re under curatorial things. Some are not-for-profit, but they do get money from the state because the appointee is always a governor’s appointee for the SHPO’s Office.

Kelley: I didn’t realize that there wasn’t a standardization nationally before this.

Donaldson: Most of it’s the state parks like New Mexico and Arizona, only because we took the national model at that time because the Department of the Interior has National Park Service and then they have their Preservation Department. So we have resources inside the Department of the Interior and then we have resources and then we have Parks and we have us.

Kelley: And does this structure, do you think, work better?

Donaldson: I think it does. I think I would like it better if we were independent, but I’m not sure where we’d get our matching funds, but I think it would be a lot
better because State Parks is one of our agencies that has to comply and, quite frankly, we have real difficulties with them. They don’t comply as well as Caltrans and the rest of the folks that we deal with, but we’re under them, so we have a programmatic agreement, but it’s not a very good agreement.

Kelley: The mandate that the Office of Historic Preservation has, have you been able to meet that with the furloughs, the cutbacks that you’ve had to endure?

Donaldson: No. It’s really tough. When we had one day, we were managing it. Two days was a real tipping point, stressful for a lot of people because, unlike when Wilson was here when we had furloughs, it was an IOU, and after the furloughs were lifted, then the IOUs would then filter back to us in two years. This time the money is gone. It’s out the door and we’re never going to see it. So it’s a cut of 15 percent of pay and I think it’s really tough. We’ve seen departures. People leave, although they’re not leaving--

Kelley: Because of the workload or because--

Donaldson: Because of when the first furloughs were coming in, they, like Patricia, for instance, were going back to the private sector, where you can probably not only get more money, but with all the stimulus funds coming in, people are asking for historians and archaeologists and stuff because they’ve got this incredible workload that’s going to be there for the next two to three years. Also she didn’t have much vested interest. But of course, the people that have a lot of vested interest will still hang on. But if we have a workload
coming in from the stimulus, 25 percent, we get to cut 15 percent on the other hand, we’re basically getting cut, what, 40 percent in our cut, so we only can work about half-time.

And there’s a morale thing that’s really hard to keep everybody up. I think the office is doing well, but I know in Parks it’s really difficult because you’re asking to do more with less and then when you can’t get the production out, and then people call you and get on your case because you’re not handling, it just doesn’t seem fair. And there’s nothing that we can do about it. It’s a mandatory furlough, and even in Parks where people were working Friday in order to keep parks open, especially on the weekends, to generate, then they have to take off another day. They don’t get it lifted for them. It’s only, I think, life safety, like hospitals, CHP and the patrols on that, all of the dispatchers, those kind of guys, they’re off, rescue and stuff. But we’re not.

Kelley: You’re saying that there is not at this point too much stagnation with the projects that are coming in.

Donaldson: No, there is.

Kelley: Oh, there is.

Donaldson: What if we can’t keep up with the workload? I just got a call from the Inspector General, which is a special branch that’s just been set up for the stimulus funds, and she’s on my case now that we’re not doing all of these hospital stuff, and it’s a big chunk of change. Out of the 50 billion that’s
coming in, 20 billion is going for these hospitals, and poor Tristan is the only one and he’s got all these other things that he has to do. So I’m trying to put that to bed. We’re doing best practices. If you look at our website, it tells what minimum requirements--

Kelley: Streamlining. I saw that.

Donaldson: Streamlining. But the problem with HRSA [U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration] is they pass it all off to the people that are getting the grant. So you’re getting a chief financial officer or project manager or whoever the chief administrator is, they don’t have a clue what 106 is, how to go through it, how to function. So I’m trying to set up a meeting in San Francisco with the HRSA guys and saying, “You guys have got to participate more, otherwise these things are not going through.”

Kelley: They’re not getting historical consultants involved in the process?

Donaldson: No.

Kelley: Is it because they don’t have the money, do you think, or because they don’t know?

Donaldson: Probably the money and the time, because once they get the money, they have sixty days to close the door in order to receive their certification and the money. If they miss that, they don’t get the money. So that’s the real problem. Even trying to go to the Information Centers and get the information, and they’ve also got to deal with the tribes and everything else,
they don’t have a clue what they’re doing. So it’s a real mess, and that’s why the Inspector General has stepped in. So we’re going to try to solve it. The other way we could solve it is that there is a thing in the law that if they don’t hear from us in thirty days, they can proceed ahead, but not without our consent. It’s not an automatic approval and pass-through. So they’re at risk for complying with 106. Or they can go to the Advisory Council and discuss it with them. But they’re not going to go to the Advisory Council because it’s going to be a dead end; they’ll just be coming back to us. And that may happen, Sharon. It may be that there’s just going to be so much water over the dam in order to protect the dam, the whole thing, from collapsing, like they normally do, is you just release a whole bunch of water down below, floods out a few farms, kills a few animals, but that’s it. It doesn’t destroy everything. Maybe we’ll have to do that. We did that with cell towers. When Jeannette was doing it, she couldn’t keep her--

Kelley: What was cell towers?

Donaldson: Cell towers. New cell tower location. She couldn’t keep the quotient up. She normally has to review about almost ten to twelve per day. She was lucky if she was getting one out the door.

Kelley: The FCC is what you’re talking about, the FCC streamlining.

Donaldson: Yeah, so all of that, and it all went out and then we got horrible letters from lawyers and everything else saying that they are not getting their money. Even though we missed the thirty day, it doesn’t mean anything to them;
they need to have a letter in the file. So we initiated a one-page real quick clearance letter, that when they come in, we’d look at it. If it’s just a cell tower that’s there and they’re putting another repeater on it because they have to come in, we’d just pass it because the cell tower was already built. So whatever the first thing that came in, whatever that impact in that review, there’s no need to go through it again and look at the lay of the land and whether it’s on a traditional cultural property, because it’s already built.

Kelley: And OHP is getting ready to have a training session in a Recovery Act in regards to Section 106. Is that along the same lines of streamlining processes that had a propensity to be time-consuming?

Donaldson: Yeah, including most of the federal agencies and knowing what they need to do. The federal agencies really have to provide the first streamline, because if a project comes to us—sometimes I get e-mails, just a single e-mail saying, “We’ve just received some federal funds. We need you to sign this document enclosed,” which they put, “Everything’s okay. Sign here.” So they don’t have a clue what’s happening when we get it to Tristan and they refer it to us. So the lead agency has to come in and have a screening process up front that they tell them the processes, the information, they have to have a map, da, da, da, da, da, all of that before they come to us, and get that together. Then when they come through the door, at least they got the information in to us. Because these things come in the queue and we don’t get to them till thirty days, and if they don’t have a map, then we send them
a letter saying, “You don’t have a map.” And they’re going, “Well, how come you didn’t tell--it’s been sitting in your shop for thirty days.” It’s because it’s a queue-in process.

So we are doing some prescreening right now with the simple ones like the hospital ones, the cell towers, and all that. The bigger projects, of course, the big solar energy projects and the transportation, all of these that involve lots of properties, of course, they’re going to take more time to get through.

But generally, those guys have their act together. BLM has their act together. Department of Energy, Caltrans, it’s working as a Federal Highways Association, they have their act together. They have trained professionals who’ve been through it a lot.

But we did six HRSA projects, all last year, six of them. So far since June, which had one, but since July till now, we have done 106, 107, and it’s 20 billion dollars worth of improvements and they go all the way from putting a new HVAC on the roof, to constructing a whole new lane and everything else in between. So it’s going to be tough.

Kelley: That’s one end of the work that’s done in this office that streamlining it or making sure that they’re meeting the criteria before they send it in helps the workload in here and helps make sure that OHP is affecting--

Donaldson: So they can get their licensing and everything else, but we’re still not going to catch up with the furlough.
Kelley: On the opposite end of the spectrum, what are the most important things to make sure that--

Donaldson: I think the bottom line is that they’ve done their absolute minimum in compliance, but we’re not going to lock horns in looking at other really detailed mitigation ways to do it or different alternatives. We’re going to at least make sure that they gave us all the stuff, and even though we may not agree with their determination, we may disagree, we’re not going to hold it up, because if we do and we get into all of these things, the staff’s going to go nuts. They’re not going to be able to handle it. When you look at Tristan’s desk, he’s got a stack this high.

The thing is, you can get really complacent in this business. I’ve seen it with some of the old-timers here. You know, “Who cares? They’re not going to fire me. They can’t fire me, so if I can’t get it out, who cares? You know, you pile all this stuff, you take three days a month away from me, the heck with ya.” A lot of them have a lot of vacation days. Say if they just want to take off for a month on their vacation days.

Kelley: The work just sits there.

Donaldson: Yeah, their work just sits there. So I’ve been downstairs to Resources and I told Todd, I said, “Todd, the only way you can solve this is to bring in more bodies.”

“Can’t do it. We’ve got the executive order. Unless it’s a life safety deal, can’t do it. You can take off.”
I said, “Taking off doesn’t do any good. If I take off on a Friday and I take off, let’s say, the next three months, then I’ve got, what, nine days? So I’m asking these guys to take a vacation for two weeks without pay, there’s no pay, but to just disappear. What do you think is going to happen in two weeks? When they come back, they’re going to have twice as much as they have now.” So it doesn’t solve the problem, and it’s going to go on for two years. It’s just not going to solve the problem.

Kelley: Do you really think it will go on for two years?

Donaldson: Well, I know we’re set for June, but I think that it will probably go all the way through Schwarzenegger’s stuff, so one year and three months or so. If he lifts it in June, it will be strictly because of political, it’ll be just like Gray Davis, the budget will get worse and worse and worse. But he’s not going to inherit that in six months, but when he goes out in six months, no furloughs, it’ll look good, but it’s actually not. It’ll be just like Davis cutting all the programs, Trade and Commerce and everything else, so that the budget starts to come back real quick. But I don’t know.

Kelley: What is the impact you’ve seen from the outside to specifically OHP? Or, specifically, where have you seen that private industry is struggling?

Donaldson: You mean as they’re interacting with OHP to get their projects approved?

Kelley: Correct.

Donaldson: They’re struggling big time right now. We’ve had an increase of 25 percent and they have got to move on with their programs, especially the renewable
energy. They are looking at actually starting construction in March of 2010, and we haven’t even seen the submittals come in.

Kelley: Who would they come in from?

Donaldson: The Department of Energy, and there would be various ones, from PG&E, Southern Cal Edison--

Kelley: So you’re talking about the corporations and the entities that you deal with.

Donaldson: Right, but we deal through federal agencies as we’re dealing. We don’t deal directly with them. But it’s interesting that Southern Cal Edison and PG&E are buying us two people to help expedite their particular programs. I mean, they’re private companies that are giving us $110,000 so we can hire an employee and do all the rest of the stuff, the taxes and your cubicle and the computer and all that. So they’re buying us these people to expedite their stuff so when their stuff comes in, it doesn’t get in the long queue and works its way forward. The same person that we go ahead and hire won’t be doing that review. For instance, Bill will be doing the Western Area Power Administration, the WAPA stuff. He’ll be doing that. But we’re going to get a person from WAPA that will be doing our stuff, so when we get a thing that has the WAPA name on it, Bill will drop everything that he’s doing and work on that.

Kelley: That’s creative. That’s a creative collaboration.

Donaldson: Yeah, we’ve done with seven--we’re leading the states in it. We’re not the only ones that are trying to do it, but we’ve been leading the states in doing
They all want to get copies of our contracts, and we’re sending them out.

Kelley: Didn’t Caltrans do that also? They had people over here training, maybe for a different reason.

Donaldson: Yeah, we’ve had that for a long time. In fact, I’ll give you a paper. Almost all states have done that with their Caltrans folks, and the reason being is because that seems to be across almost all the states. Those partnerships were already set up initially. I mean they’re not new partners. For instance, you look at this and you see the states. For instance, look at the furloughs. It goes everywhere from one day to, what is it, thirty-nine?

Kelley: Thirty-nine.

Donaldson: Gee, I wonder who has the thirty-nine? That’s us. Three days a month. Or thirty-six or whatever it is.

But here’s the working relationships that all the states are trying to do. But you notice Department of Transportation has a lot of states because they’ve already been working on it. But if you notice where California is, we’re here and we’re here and we’re here and we’re actually with Federal Highways because Federal Highways is also acting in that.

Kelley: How is Federal Highways--I mean how are they interacting with you to--

Donaldson: Caltrans is assuming the Federal Highways because we have a special agreement. It’s a trial thing for three years. So we have Forest Service and then--I can’t read that--Marines.
Kelley: U.S. Marine Corps.

Donaldson: Yeah, and WAPA and stuff. So we’re really taking the lead in terms of trying to make this thing work. But I’ve got to tell you, and we all knew this, we tried to sponsor a bill in D.C. at the National Conference of SHPO for 16 million in order to let that flow into all of the states in order to buy extra people for these Recovery Acts monies, but it was defeated in the Senate. It’s not new news since Obama released the money in February. I mean, we just knew it would come. We’re calling it the perfect storm and the seventy-five-foot tidal waves and stuff.

Kelley: Have you seen this type of budget crisis in your history?

Donaldson: No. Nobody has that I’m talking to. We had stuff when Nixon was here. We had stuff when Reagan was here. Reaganomics was a big attempt, and even with Wilson in terms of what they call base-zero accounting. In other words, you don’t have a program that gets funded every year. You have to defend your program for the amount of money. So it was base zero every year, which just drove everybody nuts, and he did have his furloughs for a while, but they were reimbursable furloughs. In other words, it was just a temporary stop, and then to be paid later, which really doesn’t do any good either. That’s just stalling and leaving it up to the next governor to fix. But everybody says this is the worst they’ve ever seen.
Kelley: The paradigm shift you were talking about, that’s an interesting way to look at it. My feeling is nothing ever changes unless there’s drama or trauma associated with it.

Donaldson: I agree.

Kelley: So this looks like the impetus for that paradigm shift that you’re talking about, and hopefully it’s more of a cultural shift more so than one that has to be regulated and mandated.

Donaldson: Yeah, I hope so. You raise an interesting point. You don’t miss the water till it’s gone. Maybe that’ll happen. I mean, we all know pretty much what our reserves are. We have fairly good predictions. We can certainly see the climate change that is happening, both hot and cold, and with our science we can understand it, but we’re not going to be able to solve it with our science. It will be a full cultural shift, but we may have to run out of oil before we finally understand, and cars are frozen because there’s no gasoline. It will be kind of like the ending of World War II, when the Germans ran out of gasoline and everything else. Their mobility ceased and they lost the war. They couldn’t develop their rockets. They didn’t have the fuel to do it and all that, and once all that mobility ceased, the war was over. I think that once we can’t communicate and our mobility’s ceased, then probably that’s when we will change. We tend to be living from the Stone Age when we had lots of resources, and we don’t seem to understand that we don’t have that anymore.
Kelley: You’re a strategizer and you come up with solutions. Are you being heard? Your solutions are wonderful. Are you being heard?

Donaldson: I don’t know. I keep pronouncing it. I don’t know. I get published all the time, but I don’t know if it’s a real change.

Kelley: Do you have anybody else out there that thinks the way you do and is promoting it?

Donaldson: Not in terms of SHPOs. A lot of them haven’t been from the private sector. Kat[erine] Slick is very good, but she’s moved on. She’s now executive director or secretary of ICOMOS [International Conference on Monuments and Sites] I’m on the board, too, and when we traveled to these third world-- I shouldn’t say third world--aspiring countries and stuff, it’s a whole different ballgame. I’ve always been into adobe structures and stuff, and I was just amazed when I’m doing these visitations, that over one-third of our population lives in earthen structures of one kind or another. I don’t think that we appreciate it. I think we’re just foolhardy in spending money and really don’t care.

I remember [Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris] Le Corbusier, when he came over in 1932 and visited the state and said that this is the most wasteful nation he’s ever seen. He was Swiss-French.

Kelley: I agree with you on that. Well, let me draw this to a close and ask you the few ethics questions I have for this other project, if you don’t mind.

Kelley: I want to thank you very much for participating in this.
Donaldson: Yeah, it’s been fun. I always love this because it always gives me good reflection.

[Audio File 1 ended at 1:15:22]
APPENDIX D

ORAL HISTORY with CLARE ELLIS
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Clare Ellis

April 19, 2010

By

Sharon J. Kelley
<table>
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Clare Ellis began her library career at Princeton University after earning an BA in English, Creative Writing. She moved to Washington, DC with her future husband, Bill, to work at the Library of Congress. There she held a number of interesting positions and earned her MLIS at night at Catholic University. She was awarded two meritorious Service Awards while there and was loaned to the Preservation Directorate for an administrative detail of a year. She and her husband decide to leave the fast paced DC life and sole their house and moved to California. She then worked at the CSUS Library and the California State Library. Twenty years ago she accepted a position with the Sacramento Public Library as the head of the newly established Sacramento Room. She retired in January 2010.
Interview History

Narrator:

Clare Ellis

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

April 19, 2010
3:30 p.m.
Starbucks Coffee
2095 Golden Centre Lane, #10
Gold River, CA  95670
40 Minute Session

The narrator and interviewer met at a coffee shop and sat outside in a patio area, the recording was stopped for a short break and then restarted.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:

The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:
2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento’s Public History Industry
An Oral History Thesis
California State University, Sacramento
Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

In consideration of the recording and preservation of my oral history interview,

I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, all rights, including all literary and property rights unless restricted as noted below to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use and dispose of the recording(s) and/or transcribed interview(s) conducted on: 4/19/2010

This includes the rights of publication in electronic form, such as placement on the Internet/Web for access by that medium. I hereby give the above mentioned Department the right to distribute the recording(s) and/or transcription to any other libraries and education institutions for scholarly and education uses and purposes.

Note any restrictions below:
Signature of Narrator:  Clare Ellis
Dated:  9/15/10

Narrator's name as he/she wishes it to be used:  Clare Ellis
Narrator's Address:

Narrator's phone number: [Redacted]

Signature of Interviewer:  [Signature]
Dated:  9/15/10

Interviewer's address:
Sharon J. Kelley
P.O. Box 19783
Sacramento, CA 95819

Interviewer's phone number: (602) 380-5070
Kelley: This is Sharon Kelley and today is April 19, 2010. I’m interviewing Clare Ellis, the recently retired librarian of Sacramento Central Public Library, Sacramento Room. Good afternoon.

Ellis: Hi, Sharon.

Kelley: Clare, could you please share some background--a little bit of background information about yourself such as where you were raised and your education?

Ellis: I was raised in Pennsylvania in a little town called Morrisville right across the river from New Jersey. And I went to Slippery Rock State College for my undergraduate degree and majored in English in creative writing and then went back and worked at Princeton University Library after I got my undergraduate degree. And I met a student there and then after a while, we moved together to the Washington, D.C. area together. So I then, of course, wanted to work at the Library of Congress, so, of course, I got a job at Library of Congress and started jumping from job to job so I could crawl up the ladder, so to speak. And then it got to a point where it was silly not to get my library degree. So I got into Catholic University of America which was the only school in the area that had night classes at that time and then I got my masters degree. And what was nice towards the end of my getting my degree, I just had a few more courses. I got in a special program at Library of Congress and what it did was to pay for the rest of my education, give me the time off if I needed it to go to class as well as to put me in a professional job with the professional salary...
before I had my masters degree. So I was really fortunate in that respect. So that covers all the education except for taking first archival courses at times and earning credits here and there, but nothing spectacular.

Kelley: When you worked at the Library of Congress, what was the most interesting position you held? And what was the most interesting sort of job duties?

Ellis: Well, probably would be when I worked in duplication services department because I was one of what was called the researchers there and we got to go in every single area of the library. And for like a two-month rotation, we would all take the general requests, but then we would be assigned to certain departments if anything came in for the book division or something for the music division, of course, some would handle that. And basically, it would be if you were a person who wrote in and asked for something and how much it would cost to have it reproduced. That would be what we would do. Actually, much more complicated than it sounds, but really interesting because the books you would get to see and handle, there was an uncatalogued Cyrillic collection that was up in the very top of the Thomas Jefferson Building, I had to go up, take these winding steps to get up there. And one time, I surprised someone there smoking dope and another time, a couple engaged in activities, so it was so funny, but we had to go everywhere to look for things. And then Bill and I had decided to move to California. Right after we decided that I got offered my dream job at the library, but I had already decided to go. So I left and that was I got another special--got into another special program at the Library of
Congress and in that case, I was put in the Preservation Directorate to design a system for the conservators to track the hours that they spent on various projects. It’s a simplified version. For example, the Orientalia Division would be given X hours a year. So now, they had to track those kind of things. When they restored the Brahms manuscripts for the big anniversary, they had to track all that for the music division. But I was going to leave, so I left, then came out here.

Kelley: That’s fascinating. You came out here directly from there?

Ellis: Yes, uh-huh.

Kelley: What is your employment history once you got to Sacramento?

Ellis: Let’s see. I found I was missing libraries, my husband and I started like a computer business together and that was okay, but he’s really the computer person so I decided I wanted to go back into library. So I became what they call an “on call,” you know what that is of course…

Kelley: Right.

Ellis: --at Sac State and I did that and that was great. I loved, you know, it’s like halftime--

Kelley: What year?

Ellis: Let’s see. Mid-1980s probably.

Kelley: Okay.

Ellis: And then I got a call from the state library because they were looking for a serial specialist because they were doing a retrospective of conversion of their
card catalog to computer so—and I had worked with serials a lot at Library of Congress. So then I went to the state library and worked four days a week. So it’s technically part time. And then I just remember one day seeing they were calling for the applications to take the test for the Sacramento Public Library system and I ripped it out and put it on my desk, then one day I was upset about something at the state library. I was in the automation department and I called the number in the postings and they said it was the last day to submit the application, so I did the application and turned it in and scored in the top three so I got interviewed right away. And got offered a job and I thought, “Well, that would be interesting. I never worked in a public library, just really special libraries.” So then when they offered me the job, they said they were calling to offer me a job, but it wasn’t the job that I had interviewed for. They were going to have the library and the woman who had been just buying the books to try to keep up with the collection, wanted to take the job that I have been interviewed for which was part of the team getting new Central ready to open. And I said, “Well, is the salary the same?” And they said, “Yes,” so I said, “Okay.” And so I was very lucky Margarite Sullivan was the head of Central Library at that time and Margarite was really good with talking to me, but she basically let—we talked a lot and thought about some things that should be done and then she just let me go and do that and that was making connections with the history community and going to all the book dealers in town so they
know what we have and what we might be looking for. Then I just kept buying the books, too, for the room that would open eventually.

Kelley: So it was in its processing phrase and what year was that approximately?


Kelley: What were some of the challenges of getting the collection together?

Ellis: You mean continuing to purchase things or--well, first, the main thing was I had to try to learn the collections and part of the problem with that, too, was a lot of them were boxed until we actually got them on the shelf, like the books from the vault were locked up in a small room and things like that where they weren’t accessible, so most of them--some of the regular ones were, though, so I learned the collections so I knew what I was doing as far as buying. And I always loved history so that was easy, that part of it. And then as the room opened getting--people who came in and found out about us reporters and people from KVIE and everything that really helped too as far as them getting to use our materials and get them out there and everything.

Kelley: Do you know what the impetus was for the Central Library to create such a room?

Ellis: Yeah. For all these years they had these books and never quite knew what to do with them, where to put them and when New Central was decided to be built, luckily, they left most of the original building that Andrew Carnegie gave the money for that was built in 1917, they decided to leave it there. So they
had that second floor of this beautiful Renaissance building and the director and assistant director went around the country and looked at various rare book rooms and then came back and our foundation had just been formed recently. And they asked for a project so the head of the library, Richard Killian, then said, “Oh, we’d like to transform the second floor into the rare book room.” So they took it on as a project and raised over a million dollars of private money and the place was completely gutted and rebuilt and the idea was to make it look like an old reading room from around 1917 and, you know, it has that nice ambiance and does feel like that. So that was just almost like right place, right time not only for me for the job, but for that room being done as well. It was just--finally, Central Library was going to get built and so they had this space.

Kelley: It seems like the room is more than just a rare book room. It’s specific to Sacramento’s history.

Ellis: Uh-huh.

Kelley: Is that correct?

Ellis: Sacramento in California, it’s called the Sacramento Room but just like the state libraries called the California Room, then they have a lot of Sacramento material. We also have loads of California material though we tend to--not we anymore, but the room focuses more on Northern California since we’re in Northern California and then there is that printing and book arts history collection which is astounding and has been used by people from all over the world and that has a lot of California printers in it and publishers rare books.
So there is a lot of just connection to California as well as Sacramento, though Sacramento was always the priority as far as purchasing anything. If there was something that came out for Sacramento, we would want to get that before we bought something else.

Kelley: You said that--you talked a little bit about the audience for the collections. What has been the broadest audience for the room or what has developed as the broadest audience for the room?

Ellis: Boy, that’s hard to say. There are a couple of different ways because teachers, when they found out about us, would send students and we’ve had probably I guess the broad issues maybe has been students, not only students working on their public history degrees because we’ve had a lot of those, but art and architecture and fourth graders. And the room can serve patrons from fourth grade, California history, up to easily graduate level. And then just so many people who are from Sacramento who come in and say, “I’m a fifth generation Sacramentan and boy, I never knew this was here. What is this?” Those people just wander in and want to know, “What is this place?” And they’re so shocked to find out when they walk around, here are these incredible things they can just pluck off the shelf and look at and enjoy and use.

Kelley: And have you had clientele that are politicians or researchers politicians?

Ellis: Yeah. We’ve had a number of those. I know one of the few times I lent a book out, it was to the Governor Gray Davis at that time and let’s see. Our new mayor has been in a few times, Kevin Johnson and when Heather Fargo
was the representative for the area that included Central Library before she was mayor, she was always very interested in the library and they will have sent, at times, people over to look up just various old facts and things like that.

Kelley: Anybody from the entertainment industry?

Ellis: Yeah. At times, we had people like--let’s see. I think it was called Hard Copy. I never watched those news magazine type things, and it was during the OJ trial and said they were trying to go into old-year books and track down some name they had because they thought the person had some connection to O.J. so we did let them in to use the yearbooks even though we weren’t open. And they did do that and we’ve had a lot of people working on things, producers and all, Jack Gallagher shot one of the other shows on PBS that’s good. I just taped one last night, I can’t remember the name of it. Oh, Ken Burns, his World War II or the War I he--I don’t know. I was on vacation during the time that happened, but anyway, we had lined up a number of people who would be good for him to talk to and one was former mayor and owns the Millworks--oh, do you hear it, Sharon? I can’t remember his name [Burnett Miller]. Oh, he’s so sweet. Anyway, he was interviewed in the room and things like that, local celebs, but not too many the people would know. Jim Henley--

Kelley: Jim Henley, definitely.

Ellis: --I think got interviewed. It’s such a nice place with the books in the background and everybody--

Kelley: Right.
Ellis: --likes it as a place to be interviewed. So we’ve had a number of requests like that. And then we’ve had--well, not--this is kind of political entertainment, we had the president of Ireland, Mary McAleese in the room and that was because she was speaking in the Galleria. We’ve had a number of people like that and I know I won’t be able to remember the names for you, but we’re here for some things that takes place in the Galleria. And so because the room is isolated and because we were often had to close because of security reasons, we could use the room for like an area they could use if they needed a phone or just a place to be before they went on, so to speak.

Kelley: Okay. I’m going to move on to your experiences with economic, I don’t want to say battles, but economic crises that ever risen in the library and my specific focus is looking at how the current recession from 2008 forward has affected the public history industry in Sacramento and within the scope of this interview, specific to your experiences in the Sacramento Room. Did the Sacramento Room experience any financial difficulties, any difficulties or whatsoever because of the recession?

Ellis: Actually, no and I know we all know that libraries always have major problems with funding in particular and up until maybe five or six years ago, I was dependent upon the Central Library’s budget for my book budget and so that meant I got a cut out of the money that we had to spend for books which was never enough money. And the foundation over the past 15 years had set up various endowments and they reached their peak of a million or whatever
million and a half it had to reach in order for me to start getting the interest from the investments and so I did. I could have always have spent more money, so I guess you could say the recession did affect me in that respect because as the investments went down, of course, that meant I got less money than I would hope to. But for example, my budget last year was $12,000 and that’s a lot of money to buy books provided you’re not buying books that cost $10,000 of which I saw some that would have been real nice to buy, but of course, you know. So once you get it and you go back to buy and trying to buy as much Sacramento as you can and then go on from there. I would try every year to buy one or two high ticket items that fit into the printing and book arts history collection, but it had to have a connection to California or Sacramento just so we--

Kelley: Could you give me the example of that?

Ellis: Yeah. One would be William T. Vollmann’s Grave of Lost Stories the Special Edition that just had that one story in it and it’s set within marble slabs and has cow teeth set in silver that hold the marble slabs up off the actual book that Bill constructed himself and there are snake bones in the cover and he did all the printing and the artwork as well. So that is one and that’s a big favorite, we would show that on tours, both to adults and to fourth graders. Even high school kids were impressed with this and you can imagine how hard it is to impress that age.

Kelley: Yeah, it is. I’m just going to stop this for a second.
Kelley: Can you tell me a little bit about the types of funding and types of grant moneys that the Sacramento Room has access to?

Ellis: Yeah. In addition to the endowment funds that were set up by the foundation, the other part of that would be donations. And originally, when we got a cut out of the central budget, the money fell within the central budget. However, we always have what was called the “gift fund” and that’s where any money would go if it was received, so I would have that money available to buy materials as well. Let’s see. And then, of course, there are great monetary donations, but then there are the actual physical donations as well and we have had some wonderful things just walk through the door and end up in the collection. And I’m basically sure we have kept everything. When you donate something to the library whether it’s a $2,295 best seller you read and don’t want to keep or it’s a rare book from the 1400’s, it’s a library policy for many reasons, I’m sure people can guess that once you donate something to us, it’s ours to decide what to do with and you can’t dictate the disposition of the materials because we have had people want to dictate its system, its special place and, you know, so that doesn’t happen. And grants, we’ve had a number of preservation grants that I got over the years. One of the first ones was to completely survey and these were local history preservation grants, LSTA and, of course--so what we had was a complete survey done on the Sacramento
collection and the California collection where a conservator went through, book by book, did a sheet on each one to tell us what was wrong and then estimate of how much it may cost to restore it so that it then be usable. And then we do get money to actually restore the books after that and grants where it had people--one of them, one part that a gentleman did was to--that we hired and need later became a librarian for the system was a small booklet called “Unique Views of Sacramento” and what that had was things that he found in the collections that we found no one else had on any national or international databases and that was kind of a really odd and obscure type things but fascinating kind of things.

Kelley: Well, actually, this leads into the next question. Does the Sacramento Room have a website and what types of information are accessible on the website?

Ellis: Yes. Sacramento Public Library has a website and then the Sacramento Room has part of that of course. And I know they’ve been doing some changes recently, so I know that some of the librarians have said to me since I left that complained that it was harder to find. I haven’t gone in and really, really looked at it so I’m not sure, but one thing you can access a number of publications that we’ve done. You can access all of the images from Sacramento History Online which was another LSTA grant project that we did that was to have a joint project with the State Library California Room as well as SAMCC, now the Center for Sacramento History and the State Railroad Museum Library where we picked images that were not under copyright but
put them together in a site. We focused the first year on transportation and the second year on agriculture or maybe vice versa. Anyway, great resource.

There’s also materials there--

Kelley: That’s the Sacramento History Online website?

Ellis: Uh-huh. And there are also resources for teachers to use which we had enough money to actually hire some people in education in curriculum to design things that they could use like, for example, a kid could actually go to the website and pack a trunk to take a trip in mid-1800s, for example. And so if he/she throws in a cell phone and there’s a beep or something, that will let you know you can’t take that with you or whatever. So that was a great project. I started wandering off there and I’m pretty sure got off the question. Sorry.

Kelley: No, it’s okay. I usually back to it. Is the unique aspects of--the booklet that dealt with the unique aspects of the collection in that website?

Ellis: Exactly. Yes. If it isn’t it sure should be, Sharon, and also now, you can access city directories online. There is this great woman who came to me and she’s involved to a lot of genealogical enterprises and societies and all and she is someone who has been scanning our city directories and putting them up in accessible online so you can access those as well which is fabulous for people because they just love having the directories.

Kelley: They have directories that are fascinating.
Ellis: Yes. And to be able to look at them, not go through them like kind of real on microfilm or if you come into the room actually handle the paper, you can do that from 1851 on if you’re willing to work lots for a part of it.

Kelley: Right. Well, what are some of the technological changes that the library has had to face in the time that you were there because technology changes so quickly?

Ellis: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, the constant changes and things we need to learn just to manage our normal workday, but I guess the biggest thing that came along during my period of tenure in the Sacramento Room is probably digitizing of things. We started with the Sac History Online, the images were digitized and that, of course, library literature you read over and over and over. So you have a pretty good idea of what’s going on, but it’s different when you’re actually in the middle of having all your photographs scanned and basically writing the cataloging for them and--oh, by the way, here’s another little job to fit in on top of everything else that you’re doing.

Kelley: Are there any standards that you specifically follow for the digitization like I know the archivists follow the American archivist standards for digitizing materials?

Ellis: In our case, I think that’s complicated. We’re not far enough into it to say that we’re following one or the other, but mainly, it would be Library of Congress subject headings, but what you just said is probably the better way to get the headings.
Kelley: So you’re scanning on the materials, putting them into some form whether it’s PDF or a JPEG file…

Ellis: Right.

Kelley: --so it’s accessible online?

Ellis: Right. And it’s CONTENTdm that we’re using through OCLC so we have a lot of--

Kelley: What is CONTENTdm? Well, what is the acronym stand for, do you know? Oh, that’s okay. Don’t worry about it.

Ellis: This is something that came about just as I was leaving. And so the last parts of it and all, I didn’t even participate in the meetings and things that we’re having with OCLC since it was because I wasn’t going to be there, so sorry.

Kelley: No, that’s okay. You talked a little bit about the different collaborations that the Sacramento Room per se has had such as digitizing of information, putting them in Sacramento History Online, the pictures with Center for Sacramento History. Are there any other types of collaborations that you can think of that the Sacramento Room--

Ellis: Well, we did something with the Sacramento Book Collectors Club. The book collectors and I don’t know if you remember have--

Kelley: I’m aware of it.

Ellis: Gone to the meetings or whatever, but they’ve been around forever and--

Kelley: Right. They were basically one of the first histories out of Sacramento. Is that correct?
Ellis: Yeah, uh-huh. And I’ve started at the libraries so as every 20 years someone immediately told me about it and I went to like their first banquet speaker dinner and so yeah, we’ve got to know the people and ended up being vice president and president at some point to which you always end up doing that in organizations, you’ve been there a while. And the Sacramento Book Collectors Club has published some incredible publications over time including some leaf books of some very old books and they’ve did some great things. Well, most of the members who were printers in doing this kind of things are really getting up there in age and it’s hard for them. So if someone else came in and suggested that we do publish like five things that are no longer in their copyright that are interesting books and that people would want to read and so we supplied--we happened to have some of those, so we supplied them for someone to scan and there was one on the Transcontinental railroads, there was one of a child who crossed the plains to California in the 1800s. And so I’m very happy to say that we could do that and supply the books for them and gee, I wish I could--there is more I know, but I can’t pull it out. If I think of something, I’ll ask if we could go back to that question.

Kelley: And that’s okay. You aren’t just involved in working for the library, you also worked in the public history domain in Sacramento, City of Sacramento, County of Sacramento. What are some of the hats you’ve worn in that field such as historical societies?

Ellis: Yeah. Well, the historical society, that’s just a great--
Kelley: Sacramento County Historical Society?

Ellis: --yeah, uh-huh--a great example and Rancho del Paso Historical Society, I got quite involved with and they have been very generous and even gave the room an honorary membership and use the room extensively. Their publication is excellent and I wish I could have belonged and at least attended meetings of all the local history groups that are functioning because they all do so many things that what I had to resort to was belonging to the consortium, Dr. Bob’s LA Consortium which was just the incredible source of information--

Kelley: Dr. Bob LaPerriere?

Ellis: Yeah.

Kelley: Okay.

Ellis: And then they--when I got a new supervisor, the woman after Margarite, Judy Eitzen was also very supportive of the room and the kind of things we were doing in the various collections. And she knew a lot about things as well as book of arts because she was interested in those as well as the history. But when the new person came, because I work Thursday night, I didn’t want to go to a meeting that started at nine without compensation and since I couldn’t leave early, she wouldn’t allow Tom Tolley and I to go as the bottom line, so we lost touch with the group like that, but I may just go back to do that and in that way, find some--there might be some things that I could help about doing or whatever. Another thing that connects with that is the old school house in Sacramento.
Ellis: And I’ve, for a number of years, judged the essays that the kids write about what it’s like to go to school in 18--they just changed the year this year, but it might be 1870 this year sure that they were had to write about which was good. This is in collaborative, but it’s another kind of reach-out type thing as judging at history day. And I always was very honored to be asked to do these things because it was--the reason I was asked was because of my position and what I did from my work life and here, I’m so fortunate to have a job that I love so much that spills out into my own time as well which is just great because I love what I’m doing. So I was really, really fortunate.

Kelley: What are some of the best things about being retired?

Ellis: It’s hard to say yet because for the first couple of months, I still had to work with cleaning out my office that took me two months to finish because I wanted to be there when someone else was there and everything. But one thing that I really like I said to my daughter this morning on the telephone was that she stopped over yesterday about 11 o’clock and I was still asleep, but that’s because I went to bed at 5 a.m. and I love staying on till early morning hours and then not have to worry about going to work. For some reason, I could never go to sleep early on Saturday night, so I’d always be dragging into work at 8:30 Sunday morning and I like the flexibility of being able to get together with friends and I’ve also got to read a lot and that’s been really good.

Kelley: So do you have plans for what you’re going to do from here?
Ellis: Yeah. I want to do--well, I want to get the paper files straight in the house that’s a priority. I want to do some updating on the house because it’s over 20 years old and I just need some new things done to it, you know, new floors and things like that, and then I have a page in my calendar for this year that I’ve started jotting down all the places that I want to go.

Kelley: Oh, that’s nice

Ellis: And then I’m going to present it to my husband and say, you know, I’m sure he can at least get him to agree to go to the Dream Inn in Santa Cruz, if not Ireland though. He already said he wanted to go to England to see a specific football club place, so that’s great because we have--it would be in the London area, we have really, really good friends in London and near Birmingham, too, I would have a great trip to England.

Kelley: Well, I thank you so much for participating in these interviews. You were definitely a real asset to this project.

Ellis: Oh, thank you, Sharon.

Kelley: --so I was really glad that you agreed to participate. Thank you very much.

Ellis: Thank you so much.

Kelley: And we’ll end the interview right now.

[Audio File 2 ends at 00:20:01]
APPENDIX E

ORAL HISTORY with MELISA GAUDREAU
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:  
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Melisa Gaudreau

December 2, 2009

By

Sharon J. Kelley
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[Audio File 1]

00:00:28 Personal background information, education – University of Texas,
         Austin Architectural Engineering BS – University of California,
         Berkeley, Architecture MS;
00:01:40 Joined Page and Turnbull in San Francisco – Opened Page and Turnbull
         office in Sacramento – Leland Stanford Mansion rehabilitation;
00:03:38 History of Page and Turnbull – Projects performed in Sacramento Office;
00:04:34 Work focuses on architecture, urban design and historic preservation;
00:06:56 Collaboration with other Environmental Consultants;
00:07:36 Recession 2008 economic impact – Project slowdown – Sacramento Rail
         Depot Project;
00:09:04 Page and Turnbull consultant projects for California State Parks;
00:09:45 American Recovery and Reinvestment Funds – Potential for bolstering
         consulting projects;
00:11:49 Consultants for Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks – Types of
         consultants used in projects;
00:15:20 Message for future researchers.
Melisa Gaudreau

Melisa Gaudreau leads Page & Turnbull’s Sacramento office, established in 2007 to serve the Central Valley. Trained as both an architect and engineer, Melisa’s role since 1999 has been as a project manager and project architect on a wide range of rehabilitation projects and technical studies. Currently, she is managing the rehabilitation design, the Historic Structure Report for the State Capital building, and the exterior masonry conservation and cleaning of Memorial Auditorium.

Melisa specializes in rehabilitation design, Historic Preservation Tax Credit applications, Section 106 review documentation, and application of the California Historical Building Codes, and technical evaluations in support of CEQA compliance. She is a board member of Sacramento Heritage and is active in moderating presentations for the Association for Preservation Technology, the California Preservation Foundation and Sacramento’s Preservation Roundtable.
Interview History

Narrator:
Melisa Gaudreau

Interviewer/Editor:
Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:
December 2, 2009
11:00 p.m.
Page & Turnbull, Inc.
2401 C Street, Suite B
Sacramento, CA  95816
20 Minute Session

The narrator and interviewer met at the narrator’s place of business and sat in a conference room.

Editing:
A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:
The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:
2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento’s Public History Industry
An Oral History Thesis
California State University, Sacramento
Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

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Signature of Interviewer: [Signature]
Dated: 12/7/09
Interviewer's address: [Address]
Interviewer's phone number: [Phone number]
Kelley: Good Afternoon, I’m Sharon Kelley and I’m interviewing Melisa Gaudreau from Page and Turnbull Consultants. Good Afternoon.

Gaudreau: Hello.

Kelley: Nice to meet you. Could you tell me a little bit about your background, your educational background?

Gaudreau: Sure, I actually spent a lot of my upbringing overseas and that’s just an interesting side note but I lived overseas quite a bit, graduated in London, England in an American School of London but then came back to the United States, had attended University of Texas in Austin received my architectural engineering degree from there in 1987 and then came out to California and worked in the architecture industry for two years. Went back to graduate school at Berkeley and received my Master’s in Architecture in 1993 there at U.C. Berkeley. I worked in the Bay Area following that for a few years, joined Page and Turnbull I, I think it was November or December 1989, so I’ve been with them over ten years now. I’ve worked in their San Francisco office, came over here to Sacramento and started the Sacramento office.

Kelley: Oh you did and what year was that?

Gaudreau: It was about 2000, towards the end of 2006.

Kelley: What was the reason for that, were they interested in opening and office here?
Gaudreau: They had doing some work here in Sacramento, a couple of projects: the major project was Leland Stanford Mansion rehabilitation and that was just finishing up but we saw an opportunity here. My husband and I, he is from Sacramento and wanting to move back for professional and personal reasons so we came back to Sacramento and it seemed right to open an office for the firm here.

Kelley: There is a lot of historic preservation in Sacramento and ongoing. Were you surprised?

Gaudreau: No, I think in between my undergraduate and graduate degree I had spent two years here in Sacramento so that was in the mid 1980’s so I was familiar with the town and I did know about the resources here and I think coming back a few years ago definitely you’ve seen that things had changed here but I did know that there was a wealth of historic resources and there would be the work here if you sought that out.

Kelley: Can you tell me a little bit about Page and Turnbull itself?

Gaudreau: Page and Turnbull has an interesting history. Charles Page established the firm; this was in the early to mid 1970s. Actually, Page and Turnbull was the first firm that to, dedicated its practice to preservation in San Francisco, so we like to hold ourselves out as the earliest firm in Northern California that practiced preservation specifically. J. Turnbull joined the firm in the late 70s and they’ve had a thriving practice based primarily out
of San Francisco but they’ve done work up and down the state and work outside the state as well.

Kelley: And what type of work specifically?

Gaudreau: The work is architecture, urban design, and historic preservation as they title it. We do lots of rehabilitation work, we do lots of assessment reports, we do a number of historic resource studies and then we also provide primary architectural services related to the projects, be that design, construction documents, construction administration. But it’s interesting, the firm is set up with three studios, currently we have an Architecture Studio that handles most of design work again related to rehabilitation, repairs, or sometimes new construction in historic districts. But we also have two other studios, we have a Cultural Resource Studio that is comprised of historians and cultural resource experts and planners and they work on a number of products such as historic assessments, HSR, HRER, evaluation reports, tax credit reports, nominations, Section 106 environmental documents and the like. Our third studio is a Materials Studio and they assist the firm with more technical analysis, investigation and recommendations for specific products and techniques to utilize in a project or repairs of materials.

Kelley: And you do you cross paths with Environment Consultants in your line of work?
Gaudreau: Yes, definitely do. We often collaborate with environmental consultants for environmental documents and submittals.

Kelley: During this economic turn down that has been going on since 2008 and now through 2010 as we’re on the eve of that, how has it affected Page and Turnbull? How has it affected what your company is doing right now?

Gaudreau: We definitely noticed that the construction industry and redevelopment has changed and that has affected the workload that we’ve seen over the years. It seems that a lot of the developments projects we were involved with led by private entities have really strapped down. On the other hand we’ve had projects that have sustained themselves through this period primarily work we are involved with National Parks Service and the GSA (U.S. General Services Administration) so on a federal level those projects seem to have maintained themselves and we continue to do a lot of work for those entities. State work has seemed to have slowed down, we have not done as much work for State Parks say and some of the, some of the other state agencies.

Kelley: What kind of work do you do for State Parks?

Gaudreau: Well the Leland Stanford Mansion was a big State Park project actually it was a…

Kelley: It was a renovation.
Gaudreau: It was a private-public cooperation through the Leland Stanford Foundation and California State Parks. We’ve also had term agreements with State Parks in the past so that we have been the chosen consultant to work on a two-year basis on various types of projects that we’ve done and a number of state projects.

Kelley: Are the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds coming in, are they affecting your business in any way?

Gaudreau: It’s difficult to say whether that’s had a direct impact at this stage. I think that there are few key projects where it looks like those funds will be utilized for the ultimate funding of the project. We’re working with the City of Sacramento on the Rail Depot downtown it looks like that might be a potential to supplement funding for that project. So it has helped to fund with some work we are involved with.

Kelley: I know that there are long and short term goals with those projects too and they seem like they will stem out to the preservation field, especially since new construction is slowing down, it would seem like that would bolster preservation of what we do have. Do you see that happening?

Gaudreau: I see the potential for that happening absolutely. I think that projects that have the infrastructure or transportation linkage seem to be poised to take advantage of those fund and I think that projects that are communal in nature are also posed to take advantage of those funds.

Kelley: Sounds reasonable that it would bolster those industries.
Gaudreau: Absolutely

Kelley: I understand that Page and Turnbull has been involved in the Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks Report. Can you tell me a little bit about that project?

Gaudreau: Yes, we were selected as a consultant to do a survey of the Raised Streets and Hollow Sidewalks in Sacramento. I know that some survey work from an engineering perspective had been done prior but we were the first entity to look at the resource from an architectural and historic standpoint. Our Cultural Resources Studio surveyed a number of representative areas and did put together DPR forms and produced a survey report and gave some overall recommendation about what they saw in terms of the resource and its eligibility as a historic district.

Kelley: And it’s the DPR 523A nomination that is at OHP right now, awaiting determination? Is that where it is?

Gaudreau: Yes it’s been submitted and reviewed and my understanding is that review is nearly complete.

Kelley: Is it looking like that will be positive, that it will be registered?

Gaudreau: I’m not sure I can comment on that.

Kelley: That’s OK. In that particular survey did you use an environmental consultant on that, would you have had to?

Gaudreau: Actually, we did not for that particular project. The project was funded by a grant, which the effort really needed to be tailored so that that we could
produce the most fruitful product with the available grant funds. It really appeared that the most important aspect was to produce the survey forms and do the assessment, the historic assessment of the resource as a whole. We did have an archeologist on call if needed, turned out that we didn’t anticipate and there wasn’t, in the course of our accessing the space and surveying, there wasn’t any disturbance or any unusual finds so those services were not implemented in the project.

Kelley: For anybody going back and looking at the oral histories being recorded for this particular project in thirty, forty years from now, is there anything you feel would be important for them to know about this time in the preservation industry?

Gaudreau: Well, I think that there is one other interesting experience that we’ve seen with our practice that may be of interest and that is that there is one project that we were working on that was to be funded by the state grant, California Heritage, CCHE, California Cultural and Historic Endowment Grant. Those funds were put on hold for a period of time. They’ve just been reinstated and we’ve just been given the green light to going ahead on the project so the whole period was about eight months and in, I’d say in September of this year those funds were then again reinstated and the project did reengage so we’re currently working on this project but I think that is one thing I see in preservation in particular, that the availability of grants funds can really spur work in our field, especially for smaller, more
intricate projects that a little bit more difficult to fund than some of the larger, more public projects. So that’s one thing of interest I think is that in these hard economic times these grant either dry up or disappear for periods of time and that has a ripple effect definitely, how preservation work is implemented.

Kelley: Well that is a good sign that they’ve reengaged.

Gaudreau: Absolutely.

Kelley: Well, I want to thank you very much for participating in this survey.

Gaudreau: Great.

[Audio File ends at 17:45]
APPENDIX F

ORAL HISTORY with MARY A. HELMICH
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[Audio File 1]

00:00:23 Personal background information – CSUS, BA in Anthropology with a
minor in Environmental Resources; Hired by Sacramento City and County
Museum – Interest in preservation – Site survey in downtown Sacramento
– Hired by the State Archives as an exhibit technician - Hired by the
California State Parks Office of Interpretive Services for exhibit and
project development;
00:27:08 Work for State Parks in developing anniversary of Sacramento’s
sesquicentennial, programs and publications – Gold Discovery to
Statehood Sesquicentennial Commission – Developing of Parks Passport;

[Audio File 2]

00:00:14 Interest in local history – Recording resources to promote preservation –
Sacramento City Association – Concern over demolition and protection of
historic sites;
00:09:43 Economic impact within preservation - Preservation vs. rebuilding -
Sacramento Preservation Board – Sustainability;
00:12:02 Economic impact within Sacramento’s preservation community;

[Audio File 3]

00:00:14 Involvement with Sacramento County Historical Society (SCHS) – SCHS
publication Golden Notes - Sacramento History Week – SCHS role within
the Sacramento region; Historic Old Sacramento Foundation (HOSF) –
Old Sacramento Visitor and History Center – Economic survival within
public history community by collaborating;
[Audio File 4]

00:00:24 Historical societies collaboration and cooperation – Economic impact of recession to historical societies.
For nearly 40 years, native-born Californian, Mary A. Helmich, has worked to bring California history to life through exhibits and interpretive programming. Her experiences have encompassed the gamut of interpretation, from developing interpretive guidelines and processes to providing comprehensive direction for historic districts or specific projects within those sites. She has been involved with creating content and resources, as well as designing and building exhibits and producing tours and living history programs.

Earning a degree in Anthropology with a minor in Environmental Resources from California State University, Sacramento, she has expanded her knowledge of history and cultural resources since then, working for the California State Archives and California State Parks. She developed an interest in local Sacramento history and preservation as a student intern, surveying historic buildings in the central city for the Sacramento City and County Museum. That interest has continued through her involvement with the American Association of University Women’s book, *Vanishing Victorians: A Guide to the Historic Homes of Sacramento*, and local community activist groups, like the Sacramento Old City Association, Friends of the Sacramento City and County Museum, the Sacramento County Historical Society, and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation.

Now retired from California State Parks, Mary Helmich continues to find interesting interpretive work as a consultant and advisor for projects around the state. Currently they include a furnishing plan for Point Sur State Historic Park (an early light
an interpretive plan for the historic Casa de Estudillo adobe in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park; planning for street activities in the Old Sacramento historic district; and developing exhibits for a visitor center at William B. Ide Adobe State Historic Park.
Interview History

Narrator:

Mary A. Helmich

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

December 4, 2009
10:00 a.m.
3418 L Street
Sacramento, CA 95816
40 Minute Session

The narrator and interviewer met at the narrator’s residence, the recording was stopped and then restarted for short breaks three times.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Several responses were paraphrased by the narrator for chronology purposes. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

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Signature of Narrator: [Signature]
Dated: 04/24/03

Narrator's name as he/she wishes it to be used: Mary A. Helmich

Narrator's address: [Redacted]

Narrator's phone number: [Redacted]

Signature of Interviewer: [Signature]
Dated: 12-05-09

Interviewer's address:
Stason J. Kelley
P.O. Box 19783
Sacramento, CA 95819

Interviewer's phone number: (502) 380-5070
Kelley: Good morning.

Helmich: Hello.

Kelley: Hello. This is Sharon Kelley, and I’m a graduate student at California State University Sacramento, and today I am interviewing Mary A. Helmich at her home in Sacramento.

Could you please share a little bit about your background.

Helmich: All right. If you want to skip to the education part, I am a graduate of CSUS with a degree in anthropology and a minor in environmental resources. I graduated in 1972 and since then, have done a lot of work with museums and historic sites. Actually, I started working when I was in college for the Sacramento City and County Museum, putting together exhibits for them. I did an internship. Well, back up. I did a school project that was involved with historic preservation early on with regard to historic structures. I wrote a paper on local architecture for my environmental resources class, which interested Jim Henley [director of the then Sacramento City and County Museum] in me. I became fascinated with architecture. And for the museum, began a survey of historic houses that were in Sacramento’s central city. I surveyed about 450 city blocks, identifying the buildings. That rather got me into it. So, I had an interest in history, which grew into an interest in people and how they created that history. It all seemed to mesh for me.
Kelley: What were some of the most interesting surveys that you did downtown? I’m assuming that they were associated with the different neighborhoods down there.

Helmich: Actually, what I did, we surveyed every single--Jim Henley had started a project where he had individuals actually going around to every single block, and something happened with that group or whoever was doing it, and I ended up taking on about half the central city, just with my bicycle and my paper and my camera, going around every single block, identifying historic structures, photographing them and identifying the house addresses. So I know he got the strips developed, and so we have a wonderful record of the historic buildings downtown. Whether or not that ever got connected to the paper record, who knows? I don’t know at this point, because you go around, snap photographs. So Jim has that or the Sacramento Archives Museum Collection Center has that survey.

Kelley: SAMCC does?

Helmich: Yes.

Kelley: Was the survey was turned over to OHP at some point, because I know that they do record the surveys that have been conducted.

Helmich: This was before OHP was even involved with that kind of stuff, way before Paula Boghosian and everybody else.

Kelley: What was the Sacramento City County Museum?
Helmich: It was on 7th Street, 1009 7th Street, up above the T&T Club on the second story in the Pioneer Hall, and it was owned by the Sacramento Pioneer Society. It was their building. You’d have to climb up a tall set of stairs to get up to the second floor, because it was an old, old building. I think it was built in the sixties or seventies. It’s still standing. Then they had offices, and they had a large room that was for their exhibits. I did an internship where I worked on their exhibits. My background, before I went to college, I was thinking I was going into art and design and that kind of stuff. So I had a pretty remarkable high school education, in that I had some just amazing instructors. Encino High School is where I went to school.

Kelley: You grew up here in Sacramento?

Helmich: Yes, I was born in Sacramento. My instructors ended up teaching at colleges and universities and making names for themselves as artists. Gary Pruner and Larry Foster and Gerald Larson—they were all really, really good art instructors. So I had the basics down for that kind of work. So going back to my college—we’re wandering around the subject! [laughs]

Kelley: It sounds like it created an outlet, a creative outlet, that you were able to parlay into preservation.

Helmich: Yes, that’s exactly what happened, was at CSUS I started by taking art classes, and I realized I already knew this stuff. I didn’t need to do this. So I started getting into anthropology.
Anyway, so what it enabled me to do was take the art and the skills I learned in high school and apply them to develop exhibits. I was taking museum classes when I was at CSUS in the environmental resources program, and the anthropology had some stuff going on there, too, and ended up producing these exhibits. Jim liked what I was doing a lot and hired me then to continue on doing that work after I graduated for a time. He had a limited amount of money. Then he got me interested in a job that was over at State Archives. This was in the old building, the old printing plant, on 10th and O Street.

Kelley: What year was that?

Helmich: 1972. So I became an exhibit technician, their first exhibit person that they had, and this was, again, before the building was remodeled or before the building was torn down and replaced. But they had decided that they wanted to put an exhibit hall in, and so, as I said, I was the first person who was working on exhibits and hired to do that. So I did all the research, all the text writing, all the design, all the construction. I did all that, and it started out with just some exhibits that were in the search room and in the State Capitol and in some of the other state buildings.

Then what we were expecting and what happened was the building was remodeled. We were up on the second story. They moved the archives and its research room onto the first floor with it, big 1400-square-foot exhibit hall adjacent to that research room, and that was my job then, was to develop the exhibits. So I had a 1400-square-foot museum space, in effect, and so I
developed exhibits, changing exhibits and so forth. But it was more than just doing that. It was doing the research and doing the writing, and that was amazing, to have the State Archives at your behest, to be able to just dive in, open up drawers and go through it. It was also a challenge, too, because as no one had done that work before, I ended up having to go hunting for objects, printed documents that would be worthy of exhibits, because not everything you see in an archives—its probably about a thousand-to-one, stuff that’s interesting but not exhibitable, to something that’s going to catch someone’s interest and be fascinating. So I developed exhibits, and I would change out sections at a time, because, obviously, it was just me.

Then occasionally they would have funds so I could hire an assistant, and for that I either changed exhibits inside or I developed traveling exhibits. So I did traveling exhibits on the 1879 Constitution. I did traveling exhibits on the Chinese. I did traveling exhibits on the Japanese American experience in California. I did a traveling exhibit on—we called it 201 California Consumer Products of the 19th Century, and that was fun because it got to our trademark collection, and that was great because a number of these exhibits ended up traveling to numbers of museums around the state, and some of them were at the Oakland Museum and so forth. So that was a lot of fun.

Kelley: How long did you do that for?

Helmich: I worked there for almost ten years, and then I had interviewed for a job with the State Parks, and they were hiring, and I was very interested in working on
that because it was just the planning part. I was ended up hired in 19--was it 1981 or 1982? I can’t remember. Hired by the Office of Interpretive Services for California State Parks, and their offices were in West Sac. The whole idea was they had a planning section, then they had the development, the construction for the exhibits.

So I really loved that, because it was just the research and the writing and so forth. On the one hand, but it was a learning curve, too, because whereas, before, I did the research and the writing, and I had the chief of the archives or the other archivists kind of reading through and checking me out, this one, I had to create more documentary materials so that whoever was going to take the material and write the text would realize that, yes, I had done my due diligence and my own work and so forth.

So I started out. My first big project was at Fort Humboldt State Historic Park, and I ended up, I took an approach of outlining the material, which, if they wanted to, they probably could have just turned it into text and documented it that way, but, oh, that wasn’t good enough for the writers. They wanted it all spelled out. So I learned my lesson, so I spelled it out from then on.

So my projects, golly, working at the Office of Interpretive Services, as I say. I started out with Fort Humboldt, but I worked at San Pasqual Battlefield. We did the Visitors Center there. I worked on projects in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. I worked on stuff for Monterey State Historic Park. I
worked at San Simeon, Hearst Castle. Did stuff at Bidwell. Did things for Columbia. Worked up—you know, just you name it. Sonoma, Petaluma Adobe. Yes, you name it, I probably worked on it, something related to it. So it was really great grounding in California history, although I had brought some of that with me. If you take my interest in California history, it goes back to when I was a kid, because my dad and my mother and my brothers and I, we were always traveling, looking at historic sites. We’d go across country. We’d stop at sites, things like that. So it’s just like continually building, building, building.

Kelley: So you grew up in a family that nurtured that love.

Helmich: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It was fun, a lot of fun.

So then for the Office of Interpretive Services, I was there till 1993, when we had a realization that the bond funding would no longer support all the staff people. We had at that point, I think, forty-one people working in West Sacramento, from the inspiration for the idea to the development and its installation, and that all had to be disbanded. There just was no funding for it. We were project-funded, specific projects, and part of the problem was the field didn’t understand that. They thought we could just do any projects, and they were disappointed when their projects couldn’t be worked on. We were just focused, really focused. As I said, that money dried up.

Kelley: Can you tell me how the money dried up?
Helmich: It was state bond money. The public had voted for funding to be spent on specific projects and when it was gone, it was gone. There was also the trickle-down problem that you had in parks (and probably elsewhere). If you were developing a visitor center, you would have the landscape architects, architects, and contractors, who designed and constructed the building, get first crack at the money (a percentage of the pie). However oftentimes there would be cost over runs, and—oh, they hadn’t realized this impact or that an endangered species would be affected, and so on. Costs would add up and with the limited funding “pot” it had to come from somewhere. Generally, it came out of interpretation. So we were supposed to get X amount of money, and, typically, it was much reduced by the time it came down to us. So it was kind of a disappointment in that respect for both OIS and the project recipients.

For me, what I really loved about the job was developing histories—many of which had never really been written before. So for example, San Pasqual Battlefield: We were concerned with what was going on between the Californio (Mexican) forces and Stephen Watts Kearny’s U.S. troops, who were marching through San Pasqual Valley and the battle that ensued. However, we realized that we had this tremendous opportunity to tell the story of the San Pasqual people, traditionally associated with the valley, but are not included in today’s history books. Historically the Mexican government actually recognized the Indians as being an official pueblo—*a rare Indian*
History, of course, changed when the Americans took over and disputed the Indian claims to the land and the U.S. did not accept the Indian pueblo’s ownership, even though it had been recognized by the Mexican government. So the Indians were removed from their traditional lands. When the project began, I had found very little information in the written record, as the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 had destroyed original papers associated with the pueblo, including its 1830s census, etc. However, I was able to go to The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley with Dr. Glenn Farris, a department archeologist, to research this project. Here, lo and behold, Judge Benjamin Hayes’ papers revealed a transcription and translation from the Spanish of the 1830s census. Hayes had made a copy of it and it was in The Bancroft. With this information, we were able to identify the actual names of the pueblo people, including their occupations, families, ages, etc. Glenn and I were ecstatic. It was so cool! It was just like, “Yes!”

Kelley: It sounds like your time at California States Parks was an amazing time.

Helmich: From 1982 to 1993 were the “golden years” for state parks in many respects. There was funding to do the research that was needed, as well as to develop projects. I figured out pretty early on, and I think everyone else held this belief, that we had a rare opportunity to do the research right at this moment in order to provide a platform for accurately representing the past (sometimes for the first and last time) through interpretation. And, there probably would
not be another time like this in our lifetime. So I knew when I began writing an interpretative plan and as it evolved from an outline, that this was the park’s “moment,” so I put everything and “the kitchen sink” in there. I mean, yes, the work was theme based, but I made sure to capture all the stuff that was significant to that site, so that anyone in the future would have the information and resources available to use.

Fort Humboldt was another wonderful example. I put together a chronology of what happened with the military there— that had never been done before. I took all of the historical accounts I could get from different sources and by developing a chronology, could see here and there where the troops were being dispatched. Because of this research, we could figure out what actually happened to the fort’s regulars. Fort Humboldt was established it in 1853 because the settlers and the miners and the Indians were in such bloody conflicts that something had to be done to resolve them. There were constant attacks and retaliations going on. So the regulars came in. The army troops pushed back. They literally went in like a wedge and pushed back the warring factions, and tried to keep them separated as much as they could. But it was an ongoing problem, as each new gold strike created new pressures here or there, with the Indians being pushed out, only to retaliate later. During the Civil War, most the fort’s officers and many of the enlisted men were southerners and a number of them were West Point graduates. So, they returned to the southern states to take care of business at home, so a vacuum
developed in California. I’m sure this happened elsewhere, too. Governor Stanford set up volunteer militias to fill the vacuum. Well, who are the militia members? They were the settlers and the miners, who had their own way of taking care of business in the northwest. That’s when you really had the problems escalating between the Native people and the military. But it wasn’t the regular army; it was the volunteer militias.

Kelley: It sounds like you left behind a history for those coming in to look. You actually wrote the history.

Helmich: Yes, that’s my intent every project I did.

Kelley: An impressive legacy.

Helmich: Thank you. I’ve done a lot, yes.

Kelley: Did you ever encounter times when the economic status of the state or the nation interfered with the position you had or the research you had?

Helmich: Well, the bond money. I mean, it only is available with voter approval and, in tight economic times, they have been turned down. That is how many park projects have been funded. When there are no bond funds available, large interpretive projects are not built. And, parks have suffered. There have been no continuous efforts to capture site histories and to gather resource information. I think that that’s where State Parks differs from, say, National Park Service. The State Park System does not employ many historians, archeologists or interpreters considering its size. Actually, we’ve gotten more now than we used to have, and more staff is field oriented.
However, the number of parks and its acreage in the system has grown, too. National Park Service gives priority to reports, research and gathering information for their units, even in lean times. Over the years, it’s been interesting, because sometimes they will be ahead of us and so much better funded, while State Parks’ staffing will be down. In other times, our star will be rising, and they will be losing their staff. There is an informal competitive quality within California between NPS and State Parks’ staff. I know that rather comes out.

Kelley: I agree with you.

Helmich: So, anyway, in 1993, we had like an implosion within our State Parks, and basically the Office of Interpretive Services took the hit.

Kelley: It was from financial reasons from outside the department?

Helmich: Yes, well, because, again, there’s no bond money, and we were based on that. Again, we had forty-one people. We had an entire carpenter shop and everything else that was totally disbanded, everything. We had a library, a fabulous library. We had all the research and all the information. Everyone was kind of going off, finding new jobs. I had tons of seniority compared to everyone because I had my years with the archives, because it’s total state service, and then Office of Interpretive Services. Then what occurred, I was involved with organizing the material from all the years that the Office of Interpretive Services was involved, so I organized the archives for all of the projects that we’ve been involved with, and you’re talking a lot. So that now
constitutes the basis for the archives that’s for the department, which is in the Archaeology History Museums Division.

So then I was invited by Donna Pozzi to be a part of her group, which was going to be the interpretation section, and then there was like a museum section, and then two were combined, was interpretation and museum services, and then it became that museum services went over to a different division, the Archaeology and History Museum, and it became the Interpretation and Education Division, and that’s where I worked. I worked for Donna Pozzi from 1993 until I retired last year, which was in--what was last year? 2008.

Kelley: Now you’re volunteering.

Helmich: Yes, I’m volunteering.

In the Interpretation and Education Division, we developed policies and guidelines and helped to support field programs. It was different from OIS. I wasn’t doing very much site-specific research, although I did some very interesting projects. We needed to have guidelines for people in the field. Our understanding was, “Okay, if we can’t do the research in headquarters, someone in the field has to do it, as well as the interpretive planning.” So I organized a workshop to gather field input and with it developed the

*Workbook for Planning Interpretive Projects in California State Parks.* That basically became the “Bible” for the field, which some people used and others
did not. [laughs]...depending on how religious you were about interpretation.

So, that was one of the projects I did.

I realized parks had all these resources and information, but little of it was linked together. So I began collecting information. I put together what we called The Park-to-Park Index. Basically, it held everything you needed to know and more about State Parks, as lists–laundry lists of parks related to their cultural and natural resources and recreation, as well as facilities. I created lists on camping, fishing, boating, you name it, surfing and skiing–whatever. The Index outlined how parks related to each other in history through a chronology, by cultural groups, collections, geography, historic structures, businesses, etc. For natural history, I involved the folks in the Natural Heritage Division to get their input, including endangered species. You know, this project was huge.

Kelley: A site map of the entirety?

Helmich: Yes. I stopped compiling park information about five years ago--no, more like ten, after we became involved with other projects. There was also with the promise from the department’s IT staff that they would set it up a database for the existing information and then organize it so that field people could add information. They kept promising and promising.

Meantime, State Parks moved on. Some parks changed names. New acreage was acquired. It evolved and that information will need to be added...

Anyway, it was a big project.
I would be pulled in for special projects. Probably one of my biggest (and I think the one I’m most proud of) was when I became the Sesquicentennial Coordinator for State Parks. Actually, before all that, I was a part of the group within the department envisioning what we could be doing with the 150th anniversary of the Gold Discovery to Statehood period. We envisioned a statewide organization, a Sesquicentennial Commission, and pushed the governor’s office—pushed and pushed hard to get one. It was like pulling teeth. Gray Davis, he was really—well. [laughs] No, actually, it was Gov. Wilson first. Wilson took a long time before he finally gave it his “okay,” But he delayed appointments to the commissioners. In the meantime, our department decided to support the initial activities. We had enabling legislation, so we took a chunk of our staff time and people, and moved forward with sesquicentennial planning—statewide, as well as for parks.

We had what we called the Parks-150 and Cal-150 Committees. Parks-150 included park staff, like me, working part time on moving State Parks’ initiatives forward. Cal-150 staff was funded full time by the department for the statewide planning effort that was separate from us. Parks funded the Cal-150 group and we provided some input, but they worked independently.

Kelley: What were some of the projects? Can you give me an example of one of the projects that was involved in that?
Helmich: With Parks 150, first of all we analyzed the event, “Okay, what is this?” “What can we do with it?” We came up with over-arching themes to emphasize and the projects to support them.

Kelley: What format were you going to put this out in? Was it going to be a publication?

Helmich: We actually did that, I mean within the department and later through other publications. First, we surveyed the entire department and using that survey and the themes figured out our priorities—the projects that we could do to that would leave a lasting legacy. As we set up this, we actually put together a program and a plan of action. However, it was with the expectation that Cal-150 and the Commission would be finding the money and the support. At the time, there was only one commission member. The way the legislation had been written, there was one slot for the Tourism Division Chief, John Poimiroo. While his name was not specified, his position was designated for the commission. The other member requirements were more vague—it would be a commission composed of nine members, blah, blah, blah. However, his position was specifically named, so that Cal-150 was able to use him (he was a commission of one) to move its agenda forward. It was really very interesting. Sylvia Minnick was the Cal-150 coordinator designated by State Parks, tasked with keeping the sesquicentennial program moving forward.

Then, finally, the commission was appointed and the staff hired. However, there was a tremendous amount of turnover. It was just a revolving door.
would go in, acquaint the staff with myself, with parks and what we were doing, and everything would be fine, then the staff would be gone. I mean, it was just like this--

Kelley:: Revolving door.

Helmich: Totally, totally.

Kelley: What was the name of the commission?

Helmich: The formal name? It was the Gold Discovery to Statehood Sesquicentennial Commission, I think.

Kelley: And this took place in 2003?

Helmich: Oh, no. Oh, no. It was from 1998 to 2000, and we had started planning in 1994, 1995.

Kelley: When was the sesquicentennial?

Helmich: It was 1998 to 2000. It was statehood. The largest voluntary migration of people in human history was during the Gold Rush [in Coloma]. Whereas you see the Industrial Revolution, with a capital I, capital R, people always use small G, small R for California Gold Rush, and it should be capital G, capital R, because it had worldwide impact. It was just an amazing event that not only affected everybody and everything that was going on in California, it affected everybody around the world. I mean, everybody knew. California was on everybody’s lips. They knew it. If they didn’t come here, they knew someone who had been here. The effect of that, if you read Holliday’s *The World Rushed In*, you’ll understand. We became a totally different place
because of that, and, as such, we have then taken that and it has influenced the world. So we have a lot to celebrate and other things to talk about and to commemorate, too, as well. What happened to the Native population is the beginning. It wasn’t just in the Civil War. It began with the Gold Rush. So, anyway, we put this together. So what happened was the commission would meet. Huell Howser was on it and the Secretary of State was on it. Oh, yes, yes, yes, everybody. The woman who was the widow of the fellow who wrote *Men to Match My Mountains*, what’s his name? I mean, there were really high-roller big names on the commission, and the biggest one was Starr, Kevin Starr. Kevin, at the time, was the head of the State Library and the biggest ego in all outdoors, and I think everyone will agree with that.

Kelley: [unclear] in politics.

Helmich: Yes. Oh, gosh, he was amazing. You know, he totally didn’t get that parks could be the engine to make things happen, and basically because it wasn’t his idea, he kind of cut us off at the pass. We were ready for the first commission meeting, and we came with our binder of stuff that we were proposing and things that we were doing. We were totally ready. And he was the most obnoxious, nastiest you can possibly think of in a public setting to Ron Brean [phonetic], who was then the chair of our Parks 150 Committee. Considering that State Parks had kept this thing alive and moving when it was lying fallow in state government, we had kind of pushed it, and basically I don’t think he
realized that he wouldn’t have been there if it hadn’t been for parks, who had
pushed it, pushed the agenda.

Kelley: Did he think it should go through a different type of media?

Helmich: No. He wanted all that glory and everything to go to the state library, so, I
mean, he moved the Cal 150 group basically to the state library. But it was
just like he didn’t want to hear anything parks, because I think he thought we
were just little hokey things, 279 park units. What a better driver than that to
make it happen?

So we decided, okay, we’ll just go along our merry way as this was going
along, and, actually, I had been working relations with other agencies, and I
developed a very good relationship with Forest Service, USDA Forest
Service, and they had the money and didn’t have the staff. Well, I had me,
the staff, and no money. So they gave me $120,000 to do stuff that was work
with them. So I put together a passport program, and that included--at first, I
was thinking small, and I thought, “Well, now, let’s just--.” So it became 150
sites, actually 153 sites.

Kelley: That’s an interesting collaboration.

Helmich: It was.

Kelley: Creative.

Helmich: The idea was to find locations for every single county in California–58
counties! (I think I missed a couple because they had to have staffed sites and
some counties did not.) I proceeded to contact every county with an
appropriate cultural/historical museum that had a connection to the
sesquicentennial timeframe. I recognized that some were going to be a little
bit later, but that was okay. So, there were to be 150 sites, and not all would
be State Parks that I was dealing with. Talk about keeping balls up in the air!
For each site, there was: the Passport’s rubber stamp to design, text to write
and get approval, graphics to prepare, address and phone numbers to gather,
signage and a “stamping station” to create, along with a binder of “how to”
information to organize. In addition, during the process, area codes changed
for some sites!
Then I worked on four Heritage Adventures. These brochures were self-
guided tours connecting parks to other sites and museums using a theme.
Kelley: Were they walking tours?
Helmich: Driving. Then--gosh, there were just so many. There were museum exhibits.
We produced the “Discovery, Devastation and Survival,” an exhibition
focused on the impacts of the Gold Rush on Native Americans.
Kelley: Where was that housed?
Helmich: That was at the Indian Museum and then it moved around. It was a traveling
exhibit.
Kelley: In the Indian Museum down here?
Helmich: Yes. Then it went to lots of museums. CAMA basically took it on a tour.
Kelley: What is CAMA?
Helmich: The California Museum Association. Then I established a relationship with Cobblestone Publishing. The company produces some wonderful history booklets geared toward kids. I contacted them, about 1997, and inquired if they were interested in developing publications for the California’s Sesquicentennial. Anyway, they were interested in California because they saw its market potential. The publishers realized they needed to connect more with California, because they had had an East Coast bias. They’re out of New Hampshire.

So I got them to develop their *California Chronicles* publications in time for the sesquicentennial and helped write, edit, and arranged for other people to contribute articles. Their publications focused on California Indians, gold, the California Gold Rush, railroads, etc.

I was trying to encourage all park units to have sesquicentennial activities. Then the commission died with the election of a new governor. Gov. Pete Wilson was a Republican and now there was Gov. Gray Davis, a Democrat. And of course, most commissioners were Republicans. And, “You couldn’t do business with your political enemy.” [laughs] At the time, it was too bad, because, you know, I think the commission was really starting to roll. Oh, another thing about Kevin Starr, as the commission chair, he could have harness the members to work together, but he didn’t do that. So, each ended up “doing their own thing,” having a special project to support, like Huell Howser’s *Shades of California* book.
Kelley: Unconnected factions of one project.

Helmich: Yes, with no support, and they were trying hard to get the tall ships coming in, and the tall ships was all these ships from the West Coast and East Coast and elsewhere to come into San Francisco Bay, and they had enlisted Mervyn’s help with that, but they needed more. It was just at the time when they were just literally floundering. I think part of the problem, too, is this churning. They had some guys early on that were really bad. I think they were just using and abusing. They were political appointees and they just took everything they could. I mean, they were not working out.

Anyway, so, okay. What happens is, that happened in ’99, right? And the commission is sort of defunct. Yes. So in the meantime, I’m thinking, wait a minute, we’ve got this 150th of statehood, which is the big deal. This is the cherry on this hot fudge sundae, the whipped cream and everything. What’s happening here?

My boss had been to an event in Florida, and she just thought it was the coolest thing, and it got me thinking. Basically, at this National Association of Interpreters meeting in Florida they had done like a walk through history, and so they had recreated three dimensions, people going through time, talking to people in the past. So I thought, that’s really neat. We could do that.

Kelley: Was it living history?
Helmich: It was living history and more. I want to do it as the culminating event for the 150th anniversary of statehood at the Capitol. So I began to think about how it could be arranged. Meanwhile, there was no more commission or staff, just me in a sesquicentennial capacity. I was the only “official” sesquicentennial person --the last one standing with a statewide title. Our office would get calls related to the old commission’s business. Toward the end, they were trying to put a float in the Pasadena Rose Parade. I thought, really? You know what I mean? It is just wasted money, as far as I was concerned, when there were so many other worthy projects that could have used the funding.

So I get this call in the fall of 1999 from Clare McCullough, who was the Grand President of the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW) at the time. He said, “Well, what are you going to do for the 150th anniversary of statehood? We have to do something. You must be doing something, aren’t you?” [laughs] At that point, I had begun to write down a grand vision I had for the 150th’s climax. So he invited me down to a meeting of the NSGW’s steering committee, who were really interested in this.

Kelley: One of their parlors?

Helmich: Oh, no, no. This is the grand president. This is in San Francisco. This is the players.

Kelley: So it’s the hub?

Helmich: Yes. Clare and I became good friends and I started pulling them in. They don’t get much credit for their involvement in history, but the Native Sons are
unsung heroes, as far as I’m concerned. They were the ones who preserved so many of the places that were to become state parks, including Sutter’s Fort, the Customs House in Monterey, William B. Ide Adobe. You just name it, they probably were involved starting in 1870s. Then at the turn of the century, racism infused the organization, as it did much of the state of California. Today the NSGW is a diverse, inclusive organization. Anyway, he invited me down to their offices and I presented them with an outlined concept of what I want to do, and that was to stage the culminating event on the Capitol grounds. (The event was later planned for Capitol Mall, and then changed back to the Capitol grounds–I’ll tell you about that shortly.) But I wanted to have a walk through time. I wanted people to experience California history in three dimensions through people and exhibits.

I knew this was going to be very expensive and needed support. With the NSGW, we pushed and they lobbied and they pushed. The director at the time, Rusty Areias was working for it, too. Our vision was huge, really, really huge and worthy of California. We needed to hire performers and musicians and to have all kinds of exhibits and activities going on. It had to be grand.”

In November, December, and January, I refined each of the periods to be represented, thinking, “Okay, this section will be Native American. What goes here? This will be the Spanish and Mexican era, this the Gold Rush period, etc.” My division began enlisting others, including the folks involved with the Dickens Fair in San Francisco, as well as the Native Sons, who began
soliciting for food vendors and working on souvenirs. Commitments had to be made. Graphics had to be produced. Time was short. We had to start writing contracts. September 9-11, 2000 was getting closer and closer.

Kelley: You had it mapped out. You really had it mapped out.

Helmich: Oh, yes. I had to create a chronology of California history for use as a reference to learn what would best represent it. So, I had it all figured out. However, as the dates were getting closer, we still didn’t have any money, but we were writing and signing contracts. We had to! In August, the Democrats were having their convention. But, they couldn’t quite decide if this event was going to happen, or not. Actually, it got worse. The Admission Day funding was the scheduled item for the very last day, the very last item. It was in September. Rusty Areias, the department director, formerly an Assembly member, actually walked the floor of the Assembly, which I don’t think is normally permitted, drumming up votes for the bill. It was approved. We had the $895,000 that we needed. [laughs] There was a collective, “Aah!”—sighs of relief.

Kelley: Where did the money come from?

Helmich: It’s the state. The state. They finally recognized it. But leading up to that, even, we had been led to believe that we could not have the Capitol. We had had mapping out, planning all the different units and everything that would be going down, would be doing Capitol Mall, and we’d been talking with the city. The city had their police people and their fire chief and everybody else,
their special events people, and we’d been meeting off and on, off and on, off
and on. They never said no. So we were moving on, putting together banners
on the Mall and everything else. Three weeks before, they said no. And this
thing’s huge. This thing’s huge. I mean, we had tents. We had everything
that’s going to be coming.

Kelley: This is someone from the Capitol?

Helmich: No, it was the city. It was the city fire chief, who did not want to block off
Capitol Mall. (Since then, I’ve seen that the city has blocked off parts of the
mall for events.) The fire department was extra worried about access to the
buildings. We had planned to use the center median and the streets on either
side, but with a fire lane. Vehicles would have been able to move through.
However, as there were high-rises on the Mall, the fire department refused to
approve the permit. So we were left with: “Oh, my god.”

So what happened? We ended up approaching the governor’s office,
explaining our situation. “Look, we cannot do it on Capitol Mall. The city
won’t let us. You have the power to make it happen here on the Capitol
grounds”—which had been our “Plan A,” anyway. So they gave us the
permission. However, there were certain restrictions. I do not know if you
have ever been to an event at the Capitol, but they won’t let you have any
kind of commercial activities on the grounds. The strip of land beneath the
palm trees, between the street and the sidewalks is considered city property
and fine for the sale of food and merchandise. You can do whatever the heck
you wanted to there. Okay, fine. So we’re securing food services and
everything else, but it was late, really late. Fall fairs had secured most of the
best vendors at this point. We did not have as many as we would have liked
to have had.

We wanted to put up a tent for shade and programs in front of the Capitol, but
the governor’s office did not want this. They wanted Gray Davis, who had
given us absolutely no support, to be able to speak to the multitudes on
Admission Day. They really changed our plans at the last minute

Oh, yes, I forgot about the U.S. Post Office. The Post Office was involved in
the Sesquicentennial, too, because they had issued a special stamp

commemorating the California Gold Rush stamp, and had planned another
one for statehood. They had gotten very little support as the commission was
gone. As part of the event planning for Admission Day, I brought them into
the process. So we a stamp was issued to celebrate the 150th. It became part
of the big reveal for the opening ceremonies.

To give you an overview of the layout: if you faced the Capitol, immediately
to the right, and then counterclockwise, you would experience the history of
California in three dimensions, starting with the Native Americans. We had
arranged for California Indians to build tule boats, carve redwood log canoes,
and smoke salmon. We had bark houses, crafts, dancers, singers. You name
it. Then for the Spanish and Mexican periods, missions like La Purisima were
represented. There were costumed early explorers. We could call on State
Park units from throughout California to help us interpret history. So we had staff and volunteers from La Purísima, Sonoma, Monterey, Hearst Castle, and many, many other parks participating. We had an exhibit of mission models produced by a fourth-grade teacher’s class. Exhibits featuring African Americans in California, the impact of the Gold Rush on California Indians, displays of fire equipment, farming machinery, early radios and televisions, movie memorabilia. The event offered a combination of living history activities and exhibits. There were covered wagons and all the items that would have come in the wagons. We had traders and exhibits of goods typical of early California, several military encampments representative of different eras. There was a reproduction Bear Flag displayed, as well as a variety of performers on stages from Californio dancers to a big band of World War II to ‘60s rock and roll. We had six stages, hosting musical performances, dancers, and other programs, including the 1849 Constitutional Convention. There was just like so much there, a Chinese herbalist, dragoons marching, a trick rope performer, and many different cultural groups’ presentations. We had gold panning activities and tandem freight wagons displayed. There was an operating stamp mill located near the governor’s office. It was my secret payback. I knew he had to be in his office reviewing the budget. The machinery produced a constant thump, thump, thump—it was so good. [laughter]

Kelley: So that’s what he got to listen to all day?
Helmich: Yes. After his presentation—delayed for the noon news. Everybody waited for hours for him. I was tapped to round up representatives of California history to stand behind him. And while it was a good idea, visually, it was September and hot--80 to 85 degrees. There was a Native American elder standing, along with a young Indian girl wearing a very heavy shell outfit. There were guys in leather and woolen frock coats—melting, you know? And he had kept the crowd waiting. Everyone got there early for a seat. I was told to be there, but was torn because I wanted to make sure everything was in place. The director of the department asked me to be there, so I said, “Okay, I’ll be there.”

Kelley: I went to it.

Helmich: You did? So you know all of this.

Kelley: Yes, and it was past and present, as I recall.

Helmich: Yes, yes.

Kelley: It took you through three eras, as I recall.

Helmich: Four, yes. I got HP to bring their garage. We got a Nike missile. Then all of the vehicles that were running around the Capitol and agricultural equipment. Anyway, so it was really a three-ring circus and more. But we had about 120,000 people over the three days. Did you go to the see the cannons, the salute?

Kelley: Yes, I did. I only went to one of the days, but, yes, I did.
Helmich: Good. It was perfect. It was absolutely ecstatic. I just wish we had gotten more publicity about it, because I think we could have had even more people there. It’s never going to happen again, not in our lifetime, ever, ever, ever, because of security. This is post 2001. This is pre 2001 when that happened.

So that was my project.

Kelley: What was the feedback from all of it? Did you get credit for--

Helmich: Everybody wanted to do it. I didn’t care about credit, you know.

Kelley: No, but I’m asking, did you receive credit for it afterwards, or did Parks receive credit for it?

Helmich: I received the Department’s 2001 Olmsted Award for Leadership and Vision. Everyone who had not been involved in its organization said, “Let’s do this next year.” [laughs] Or, “We could do it every five years.” At the time, I was drinking triple lattes to get through every day, [laughter] working from morning till night and late every day, trying to make this happen. The coordination of the people, figuring out activities to represent the past in three dimensions. Who do you go to? How do you make this happen? It was fun. I just wish there had been more time.

Toward the end, it got really dicey because all of a sudden, Gov. Gray Davis took and interest and his advisor Darius Anderson recommended his friend Wally McGuire should take a controlling interest--literally weeks before the event. The year before, Wally McGuire had organized the Second Great Gold Rush for Old Sacramento--called the Second-rate Gold Rush by some. From
my perspective for Celebrating California, our Admission Day event, he was just a disaster. He kept pulling me off tasks and asking me for this or that, and wanting me to fill out forms about what I was doing. And, I did not have time for that. I needed to be thinking, working, contacting organizations or directing staff about who to get a hold of. He kept pulling me back. So I was disappointed in many ways about the twentieth-century interpretation, because I didn’t have time to fully develop it. Even though there were surfboards, cars, music, and organizations represented, I wanted to have more, and I didn’t have time to do that because of Wally.

Anyway, the event formally that wrapped up the Sesquicentennial, but I continued doing projects after the fact. There were at least twelve families who completed the Sesquicentennial Passport, traveling to all 153 sites. We gave them certificates and other memorabilia, you know. It was really fun. Let me say one of the biggest benefits of the Sesquicentennial was that it erased barriers within State Parks and between other organizations. That was a big deal, because we could help each other. We could support one another’s activities. You’d know that they would be there to help you, and you’d be there to help them. We shared resources. It was really great. We had a Living History Committee that I chaired, and could move people around for different events. That was just super, really super.
Kelley: Has that ideology of collaboration and cooperation carried on? Do you still see that today, not within the setting of the sesquicentennial but within the public?

Helmich: It did for a while, but the problem is, is what you have with any organization and time, that people move away and haven’t had the same experiences, so you have new people coming in with new ideas and so forth. It was the bonding element, but time passes. It’ll be ten years, you know. So time kind of erases people’s understanding and knowledge of that. But it was great. I had kind of a second experience similar but nothing on the scale of that, and that was for Stagecoach Days. In 2007 we had the 150th anniversary of the Butterfield Overland Stage, and a lot of people don’t know it was in California. So we had an opportunity. We had a lot of park sites that it went through, and it not only affected those places, but it had other influences, and it was faster coming from east to west than west to east, and so that information was passed along much faster. In California, it really revolutionized. It was like cell phone service, just, poof, it was here. I mean, it seemed like that for the people of California. So we had an opportunity to connect with the places and get them excited and do events and activities. Actually, one place down in south San Joaquin Valley, they actually did a caravan, car caravan, on the original, the Butterfield Road, which was so much fun. It was so much fun. So there’s lots of stuff we did.
Kelley:  It seems like it ties local and regional history into a national perspective, but also it gives credit to the local.

Helmich: Yes, it was interesting. I had done all this research and writing, and actually we had a really good website for the department. I think what helped me was one of the projects I did was 2006, 2007, was working on the Seeley Stables in Old Town San Diego. They have a fine collection of horse-drawn vehicles, some of which were used in stage operations in southern California, and so I started really gearing up my understanding and knowledge with that. From that, I was able to distill information that would be useful for the Stagecoach Days.

The reason I did the Seeley Stable project was because I knew that had so much benefit to the park system, because we did have nothing. We had no written materials on stages and stage lines and historic vehicles. So whatever I produced there, while there may be some things vehicles are identical, at least the experience, the information, and knowledge could be used elsewhere. Riding in a stage, I captured that information, what that experience was like, and a lot of people don’t know. It’s like an E-ticket ride, if you can envision, especially at night, because they traveled twenty-four hours a day. That’s what people don’t realize. They didn’t stop at the hotel. Many of them, especially the cross-country ones, were twenty-four hours a day, and you would roll down the shades because of the dust, the dirt, the wind, the rain. So you have a little light, and sometimes that light wasn’t working, and so
you’re riding literally in the dark. It’s like Space Mountain. You could get really seasick, you know, if you got the thorough braces, which go like forward, backward, and sideways, which it’s not for the comfort necessarily of the passengers; it’s for the ease of the animals that are pulling the coach. Anyway, so understanding those experiences, that was helpful for the interpreters in the field, so that helped me with the Stagecoach Days, getting an understanding of that, and I was able to pull that together. So that was great, because from the northern part of the state to the southern part of the state, that was great.

So let’s take a break.

[Audio File 1 ends at 1:04:40]

[Begin Audio File 2]

Kelley: We’re back on line now.

Helmich: Okay. So I think your interest is in how did I get involved with local history.

Kelley: Right. How did you get involved with local history?

Helmich: I think that the first part of it was doing that research project I did for my environmental resources classes in the various architectural styles, and then doing the survey. Then Jim Henley was telling me about a group called American Association of University Women, who were very interested in doing a book on architecture. Because I had that firsthand knowledge, walking, bicycling around the 450 blocks that I’d surveyed, I could see what was actually happening with the buildings in the central city, and what I found
was that we were losing on average of probably two buildings every two weeks. It was devastating.

Kelley: They were being demolished?

Helmich: Demolished. At the time, it was cheaper and easier for the owner of a property to sell a parcel without a building on it, especially a Victorian or some other old building. So, property owners were just vacating their lots. The city was losing these structures at a terrific rate. That, I think, was one reason why Jim wanted to finish the survey. It really got to me that we were losing some amazing stuff. If you looked at what the city had before the survey, you could see from archival photographs that many had been torn down. For example, around the State Capitol, before the state began its big office building campaign—CalTrans took photographs of all the parcels—there were some absolutely grand edifices, beautiful, beautiful Victorians and turn-of-the-century structures facing the Capitol. They were torn down to make way for state buildings.

What I was saw in the late sixties and early seventies were period buildings that were part of intact block faces, then someone would tear down a Victorian in the middle. Those actions were very devastating to those neighborhoods. And, there was no protection for the historic structures. So I think AAUW’s intent was in capturing the history before it was lost and drawing attention to the problem.

Kelley: What is AAUW?
Helmich: American Association of University Women. The organization took on this cause, and what I did was teach the women, many of whom were not historians, how to do research on historic buildings. I trained them to use archival materials, so that each could go out and find the information. We decided visually which buildings we wanted to look at and then did the reverse, trying to figure out, which ones were significant and should be interpreted.

There had been other earlier guidebooks. There was one done in 1939, a *Guidebook to Sacramento*, which is really quite wonderful. So we looked at it, just kind of out of curiosity. Is this building still standing, or not? Many of them were, but a number of them were not. It gave us pause to realize what we had lost already and the impetus to get this information together, organize it, and develop a book that would raise awareness about what we had and what we could lose. There was a big push and people really started to get involved. We were not alone. The Sacramento Old City Association was moving along on a parallel track with AAUW. I was really involved with them, too.

I organized the first historic home tour in Sacramento in the 1970s—you know, the first set up by the American Association of University Women. I actually chaired the event. I also had a hand in directing the next three or four created by the Sacramento Old City Association. Of course SOCA’s home tours are famous now within the city.
I was encouraged to join SOCA and invited to become a board member. Those were pretty exciting times. We did a very articulate, very involved membership who lived in the central city. Many worked for the state legislature and understood how government worked and how to work with local government. They were very good at writing issue papers and doing presentations before city council meetings. As a result, we made the city aware that we were losing historic buildings and it was a problem. The city needed to be a more conservative in issuing its building-demolition permits. We wanted the city to look at what was proposed for demolition. Before, they said, “yes” to every permit request that came through. So slowly, we got the wheels of government turning, and finally we had a preservation ordinance established and a Preservation Board established separate from the Planning Commission. Then there was an Architectural Review Board. Now all of that has changing, not necessarily for the better right now.

Kelley: What years are you talking about right now?

Helmich: I’m talking about mid seventies.

Kelley: The Office of Historic Preservation, under their old auspices, they weren’t intervening on any of this?

Helmich: Not really.

Kelley: Or they didn’t have purview over it?

Helmich: No.

Kelley: Because it wasn’t Section 106 property?
Helmich: Right. The Office of Historic Preservation at that time was looking at larger projects. They were not really involved with residential architecture so much.

Kelley: Did the legislation that was passed help stop some of the demolition?

Helmich: Yes, and it was definitely the local commissions and the review processes that really not necessarily stopped, but slowed down that process. You’re always going to have people in the community who want to do it and get rid of buildings and move on because they don’t value what that history represents. It’s interesting, and I think I would say this, a lot of developers have not grown up in the community, so that they don’t have that connection to the past and they don’t care. They honestly don’t. It’s like the developers that are outside the urban areas that want to take over some of the open lands and put in their residential developments or commercial, they probably never grew up there. They don’t have a relationship to that landscape. They don’t care.

It’s up to the community, it’s up to the residents, to sort of say, “Stop. This is us, and you’re not going to probably live here anyway. We are. This is ours and we need to protect it.” Over the years, that’s what I’ve realized.

Kelley: Do you see the protection of it engaging or stepping back? Is it run at all in cycle with what’s going on economically?

Helmich: To a certain extent. I think the pressures, you know, I think people use that as an excuse for demolition, that “Preservation costs more, so let’s just take it down and let’s build new. It’s cheaper, and we’ll get what we want.” If someone already has a preconceived idea of what they want to do, and your
building doesn’t fit it, well, why keep it? I mean, that’s their attitude. Yes, I think cost is always going to be bottom line.

I think it’s going to be interesting, as we watch the greening of the United States and California and Sacramento, where people are going to start looking at what’s tossed aside, what’s thrown out, and they’re realizing that, hey, they don’t have the wood to build this place like they used to, you know, that actually you’ve got more here, and what you can replace it with is not going to be as nice, as finely crafted, or as well built. I mean, that’s not true for every building, but a lot of buildings. So I think that if the economics change to the point where the greening of the--

Kelley: You’re talking about sustainability.

Helmich: Yes, absolutely, the valuation, it becomes more important that we preserve what we have instead of taking it down and starting fresh. It’s going to be a lot more economically viable. So I don’t know. That doesn’t really answer your question, but I think that that’s part of it. I think that if it’s cheaper to take it down and build new, we’re going to lose that.

Kelley: So in economic downturns such as right now, it would be--

Helmich: In the past, hard times or poverty has helped to preserve buildings, witness the Stanford Mansion. However, economic downturns also have unintended consequences. Here’s an example, Right now, the city has no money. So what is it doing? It is taking its Preservation Board and its Design Review Board, and collapsing those activities. So what this means is that there will be
less attention paid to projects, because, the city does not have the staff time to properly review them.

I was talking before about cycles. Just like with the news, you occasionally can get everybody’s attention directed toward historic preservation, but then soon it becomes “old news.” These cycles of getting people’s attention are getting shorter and shorter. Preservation interests have less time to promote their cause. However, there could be hope if the city were to adopt sustainability measures

We’ve got a mayor who’s now been in office for a year. Yes, he’s local and he comes from Oak Park, which has been a place in the past where many have the attitude that new is better than old. “Because it’s got to better, right?” I hope he understands how important it is to preserve the community by preserving its historic structures. We’re in a downward spiral right now, and because there is no money to support government, government may not be able to properly support the community and historic preservation. It will spiral down until things change.

Kelley: Collapsing preservation into the components that you’re talking about, how is that going to work? How is that going to be structured?

Helmich: Good question.

Kelley: It’s hard to imagine.

Helmich: I really have not paid that much attention to it until recently. The city has a small staff now. I have a friend in the Planning Division. They have so few
people to review project proposals that come over the counter, that they’re not paying attention. They can’t. They just do not have the labor force to do the work. Bad economic times really have an impact on preservation and history. Preservation is twofold: One is caring for the resources and two is paying the staff to do the work—if you don’t have the funding, you can’t provide the oversight. Some people don’t understand how significant historic buildings are for creating a sense of well-being and for establishing a sense of place. Politicians may be into jobs, jobs, jobs, but fail to realize what the true cost of demolition and building new means to the community.

Kelley: So Roberta Deering’s agency must be really worried about what’s going to happen at this point?

Helmich: Oh, I think they are right now. Yes. You should talk to Roberta. You may have to conceal her interview from others, because she’s been largely stifled. When the Planning Department began promoting new development, Roberta kept sending up caution flags saying, “There’s a problem here. We’ve got some issues here,” Her position was reorganized, so that she would not have direct access to city management.

Kelley: Sounds like the combination planning and preservation within the city is a real big conflict of interest.

Helmich: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

Break for my contractor.

[Audio File 2 ends at 16:36]
Helmich: The other group I have been involved with not long after my stint with SOCA, was the Sacramento County Historical Society. I think it was Cindy Woodward who invited me to join. I think at the time she was president. I was elected to the board and planned many of their activities. We produced monthly lectures and publications called *Golden Notes* and a newsletter, *Golden Nuggets*. I contributed to it. For the *Golden Notes*, I helped layout several of the publications. Every summer, the Society held Sacramento History Week on the anniversary of John Sutter’s landing. In August, it was usually hotter than Hades. We always had a theme, and we tried to rouse interest, getting other community groups and individuals to participate with us in some kind of activity. So during that week, nearly every day, we’d have some programming going on for the public. It was a very cool concept and lots of fun. From the late seventies to mid eighties, I was actively involved with that the Society.

I later returned to the board, in the late nineties. They had dropped that event, which was unfortunate, as it was a good way for raising the profile of the organization in the community. I think that’s probably part of the Society’s problem as an organization right now. It doesn’t do much outreach beyond the membership. That has a lot to do with the board makeup. On past SCHS boards, there was more effort to promote events and activities, letting the public know about them. I don’t believe that that’s happening right now.
We do have Dr. Bob La Perriere, who bless him, has been wonderful for his creation and coordination of the History Consortium. That has kept the Historical Society as a hub, by getting and distributing information about what was going on within the historical community in the region—not just Sacramento County, but the region. We cross county borders that way, and that’s been great.

Kelley: What are some of the other regions you’ve been involved with?

Helmich: Just going across the river to West Sac, going to the foothills, the gold country, it’s just expanding the footprint so we’re not just stuck within the boundaries of the county. We know that.

Kelley: So local history being plural, locals history?

Helmich: Right. In terms of my involvement with the Historical Society, I came back at the behest of Jim Henley, who asked that I run for the board. I think that was 1999—the same time as the Sesquicentennial, so things got rather hectic. Jim was president for four years and on the board for six years. I was on the board for six years and president of the Society for two. I am off the board now, but retain a kind of advisory role. Susan Ballew followed me as president. Then no one wanted to be president, which I couldn’t believe. I almost held my hand up, but knew I couldn’t as I had other projects to do. The board had this revolving presidential chair. Part of the problem was the Elections Committee never understood the importance of their recruiting work of finding eligible candidates—not just warm bodies. That’s probably their
biggest challenge—typical of many nonprofits. You need to be active when on a board, not just sit on your hands. You have to be involved, take on some activity, do it, and do it well. There are people who have been serving on the Society’s board for a number of years now who don’t understand their role. You cannot have absentee board members. You have to show up and do things—sometimes things you don’t like doing. Everyone has to take part, whether it’s picking up mail at the post office, setting up chairs for a meeting, taking them down afterwards, editing the newsletter, updating information on the website, or writing articles. There are a host of things. I mean, that is why you are elected to the board.

Kelley: Currently, Bill Burg is the new president of the Society?

Helmich: He’s been there for this last year. Pat Turse is the current president. They’ve changed the bylaws. I guess it’s a two-year term, or is it a one-year? I can’t remember. The board elects the Society’s officers. Before Jim Henley’s presidency, the membership elected the officers, as well as and its board members. That was really a problem, because I don’t believe the membership really had a sense of who could do the jobs.

One of the biggest concerns for the Historical Society over the years has been in finding someone to assume leadership as the president. Having held that position for a couple years, I know it’s not difficult, but time consuming, and you have to find people on the board to do things, as well as make clear the organization’s objectives. Everyone is part of a team working and pulling
together in a harness. You assign people to do what is needed and learn quickly who is working and who is not.

The other position that’s a “toughie” is the treasurer. The 501C3 rules have changed, so you have to have someone knowledgeable about bookkeeping, as well as informed about state laws with regard to nonprofits. The Society had Becky Carruthers as a treasurer, who was fabulous. I think she did it for seven years or eight years, then passed her knowledge on to someone else, who neglected to really listen to what Becky said, and then really screwed up the books. When that person left, all the information was not passed along and the Society was in noncompliance for awhile.

Kelley: What need do you think that they fill right now?

Helmich: The Historical Society?

Kelley: Yes. What community need do you think they fill right now?

Helmich: Well, I think the Society does a number of things, serving to communicate history to the community in several ways, through monthly programs, publications, and special events and tours. Every one of us involved in history is an interpreter and, as such, knows that people have different interests and ways of learning. Some are auditory learners, some visual, others tactile. So, programs provide one mechanism for communicating stories to our community. Publications are another. Over the years, *Golden Notes*, and then the *Sacramento History Journal*, filled a need capturing local history for a broad audience. Jim Henley really worked hard to create a high
quality durable publication with the *Journal*. Then, of course, the Society’s newsletter, *Golden Nuggets*, offers current information and articles of historical interest.

Society events are another way of capturing people’s interest and excitement. There have been holiday parties at museums or a tour of the city cemeteries. We have held award programs celebrating achievements in local history. For a while, until I realized it was violating county health codes, the Society hosted what we called “A Taste of History,” with members producing period recipes. Over the years, we held five events at the California History Museum, Sacramento History Museum, the California State Railroad Museum’s Stanford Gallery, and the Towe Auto Museum.

We prepared period recipes and decorated in ways that supported each dish that was offered. In addition, there was a takeaway copy of the recipe and its source. Attendees could wander around museums, sample foods, visit with friends, and take away historic “how-to” information. The last one at the Auto Museum was probably the most successful and the most fun, but I recognized that we had not followed current county health rules, in that food to be sold cannot be prepared home kitchens; it has to be produced in a commercial kitchen.

The last one, which was really interesting and enjoyable, as we had involved other historical organizations and cultural groups—Portuguese, Italians,
Chinese, Filipino, and each of the groups, brought their own foods. I got their recipes in advance and reproduced them, so that everyone could have a copy.

Kelley: Would there be any way now to work with actual restaurants?

Helmich: Yes, actually.

Kelley: I mean even the Stanford Mansion has an industrial kitchen.

Helmich: Actually, Cathy Taylor, Capitol District Superintendent, and I talked a while ago. She wanted to “steal” the idea in the worst way, and I said, “No, you can’t have it. It’s the Society’s.” The Historical Society plans to trademark the event at the Secretary of State’s office. We have used the name, produced publications with the name, so I think the organization is within its rights. Cathy sees it as having huge possibilities for a fundraiser. I think other organizations would like to use the name. We talked about creating a fund-raising partnership for A Taste of History. You can do this if you get restaurants involved, having them produce the food in their kitchens. What you would have to do is provide them with a period recipe, and if they’re willing to kind of go along, at least have it bear some resemblance to that the historic one.

Kelley: And it’s good publicity for them and wonderful for the society.

Helmich: As long as you get a decent recipe! [laughs] I’m sort of on the sidelines right now. I’m not on that board, but I am on the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation board.

Kelley: Which is HOSF?
Helmich: HOSF. I was invited to serve on the board by Cathy Taylor, the current chair. The Foundation is involved with Old Sacramento. It has been through a lot. When I first got involved, there was an effort by the city to have our organization to take responsibility for the museum, the History Museum in Old Sacramento. There was an existing nonprofit that was involved with both the History Museum and the Science Center. City staff realized that the Science Center had the lion’s share of support, while the History Museum was being given short shrift. So the nonprofit’s assets were divided, along with responsibilities for the museums. HOSF has stepped in to take control of the situation, and I think that through Cathy Taylor, largely, has made a huge difference, providing real management skills. She is very good when it comes to historic resources and management. She’s a very good manager, and has been educating staff.

HOSF continues to evolve. Marcia Eyemann now has responsibility for the museum building on behalf of the city. She has made some real changes. We’ve had to downsize staff and lost some good people. Through the nonprofit, we’re doing our best to keep it afloat. We had a retreat recently, and made some, I think, radical decisions. One is that we are intent on changing the building’s use and the name, of this facility. We are considering the Old Sacramento Visitor and History Center. Ideally, it would have free admission, which is totally different. What we realized is that we cannot compete in terms of value for admissions price with the California State
Railroad Museum, but in order to support the History Museum’s current operations, we have to charge admissions to generate revenue. However, if we change the whole platform on how we bring in the money, increase the amount of sales merchandise; people who come in free are more likely to spend more money, so our revenues may increase. We also have new tours—underground tours and tours of Old Sacramento that are fee-based.

Kelley: The hollow sidewalks?

Helmich: Yes. We would be collecting money in a different way, and we would probably be collecting more money.

Kelley: So the museum and the archives, the Center for Sacramento History now, they are a private-public partnership?

Helmich: Yes.

Kelley: They’re overseen by HOSF, or there’s a connection?

Helmich: Yes, there’s a connection. We have the responsibility for the operation and a number of the positions at the museum. Marcia Eyemann’s got the responsibility for the Center for Sacramento History (formerly SAMCC) and for the History Museum in Old Sacramento. That’s all being worked out.

Kelley: So you have that collaboration going on. So this is that template now, again, of collaboration and cooperation to survive and stay alive.

Helmich: Right. Since I wear a couple hats, even though I am not on the board for the Sacramento County Historical Society now, I see there could be the perfect partnership with the Society and the History Museum in Old Sacramento.
The Museum has not been able to produce many programs or publications. The County Historical Society doesn’t have a home. I mean, it meets periodically at the Medical Society building. We there were a partnership with them, as the Society could use the Museum as a venue for programs and could develop publications to support the role of the History Museum, while creating an outlet for their sales. That could mean more money for both organizations. The potential synergy is there. I think probably what has prevented it from really happening before was the admission fee. If you make admission a benefit for the Historical Society, then the organization that’s operating the museum is going to want to have some compensation for that lost revenue. But if that’s now off the table, and not an issue, it levels the playing field and makes it much easier for the organizations to come together. I think the potential is pretty exciting.

Kelley: That dynamic seems to be indicative of the--

[Audio File 3 ends at 20:17]

[Begin Audio File 4]

Kelley: What do you see as the impetus for the collaboration, cooperation within the historical societies that you’re involved with right now in 2009? What do you see as the motivating factors?

Helmich: I think that if you look at them from the perspective of the Museum in Old Sacramento–it’s the same problem we’ve had with SAMC now the Center for Sacramento History–it has a shoestring operation, and they have so many
needs made worse during times like these when there is no money. To get additional dollars, they’re going to have to do more outreach. It’s interesting, in talking with Marcia, I get the sense she thinks that the Museum holds all of the cards and that it is better established. Yes, it is a facility, which has collections, but I think she underestimates the Sacramento County Historical Society. I’m wearing two hats here. I think the Society is looking for places to expand the public’s awareness of Sacramento history and of the organization as an entity. It has a lot to offer. The Society was established in 1953, and it’s been continuously operated since then as a community organization and has considerable respect within the community. Each organization would be the perfect complement for the other. I think that that is really why I’m interested in making this happen. We are at a crossroads now in the current weak economic climate—that may be continuing for quite some time, that offers opportunities and potential benefits with combining forces. There are fewer deep pockets, now and too many historical organizations with overlapping interests. There may be no individual organization that’s is going to come along to save the day. And, government is not going to be that entity. Private nonprofits are not necessarily going to save the day either. However, I think working together can really make a difference. Together organizations can accomplish the goals that they both agree upon and work together on.
Kelley: It sounds like it’s a template for future success even when the economy isn’t bad.

Helmich: You wanted me to talk about some of the generational differences I’ve seen. I have been involved with history and the field of interpretation since the early 1970s. I think I see real differences. I believe some of those differences can be attributed to media and its affect on how people function and learn, as well as the quality of education offered today. Just to complete my thought here, I think the Droid and the IPod generation have come of age, but without having the past generations’ interests in joining or getting involved in organizations. That will probably be the biggest concern on the horizon for museums and for historical societies. We’ve got a split population with one aging group having an interest in history and in joining organizations and the other, younger group less inclined to get involved, who have not grown up with history as a part of their curriculum. History was not one of the three “Rs.” It’s kind of rare and exciting to attend the Sacramento County Historical Society’s Awards of Excellence ceremonies in March, when you meet kids in high school who understand and care about history. But, they are becoming fewer and fewer. I think part of the problem is the education we’ve given them. I mean, when we were growing up, we had required history and social studies classes, so we developed a framework for understanding. If you were never exposed to it, you probably will never develop an affinity for it. They’ll never know what they’ve missed either, thinking, “Oh, its history. How dull can it
be?” As we know, history can be very exciting. I think that we are being repaid in many uncounted ways for the education that has been provided to our kids, and for the shallow media coverage that has developed over the years. Kids have been seated in front of television sets for years to keep them entertained, and, of course, the commercials, advertising first every fifteen minutes, then ten minutes, then developing into thirty-second ads. So to look at anything for a protracted length of time will be hard for some. They just can’t do it. We will have to wait and see what the future holds.

Kelley: Your contributions to Sacramento and to organizing history, local history, in so many different venues through Parks and through the different societies that you’ve been involved in, your donations to places like the Center for Sacramento History leave behind such a wonderful legacy.

Helmich: Thank you.

Kelley: I want to thank you very much for participating in this project.

Helmich: My pleasure.

Kelley: Thank you.

[Audio File 4 ends at 6:52]
APPENDIX G

ORAL HISTORY with CATHY A. TAYLOR
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Catherine A. Taylor

September 2, 2010

By

Sharon J. Kelley
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Collaborations and cooperation – Nonprofits – Historical Sacramento Foundation (HOSF) – Railroad Museum Foundation – Californian Indian Heritage Center Foundation – Historic Sights Associations;

Importance of State Parks and Recreation, Capital District to the Sacramento community;

Public History venues hardest hit by the recession;

Message for future researchers.
Catherine A. Taylor

Catherine A. Taylor is the District Superintendent of the Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks of California State Parks. In this capacity since 2005, she oversees the work of 200 paid employees, and 750 volunteers and a combined State and nonprofit budget of approximately $15 million. The Capital District includes the Old Sacramento State Historic Park, the California State Railroad Museum, Railtown 1897 State Historic Park, Sutter's Fort State Historic Park, the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park, the California State Capitol Museum, the Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park, the California State Indian Museum, and the Woodland Opera House. The Capital District encompasses several dozen acres all around the State Capital of Sacramento, California, as well as Woodland and Jamestown, California. The District’s collections are extensive and include dozens of historic buildings, millions of documentary items, tens of thousands of small three dimensional artifacts and over 240 full size locomotives and cars.

Prior to her current role overseeing the entire district, Ms. Taylor was Museum Director at the California State Railroad Museum and served in this capacity for approximately six years. During her tenure she operated three park units including the Old Sacramento State Historic Park, California State Railroad Museum and Railtown 1897 State Historic Park. She re-organized the staff structure to focus on critical needs including public programming, exhibit development, and collections management.
For twelve years from 1990 to 2002, Ms. Taylor was the Executive Director of the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, the largest State Park cooperating association in the State, building the Foundation from a $70,000 business to a highly functioning nonprofit with a budget over $2.5 million.

Ms. Taylor holds a BA in History, and is a Graduate of the Museum Management Institute at UC Berkeley sponsored by the Getty Leadership Institute. Her experience also includes extensive work in the legislative arena, in nonprofit management and in organizational development. She is active in the American Association of Museums as a peer reviewer, and is immediate past president of the Sacramento Association of Museums. She is also currently the Chairman of the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, a nonprofit organization that operates the Sacramento History Museum and conducts interpretive programming in Old Sacramento.
Interview History

Narrator:

Catherine A. Taylor

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

September 2, 2010
11:00 a.m.
Capital District Office
111 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
One hour session

The narrator and interviewer met at the narrator’s place of business and sat in her office.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:

The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:
2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento’s Public History Industry
An Oral History Thesis
California State University, Sacramento
Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

In consideration of the recording and preservation of my oral history interview,

I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, all rights, including all literary and property rights unless restricted as noted below to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use and dispose of the recording(s) and/or transcribed interview(s) conducted on: 9/2/2010

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Note any restrictions below:
Signature of Narrator: Catherine A. Taylor
Dated: Sept 2, 2070
Narrator's name as he/she wishes it to be used: Catherine Taylor
Narrator's Address: 

Narrator's phone number: 

Signature of Interviewer: Sharon J. Kelley
Dated: 9.2.10
Interviewer's address:
Sharon J. Kelley
P.O. Box 19785
Sacramento, CA 95819
Interviewer's phone number: (502) 380-5070
Kelly: Good morning. Today is September 2nd, 2010. I'm Sharon Kelly. And I'm in the offices of Catherine A. Taylor, the District Superintendent of the Capital District State Museums and Historic Parks, and Good morning.

Taylor: Good morning.

Kelly: Can you tell me a little bit about your background? I'd like to start personally with your personal background and your education.

Taylor: Well, I'm obviously now the District Superintendent for State Parks. I've been in this job for about five years and prior to that I was the Museum Director for the California State Railroad Museum for roughly six years. There were some overlapping years where I did those jobs I guess that happens a lot when you get to hold positions in State Parks. Prior to that, I spend about 12 years as the Executive Director for the California State Railroad Museum Foundation, so building that non-profit basically from kind of a fledgling you know, small non-profit with less than $100,000 to an organization that's fairly substantial, about $3 million budget and 30 employees. So I did that and it was kind of time to move on after about 12 years doing that job. And let’s see, I have a degree of History and I also have a B.A. in History. I have an associate's degree in Marketing. I'm a graduate of the Museum Management Institute, which is now the Museum Leadership Institute, which is sponsored by the Getty Leadership Institute. And I went to it when it was at Berkeley, which was really fun. They now moved it down. They moved it to L.A. Now it's very you know, all at the
Getty at this point, but we had a nice you know, faculty lounge at U.C. Berkeley, which was a lot of fun, kind of rustic for the class.

Prior to that, I spent about 10 years working for the California Association Health Facilities. Several of those years I was a registered lobbyist so basically doing political work in the health care industry, which was really great training. It was a trade association, a lot of experience with legislative, you know, started out doing a lot of the bill tracking and bill analysis, that type of thing. It was, I think, really good grounding for everything that has come since to start out doing that kind of work. It’s helped a lot in the kind of work that we have to do here. We're constantly in the public and political domain with a lot of our projects and so on so that’s basically that. I was born in Texas, didn't spend much time there. My father, at that time, was in the Air Force, but we you know, moved around a lot. And we moved to California when I was just a couple of years old. And then we moved to Thailand. So I spent several years living in Bangkok because my father flew for Air America. So he had retired from the Air Force when I was very, very young and then we moved overseas. So I spent a lot of years in that environment, which was also pretty good training, pretty good help you know, to really understand a lot of different kinds of people and--

Kelly: How did you end up back in Sacramento?

Taylor: Well, my father's brother was here, so there were some family connections here. When we left to go to Thailand, we left three siblings behind going to school
and they all lived in Loren or San Francisco because we had lived in Napa right before we left for Thailand. And so it was you know, living in Sacramento because my father's brother was here and the siblings in the Bay Area. It just seemed like a good fit. We started out when we came back from Thailand we went to Wisconsin where my father grew up.

Kelly: What year was that?

Taylor: Oh my, gosh 1970, it was right before the Vietnam War ended. So 1970, 1971 I think. Anyway my father decided well it would be really cool to live in a small town in Stoughton Wisconsin with, you know, somewhere near Taylor Road where the family farm was. And you know, he had all these wonderful memories of growing up in Wisconsin and what a good life that was and thought, you know, his kids at that point had been all over the world and, you know, we were out of control I guess in his mind. What we needed was a good small town upbringing, it just didn’t work out. None of us adapted very well and my mother didn’t adapt and she had been born in Chicago. So she lives through all the winters and so we spent this one winter in Stoughton, Wisconsin. And my mother says “I don’t think so,” you know we have been living in Thailand. We have been travelling all over Europe and Asia and you know, living in Napa before we left. And she had become accustomed to nice weather and sunshine. And not digging your car out of the snow. So she said, “We’re leaving.” So we all packed up and came to California so--

Kelly: And did you come directly to Sacramento?
Taylor: Yeah. So we came to Sacramento. My uncle was living here. I had a couple of cousins living here so--

Kelly: Do, you know, what year that was or--

Taylor: Well that not, we only spent about six or eight months in Wisconsin. It was that quick. So my poor mother--

Kelly: We’re still talking early in the 1970s then?

Taylor: Yeah. It was early 1970s, yeah.

Kelly: And what grade were you in that time?

Taylor: Oh my, gosh. So what was I? I don’t know, 12? So I was what, 12, 13 or so….

Kelly: So you came here for really young? So does Sacramento feel like home?

Taylor: Sacramento feels like home. So that is you know, it is home, California is home. You know, I don’t feel like a Texan at all. My sisters suppose to move down there for different reasons. One sister moved down for she was a vice president of a mortgage company and she ended up getting married and staying there. And then the other sister worked for St. Jude’s and they had some land down there in San Antonio. And so she went down working with St. Jude’s at that time and she ended up getting married and staying down there. And so they’re both Texans, I mean they are Texans.

Kelly: But you’re a Californian?

Taylor: I’m a Californian and I am the only one that was actually born in Texas. So it’s kind of funny.

Kelly: And you actually got your degree at Sac State is that correct?
Taylor: Yes.

Kelly: When you did you’re A.A., where did you do you’re A.A.?

Taylor: Well there was a school called Botter College and that time my mother had talked to into it and it was about 1970 something. And you know it was a marketing merchandising program, which actually was very good grounding for a couple of years. Met some wonderful friends there, which was you know, one of those great things. Not a program I would pick today, but I think it provided a lot of good training particularly for a lot of the business operations that I’ve, you know, had to take on with the museum. In particular in 1995 we worked on getting the museum store built and since then we’ve opened, remodeled and re-conceptualized stores at the Governor’s Mansion and Sutter’s Fort and the Indian Museum, up at Rail Town a depot store. So the whole earned income support structure for the museum was really handy to have all of that background and actually no retail in and out.

Kelley: So business background is like the way of history and at some point, this prestigious museum, I'm not sure exactly what is called, is it considered a masters, the--

Taylor: It's a Museum Management Institute. No, it's a management training course a lot of museum professionals, is a competitive course so you apply to it and then basically it's an intensive course at the site. So you know, you're there night and day for a few weeks and it's, you know, basically, you know, 24 hours a day immersion type of course, the faculty included someone from Stanford Business
School, Dalton School of Business, Bowdoin, Haas has, I'm trying to think what else, but it was, the faculty is superb. So yeah it's a national, well's its international so the applicants, our class had a few Australians, a couple of Brits you know, some of them Canadians. So out of 38 students, so they take about 35 to something like 35 to 40 students each course, so then you apply and then they do a selection. So anyway, then you're thrown together with all these people and it's, that again is incredibly valuable experience to, you know, build friendships and connections with a lot of other museum professionals because it really becomes this web of connections to people. So it's not just your own class. It's, it's, you know, it's the connections they have to others. So you're building kind of this wonderful network of museum professionals around the country. A people who've gone through the experience and it's a support system.

Kelley: And you said that in 1998 is that correct? And then where were you working in 1998 when you did that?

Taylor: Yeah. I was working I was actually executive director of the Railroad Museum Foundation.

Kelley: And you were involved in the Railroad Museum from its inception? Is that correct?

Taylor: I actually was a docent at the museum shortly after the museum opened. So not since inception, the museum opened technically, the Railroad Museum opened
in 1976 with the construction of the Central Pacific Passenger Station, and then
the larger facility, the Railroad History Museum opened in 1981.

Kelley: You went from being a docent being really involved in the purchase in 1983?

Taylor: Yeah. I was a docent for well since, I started class in end of 1981 and I
graduated sometime in the beginning of 1982. So I was technically the 3rd class
that the museum had conducted. And I worked, I got sucked into a lot of
projects, one of the big projects I got involved in was the acquisition of the
Southern Pacific Branch line, which is today we own about 17 miles right of
way, but I participated in that. We, you know, was a lot of political activism
that helped get the funding, put together for that. We ran trainings, kind of on a
demonstration basis so I was involved in helping with that. And just, you know,
helped the museum really figure out how to go about asking and just helping the
whole advocacy effort with the railroad.

Kelly: Then you’re a perfect fit for the position that you're in, especially with the
business background, the lobbying background, the history background. Do you
think that this is the perfect fit for you?

Taylor: I think it's interesting that I'm in this job because it is not a job I asked for. It's
sort of a, the jobs I've had here have been jobs that someone asked me to do,
which is kind of strange. I mean it's not, I didn’t set out years ago to, you know,
I am going to be the director of the Railroad Museum. I never conceived of that
and I certainly never conceived of being the district superintendent for State
Parks. I think it's just been a culmination of the skill sets or the, a combination
of the skill sets that I have the strange background that I bring to the table. But one of the things I've learned over time, everybody looks the same way. All of us have a collection of things we've done or we've decided, you know, this opportunity is good and you're going to go down that path. I haven't really met that many people that have this completely straight course and they knew it, you know 16 or 17 that what they wanted to do and they go school and they get in to their field and they have this linear course. There's, not many people around here who have had a very linear course with the job. And I think that's one of its strengths and I think certainly in the history field in this area a lot of the people I have met, the fact that they have done some different things. Or they have some varied background has actually made it a much deeper, much richer group of people. There are a lot people with good life experience and the think that--Yeah. And I think that's interesting and kind of fun to hear what various people have done and, you know, you come across folks and it is like how did, you get in this job. I think mine is kind of stumbling in. Sorry, but it is, you know, the executive director job at the Railroad Museum at the foundation. Because I had a perfectly good job, I was paid really well and I was on a pretty good course, you know, careerwise it was, would be viewed as pretty successful, pretty young, good position, good pay, and a pretty good promotional opportunity in the job I was in, and but, my heart wasn't in it. It was a great job, but I didn't care about it, which is, you know, ultimately I think it's not all about your pay, it's about what is it that makes you want to get up in the morning what kinds of
things you want to accomplish with your life and I think that's been something I've been more committed to I guess you know, I probably could be making a lot more money you know. State Parks doesn't pay that much, but you know, but it is good enough and it's more of the opportunity to do some really cool stuff so…

Kelly: Can you tell me a little bit more about what your job is as district superintendent and what are you are supervising per se?

Taylor: Well the district itself, is composes technically nine park units. One is this kind of a combination of its Old Sacramento State Historic Park and the Railroad Museum. We often look at them as two, but they're actually the Railroad Museum isn't a classified park unit per se. It exists within Old Sacramento State Historic Park. But there's also the Leland Stanford Mansion State Historic Park, the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park, the Sutter's Fort State Historic Park, the State Indian Museum Rail Town 1897 State Historic Park, which is couple hours away in Tuolumne County. The Woodland opera house is actually part of our district, but is, we have an operating agreement with the city of Woodland. Technically we have responsibility for it, but we have an operator. So, they take primary, primary obligation and role in operating it. And then Old Sac State Historic Park in the railroad museum, I mean, the California State Railroad Museum.

Yeah, it’s quite a bit. The primary job of the district superintendent is running a district, it looks a lot like being a city manager. That’s the best analogy I could give you is that you have within a district and the way State Parks run has been
broken down in to about 20 districts. Then the districts then have park units that operate within the district. And the district superintendent is essentially, oversees a region with employees and operations. So, primarily we are a, public attractions, so that the primary focus is getting the doors open and delivering a public service. In my particular district we're obviously completely weighted towards museums and state historic parks as opposed to beaches, campgrounds. So, I don’t have a lot of those kinds of obligations that some of, colleagues have in terms of operating vast tracts of land and having to deal with all of the same kind of resource protection issues and so on that they have to deal with, I have a different kind of emphasis in my job are the resource protection we deal with is primarily related to collections. You know we have paper and small three dimensional artifacts and great big locomotives and historic buildings. So, while I may not be dealing a lot with outdoor recreational areas and the resources, natural resources that go hand in hand with that. We have a lot of, a lot larger obligation with all of these historic structures and collections and so on. So, it kind of equals out in terms of the size of a district. We’re geographically small, but we're really intense in the kinds of things we have to care for and so on. The job includes everything from obviously the local politics you know, dealing with the city councils, dealing with local legislators, regulatory agencies and the fact that we’re in an urban environment means there's always a lot of interaction. And we also have railroad rights of way, which bring in the federal government and administering
operating railroads, were under the federal railroad administration. We have to deal with public utilities commission. So, we have kind of all of these layers of regulatory agencies and interfacing with local government and other state agencies on land, a lot of land issues, we have a lot of land management real estate type of issues that come across the desk.

So, as you look at the districts our, you know, our organizational chart has the group of people that deal with day to day operations, so getting the places open. We have a maintenance and technical team, which deals with things like you know, on the phone call earlier with, you know, the state Indian museum. We have a crisis because a lot of names are messed up, but we have our maintenance team that is a district wide maintenance team that deals with both housekeeping, mechanical engineering, you know, running all of our systems, that we have stationary engineers, we have electricians, we have, you know, mechanics to deal with all of the vehicles and forklifts and you name it. And then the collection staff, we have numerous curators, curators assigned to each park site and then also dealing with our collections in West Sacramento, because we have about seven warehouses in West Sac that is essentially the storage location and we're in the middle of getting ready for a move. So, the whole West Sacramento collections facilities are getting ready to move, they've been out there for 30 years. So, we have a lot of planning that has to be done to kind of get us ready to make that move.
We have another group that is all of our public safety staff, so we do have park rangers who deal with all of the public interaction on public safety matters, emergency response, all of our alarm systems, which is pretty intense for this district because we have, you know, a lot of very valuable collections. So, they're dealing with safety issues that aren’t just, you know, catching a, you know, someone who graffiti a building. They are also dealing with you know how do we protect the sites as well. So, they’re involved in that type of work. We have a planning function, so we have a whole team that’s devoted to interpretive planning helping to update interpretive plans for various park units. The, we have two general plans going at the same time, which is pretty intense as well, we have--

Kelly: When you say general plan, what do you mean by general plan?

Taylor: A State park general plan is essentially setting forth the operating structure, the facility use plan for a particular park unit. Old Sacramento never had a general plan so practically, you know, the park units has been in the existence since the 1970s ever, never had a general plan on so a lot of the development around here, the construction of the Railroad Museum was that done without a general plan for the park. So, we’re going back and trying to correct that. We’ve been, advocate for it for many, many years. We finally got in the pipeline it's about a half a million dollars to do the general plan and we are working with the A D Com. They are our consultant team. So, we have a team that helps to pull all the pieces together for the general plan. It’s a pretty intensive public process so
we have multiple public meetings and then we are doing the same process for a
new project, which is the California Indian Heritage Center. That we’re
planning to developed over in West Sacramento. So that project also fall's on
my plate. The expansion of the Railroad Museum into the rail yards is a big
project and I have got that too.

Kelly: There are projects still going forward I had heard that it had stopped
temporarily?

Taylor: It’s going. No, we’re clipping along, but, you know, bumping along. A little bit
slow because there's a lot of controversy with the rail yard developer, but we're
relying on two buildings in the rail yards. We have an agreement for two of the,
two of the structures.

Kelly: And what will those two structures be for?

Taylor: We will put the railroad technology museum. So as we have the brick building
here in Old Sacramento is what we call the Railroad History Museum that will
be the Railroad Technology Museum. So the vision is essentially that you have
the history building dealing with social, political and economic history of the
railroad and the technology museum or the technology buildings would deal
with more nuts and bolts kinds of science and engineering concepts. The one
building would be the workshop, which we've actually had a workshop out in
the rail yards for 30 years. Southern Pacific gave us a free rent on what was
called a unit shop. That building was demolished in 1999 and they moved us
into the boiler shop and the erecting shop. And so one building would remain a
workshop and then the larger building would be the Formal exhibition galleries. So that’s a huge project in and of itself it’s about $40 million undertaking so….

Kelly: How has the recession that started in 2008 and continues, affected this wide birth of venues?

Taylor: Well, you know, it’s a double edged sword and the reason I say is that, is that the facilities themselves have not experienced a huge loss of visitation. And I think some of that is due to people’s habits changing a little bit. That a lot of people do stay home and look to their own neighborhood. What places do they have for entertainment and what is a good value for them and I think--

Kelly: Have you been able to take advantage or not advantage of that? Have you had another opportunity to promote that within the Sacramento region yourself?

Taylor: We've done. The last couple of years and I have to maybe set the stage for it. When I took over the district it was a district I thought was very disconnected. It wasn’t a team per se. There was the Railroad Museum and then there was, historic sites and a couple of other things. And they weren’t, they didn’t coordinate a lot. It wasn’t very collaborative in the district and so my goal in taking on the district superintendent job was to really change the dynamic within the district and to get the staff to talk to each other, to be more team oriented in how they approached their work. We basically took the whole maintenance function out of each park unit and made a district wide team out of the maintenance function. And the reason I did that was to be able to, have enough strength in numbers. So if we do projects you would take the technical team to
do projects. So there’s a whole group within the maintenance team that does project management and carries out, you know, whether it’s a roof project or a bathroom remodel project or a whatever. There is a better mentoring process with, that it's just more team oriented.

And then housekeeping gets deployed district wide. It's a more efficient way of operating from a financial perspective. I think we've been able to find a lot of savings in our budget just by running more efficiently and in coordinating a little better. So part of that goal was also to get the sites to market more, collaborate so we have a couple of folks here in the district, at the district level who coordinate the marketing functions. And then we had a person that’s on contract with us to help us with things like press releases and we have been able to get I think a high level of consistency in for marketing the units within the district. We get a lot of coverage for programs and exhibitions that are coming up. And we’ve just tried to keep the pressure on. So that is working pretty well so whether its Gold Rush Days or the rails and wheels exhibit in the Railroad Museum or the Spanish American war e exhibit we have actually been able to get a lot of attraction over that.

In 2008 we put a project together to celebrate the Lincoln Centennial and we did exhibits at three different park units. So we had Lincoln and the transcontinental railroad, over here just Lincoln in the Civil War, California’s role in the Civil War at the state capital, and then we had another exhibit that was actually related to the transcontinental railroad over at the Stanford
mansion, but we marketed that as a collective effort and we coordinated with the California museum because they had the Lincoln exhibit from the Library of Congress. And our visitation you could see the effect of having really good programming and that's another goal we had in this district is a regular exhibit, you know, changing programming just to be able to attract people back. So, we have I think forestalled what would have been a decline in our visitation by counteracting it with more aggressive programming, more aggressive exhibition development so--

Kelly: What is your audience? I know that for like the state museum or the Library Exhibit that you're talking about, I actually was a docent over there for a period of time and I was there during that and they basically have an audience of elementary school, higher elementary school like four to six grades four and six, that's what their primary audience is. You have a huge preview so what would you say your audience base is? Is it domestic, it's closer to home--

Taylor: You know the way it breaks down it roughly, you know, the largest percentage is really just the general public, you know, families mostly, it's a very family audience, mostly 50 mile radius, that would be the primary market area that we pull from. School groups obviously are really important and those coming from all over the state because they're actually surprisingly, you know, still traveling, still getting to museums although that's, we've seen a bit of a dent in that primarily because of school buses and school funding so it's a little bit more difficult for schools I think to, you know, come up with the bus and take the
tour, but you know, we still see a lot of commercial group tours where, you know, they're organizing a tour and the I guess, you know, parents will pay and the kids will go on a tour so they're still all on commercial groups doing tours. And the, so the, from a market perspective, you know, the 50 mile radius secondary market I would say about a 100 mile, you know, into the valley and over into the bay area. We do see a lot of visitors coming on the capital border train particularly on weekends because it's a really easy jump over and you get off the train and you're at the Railroad Museum so the Railroad Museum is the, you know, a 100 time villa.

It has the most visitations of our park units. The State Capital, a lot of people visit the State Capital. The formal tour program I would say is, you know, from a number standpoint, pretty comparable to the Railroad Museum, pre-visititation at the State Capital and then the other park units, Sutter's Fort would be the next one where it is again primarily a school based visitation, but we do get a lot of the general public and we do a lot of programs to attract the general public so, you know, demo days and living history days and things that make it a little more special for people that come in to the fort so they see activity, you know, definitely having a dynamic element is pretty critical to getting people to come, but we have a fair tour base in this town as well.

Kelly: You said that the economic impact was a double edged sword. What is the other end of the sword? I'm assuming that it has to do with budgetary funds of four State Parks itself.
Taylor: Yeah I mean the flipside is that it's really difficult for us to do programs when you're getting budget cuts. Our budget last year was cut not just for the, furlough so we have other, you know, 15 percent cut in funding obviously because we had people in furlough so how you keep the places open, how do you keep delivering programs when you can't get the bathrooms clean, you know, so we closed a lot of park units on Monday just to be able to spread the staff a little more. So it was trying not to close too much, but closing enough where we could absorb some of that cut and then secondly we got just a big hit, you know, about another ten percent of our budget just for general principles so we had to figure out how to eat that. And you don’t know that you’re getting that check until the budget gets signed so you’re already a few months into the budget year and then you have to figure out how you’re going to make that work and it’s, not easy.

Kelly: How are you, how are you handling it? I know that were facing probably more budget cuts especially Parks, State Parks, California State Parks.

Taylor: Well, I’m clear right now, you know, the vehicle license fee is on the ballot in November and so that’s an opportunity out there that everybody is pretty hopeful about it, which would essentially give us a hundred percent of our maintenance spending. And I would say right now on an annual basis and we have a, we have a computerized program that gives us what is a hundred percent of the need and then we--your funding it’s maybe 10 to 15 percent coverage of that. So there’s a lot of work orders that get generated by the system that you
just don’t do, which is essentially how you come up with the deferred maintenance backlog. It’s all those things that never get done, it’s the, you know, well we’ve programmed, you know, to paint, the building every three years. Well, that work order pops up, you don’t have the people to do it, you’re probably not getting around to it, and so it falls to five years or seven years or, you know, so those things have to get deferred out when you can actually get the people and the money to be able to get stuff done.

The way we've generally operated the last few years is to look for the critical needs first, so it’s very much based on a priority district wide so it’s not the old system, which before I took the job was, you know, the Railroad Museum gets this percentage of the pot, the Indian museum gets that percentage and that’s just the way it is. Well, we don’t, we don’t work that way anymore. What we do is say, we’re all in this together and here’s the most critical need in the district.

We have mold growing in the bathrooms at Sutter's Fort and the cabinet is falling apart, and we have dry rot and we have school kids going in there. Well, that is clearly unacceptable to leave that way just because we aren’t getting funded, you know, in our maintenance budget. It means I have to not hire this position or I defer something else and I get those bathrooms fixed. Or a hole appears in the roof, well it’s going to rain and we’re going to have extreme damage to collections if we don’t deal with it. So you have to stop everything else and you’re dealing with that, I mean that's just the way it is and I think
every district pretty much makes those kinds of the same kind of calls it's, you're in crisis manager at most of the time.

And that I think you see unfortunate part it's that it means, you know, the really great work the staff can do to plan and to implement projects, they don’t get to work that way. Nobody gets to work the way they would prefer to be able to work. Everybody has to be in crisis mode because your forced into a crisis way of operating so and I think what's been draining on people is that, it’s not just one year of crisis mode State Parks has been in that kind of operating mode for over a decade because it's been cut, after cut, after cut so it's, you know, I kind of my, my comment about it is, you know, is like compromising and then you compromise, compromise then you compromise, compromise and then pretty soon, you're not even close to what it was you wanted or what that ideal was you've gotten so far away from it. And I think in State Parks we have, we have been forced to squeeze and to squeeze and to squeeze and pretty soon do you have a valuable system you know, we've got a lot of really smart and capable people, but it's sort of the circumstances have forced everybody in to an operating mode that is, that is pretty tough, so--

Kelly: Do you have any opinion about what the outlook is for you now, for your agency team?

Taylor: Well, you know, the vehicle license fee is something that--

Kelly: And this is going into State Parks that you needed, you're talking about, being charged a vehicle license fee to go into any State Park?
Taylor: Well, what would happen is the vehicle licensed fee would be charged annually on your car registration. And in return for that you would have essentially free entrance into State Parks. And it's happened in other states, they have a volunteer system I think in Montana. And the idea is that would raise about $500 million to fund the system and it would allow State Parks to get off the general fund. So it would be a dedicated funding source for State Parks, which you know, I suppose if you've got people on both sides of the argument obviously I am biased, I think finding that solution is really critical and I think when you look at something like State Parks, it's like good roads and good education and other public utilities you know, State Parks is a public benefit. And so we should be, we should be adequately paying for that and protecting the system.

Kelly: Now, there's a subject that's going to come up on the November ballot?

Taylor: Yeah, it's on the November ballot its prop 21.

Kelly: Have there been any surveys yet to see what the general--

Taylor: The polling data, I have the last polling data, I heard a week or so ago was about 54 percent, which is the average statewide, you know, so its polling higher in some areas a little lower in others, but 54 is, you know, that's a win. If it, if it holds steady so, but what that would do I mean, it is a, it's a good solution. The obvious question though is so what if it doesn't pass and what is, what is a no scenario? And the no scenario is pretty grim, you know, so we all are kind of looking at November as a watershed. It's either going to be great, you know,
and we will have sort of a rebirth of the park system or we'll be facing Armageddon. What do we do, you know, the economy, you know, it's, the forecasting I hear is that we're not even beginning to climb out of this till 2014, you know it's going to lag, you know, so we've got another two years of, maybe three of very grim budgets and probably a decade to really recover in a lot of other industry. So, you know what is the, what prospect is there for State Parks, you know, I think you know.

Kelly: Are you involved in any collaborations, cooperations, or with other agencies or societies? I know that you're a member or you're the president now of the Historical Old Sacramento Foundation is that correct?

Taylor: I am Chairman of the, yeah, Historical Sacramento Foundation.

Kelly: Chairman. You're also involved in other. What other, let me stick with that question first. Have there been any collaborations, cooperations with other agencies or societies, et cetera that have benefited your district?

Taylor: Well, yeah. We, you know, we have several non-profit partners.

Kelly: Who would that be?

Taylor: Well, we have the Railroad Museum Foundation, which I was the executive director of for several years, but they are still, our primary cooperating association for the Railroad Museum and actually the largest in State Parks. So from a just size of budget, size of staff they are fairly substantial in relationship to the other non-profits, other non-profit cooperating associations in the state. We've developed the Californian Indian Heritage Center Foundation and that is,
primarily Board of California, Indian people and the objective of that foundation is to be our partner in helping to get the Indian Heritage Center done. And as that project goes forward, our objective with the Indian Heritage Center is actually to bring California, Indians much more into operations and having a voice in running the place. So we are working now, we have a consultant team on board, there is, actually four different consultant centers; one master contract looking at governance, fund development, kind of financial feasibility issues. So, it's entirely possible that the Indian Heritage Center Foundation takes on a much more prominent role in terms at the operation of the Indian Heritage Center, and how that's done is kind of what we're working on with the governance study and, so on. We've also restructured one of our non-profits, it's now used to be the Historic Sites Association, but it is now called the friends of Sutter's Fort, and so they brought on a business director about a year ago, and she's been able to really help bring a lot of life to Sutter's Fort. Sales have increased in the trade store. We're doing a lot of events. In fact we're doing on September 25th. We're doing an event called "A Taste of History", which should be really fun.

Kelly: You've done that before, is that correct?

Taylor: Well, we've did one at the historical society.

Kelly: That, Sacramento County Festival is that correct?

Taylor: Yeah. And then we heard that we couldn’t do it any more, because we all cooked and brought stuff, and you know, filled everybody. Apparently, we
weren't supposed to but we did it, anyway. So the Taste of History then as Sutter’s Fort actually is using chefs, so local chefs. So, Michael Tuohy, and Patrick Mulvaney, and Kurt Spataro, and there's a couple of others, so we're doing basically a food event with breweries and wineries, and there’s a honey maker, I think. I don’t know what we call them a Honey Farmer, a Honey a Honey person. Anyway, it should be a really, yeah, it should be a really, really neat event. And we’re collaborating a lot with Slow Food Sacramento of that event. So, so, we do collaborations, we, we do a lot of collaboration with Midtown Business Associations, so they are our primary helper with the Sutter’s Fort Event because they see the Sutter’s Park, at Sutter Fort Park area is kind of their regional park over in the Midtown area. So they really want to get more involved. We have prop partners within State Parks of Sutter’s Hospital for example as a prop partner with Sutter’s Forts, so they've given us a substantial contribution and so, you know, doing some, some programs with Sutter’s Hospital is on the, is on the horizon. We did a big project at the Governor's Mansion with Bosch. They helped us do the alarm system and install, you know, heating cooling and, so that, that's been really, really important for the whole, the rehab project we did it at the Governor's Mansion.

Kelly: And you were really involved with that, with the renovation at the Leland Stanford Mansion is that correct?
Taylor: Leland Stanford Mansion, they started before I became District Superintendent, and then we wrapped it up, and, and got the place open. So, it was pretty exciting.

Kelly: Brought in the, I can't remember his name, the gentleman who is the chef?

Taylor: Oh Casey Hayden?

Kelly: Yes, Casey Hayden.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, I knew Casey before, and so it actually, it worked out, it was kind of an interesting the way that all came about. So, it was kind of fun so…

Kelly: Aside from the, the position that you occupy, you seem very committed to Sacramento history, and you also involve yourself in a lot of different community organizations, is that correct? What are some of the community organization's personally that you are involved with that, aren’t necessarily tethered to your directorship here?

Taylor: Well you know, primarily The Historical Old Sacramento Foundation is something I, I’ve worked on the business plan for the Historical Old Sacramento Foundation oh, gosh probably ten years ago or more and the organization got off the ground, we used to have something called Old Sacramento Management Board. And so I participated in that and, and it was okay, but it was, it didn’t really have any teeth and it wasn’t necessarily doing programming and it was, it was advisory to the city and a state technically so we basically took the Old Sacramento to the old with Sacramento management board and we reconstituted it I wrote the business plan for the Old Sacramento Foundation and, so we got it
up and running did the 501C3 application got all that going and then I stepped out because my view was old Sacramento the merchants and the property owners really, really needed to be more integrated into that and if I, you know, if I stayed in the middle of it then it would, it would look like, you know, State Parks was trying to you know. So, I pretty much stayed out of it and they had developed also a business association so the two were kind of linked up and they had one director and he was there for a while, you know, so kind of like it bumped along and then they had a second director and it just didn’t seem to be working out, it never really fulfilled what I’ve thought the vision was so the two split up. The business association kind of spun off and is now the Old Sacramento Business Association, which is primarily merchants and property owners and they manage some friends that are assessments of the businesses and they’re kind of operated under the umbrella of the downtown partnership and I’m on the downtown partnership board.

Kelly: Right, I’m going to ask you about that too.

Taylor: And I’m on the old side business association board as well so they’re, actually two different boards, but they, the downtown partnership essentially provides management help and support to OPSA because they look kind of the same, they both are, they’re pretty much business improvement districts although the downtown partnership is officially the ID and the Old Sacramento Business Association has certain abilities to do assessments of, property owners for, you know, for cleaning up facades and the, the merchants assess themselves for
marketing so I don’t know what they call it the BIA something like that so they
do have some funds that come in to help do marketing programs and certain
kinds of, of activities. The Historical Old Sac [Sacramento] Foundation when
the spin off happened, the Old Sac Foundation just sort of, was out there with,
well who, wants to go with the foundation and they, they weren’t a lot folks that
came with that board, most of them went to the OSPA board, but there were a
few merchants who really are very committed to history and programming in
Old Sac and really see that as a driving force and really from a marketing
perspective what we’ve really have that is unique we’re not just a shopping
center or, you know, eating establishments. What is unique about old Sac and
what gets people to come down here is the fact that it’s, well it’s the setting, you
know it’s the historic buildings. It’s not Westfield shopping mall, you know…

Kelly: What would you say the most important aspect of this is for Sacramento?

Taylor: The most important aspect of, in Sacramento?

Kelly: Old Sacramento and all of the elements that you govern in your position.

Taylor: Well, you know, I have a, I have a very strong opinion about a community’s
ability to attract people and be a vibrant community and I think, you know, civic
communities are the Lunch pin, you know, you can’t just have businesses in
town and you can’t just have places to eat and places to shop without, you
know, a cultural underpinning to that and I think what all of our civic
communities do, museums, history programs, the kind of work that Historical
Old Sacramento Foundation is doing in Old Sacramento. This past summer we
brought, the street theatre program called the Time Traveler Weekends and we had about oh, for probably 60, 70 paid actors and volunteers out on the street of Old Sacramento. We had people marching in the streets to raise the streets. We had performers on stages all around Old Sacramento. We had a musical review in the eagle theatre. That’s never happened in Old Sac. It’s, it was so lively and I mean we’ve had our living history program, but it’s not large enough to have really made a critical mass kind of impact. So having the Time Traveler Weekends really offered programming for people that just you know, come down on the weekends and I think we’ve seen a pretty good jump in visitation and again, I will kind of go back to an earlier statement I made about, you know, programming aggressively getting exhibitions done and providing something for people to see and to participate in is really the key and I think that the economy, the vibrancy of Sacramento, the you know, any place that you want to live and raise your kids and so on, is a place that has great public facilities, great parks, great museums. I mean look at any great city in the world. Any one, pick any one and you’ve got, you know, you’ve got great museums and great attractions and a vibrant, you know, a vibrant cultural life so--

Kelly: The public history community, in Sacramento is, very broad, very vast and corporate everything from museums to archives, libraries to historical societies, to State Parks. What do you see are the venues hardest hit by the current economic recession?
Taylor: You know, it's tough even in the best of times to run facilities because the, most successful ones have some level of public support. And when that public support begins to wane, it’s I think it’s particularly hard on the small ones that are, you know, living on the margin already, you know some of the bigger institutions can handle, you know, they can absorb a cut, but I think some of the smaller organizations really, really struggle to stay afloat and, you know, and I think one of our obligations is to help each other out to you know, to the extent there is something happening in town, if there’s another, museum that needs staff expertise or support. I think, you know, we can be in a position to help.

Kelly: It sounds like you’re very committed to that collaboration and cooperation within agencies and organizations?

Taylor: Yeah, we’ve, I think we’ve done a lot of that, our staff, you know, and I encourage our staff to be involved. We’ve got an organization in Sacramento, it’s the Sacramento Association of Museums and that group, Paul Hammond who’s our, Railroad Museum Director is, actually chairing SAM this year. I’ve chaired it in the past, but that group does a lot of collaborative marketing effort. We do museum day in February, which is all the museums get together for free. We do shuttle service and it’s a pretty complex thing, but there’s 80, 90 thousand people that come out to see museums one day in February. You know, we probably should do it more often, but it, you know, we made it there. But I do think some of the smaller institutions do have a rougher time when, when the economy gets tough it’s, you know, that’s typical so--
Kelly: Well, I’m going to close this off with one final question and I’m going to ask is there anything that you think is very important to convey to future persons looking back at thesis, all history theses per se, is there anything that you would like for people to know?

Taylor: I think probably the most important thing is that, that when you’re in, you know, the time you’re in, you make the best decisions you can and I think we try to do is be the best stewards we can of the places we have under our care. We may not always make the right decisions, you know I look back and think kind of, “why did they do that?” And it’s hard because I don’t know what they’re dealing with. I don’t know what they’re daily life looked like. Why did they make that decision and do it that way. You know, I wouldn’t have done that. I don’t know maybe I would have, you know, if I had all of the circumstances my predecessors had to deal with or, you know, budget conditions or staff or whatever all their circumstances. I think you have to sort of cut them, cut them some slack. So, I guess, you know, looking forward people who come after us and I think it’s important for them to know that the people today who are taking care of these sites are absolutely committed to them. That, you know, I find the people whether they’re in the historical society or they’re on the board, this group or that group or affiliated with, you know, the city’s achieves or the state achieves or the state library or state achieves or State Parks were, you know city museums and so on, it’s a wonderful group people. I mean, it’s, it’s a group of people incredibly committed to a purpose. You know,
we don’t always get everything right, but I think there’s just incredible energy around saving important places, doing a good job with historic preservation, running quality facilities for people, doing a good and honest job of research and, you know, exhibition development and I think, you know, we have challenges like places like the rail yards, but one of the things I thought was really, really pretty cool is that we have the historic preservation community fully behind what we wanted to do in the rail yards they got it. They got it. They understood the importance of saving those places. It wasn’t just about the railroad depot or not just about this or not about that, it was, the group actually coalescing and saying, “Hey, you know, what that’s our heritage and if State Parks is going to take the lead to develop that, we’ll help, you know, and if the science museum is going to do the PGN building. Well, we will support them.” And it’s, I think it is really critical and what I have found valuable in the community, it’s really grown and I think more so in the last, you know, five to ten years. I think it’s something that used to exist. You know, 30 years ago in Sacramento, I think it was a very cohesive group and something was missed in those middle years kind of, you know, the late 1980s to the 1990s I think it was, everybody was out doing their thing and then really it’s begun to really coalesce again. And I think that is a pretty cool thing because it gives us an opportunity to save the place like Old Sac or save the Rail Yard or save important historic structures in town and to have really, really build on Sacramento’s heritage, so--
Kelly: Well I want to, thank you so much for participating on this and sharing you
wonderful experience and advocacy for history of Sacramento.

Taylor: You’re welcome. Thank you for coming.

[Audio File ends at 59:22]
APPENDIX H

ORAL HISTORY with JANESSA WEST
HISTORIC SUSTAINABILITY:
2009/2010 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY OF SACRAMENTO’S PUBLIC
HISTORY COMMUNITY

Oral History Thesis

With

Janessa West

March 22, 2010

By

Sharon J. Kelley
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[Audio File 1]

00:00:32 Personal background information – History BA from CSUS – Public History MA from CSUS – Internship with the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation – Children’s History Camp Project;
00:01:40 Current position as Public Programs Coordinator – Position in Living History – Historical reenactments – Civil War event at Gibson Ranch – Volunteer reenactors – Gold Rush Days – difficulty of soliciting volunteers;
00:05:34 New loan from the City of Sacramento to fund a new program: Underground Tours – Loan from city to fund the tours;
00:05:48 Reduced budgets from City and County – Museum forced to close two days per week, cut back on utilities and supplies;
00:07:13 The City of Sacramento combined the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, Sacramento History Museum and the Center for Sacramento History – benefit of been adjoined to the Center for Sacramento History archives;
00:09:05 Public History Community — Sacramento Association of Museums (SAM) cross promotion with marketing – Free Museum Day;

[Audio File 2]

00:00:25 Museum audience;

[Audio File 3]

00:00:00 Museum audience – SAM museum brochure;
00:01:20 Most popular exhibit is gold exhibit – New exhibit is Gold, Greed and Speculation – Importance of gold history in Sacramento history;
[Audio File 4]

00:00:13 Museum technology;
00:03:01 City and County budget funding;
00:03:44 Missed opportunities – Loss of staff positions – Loss of Community Relations staff and Financial Officer;
00:05:40 Future plans and projects – Underground Tours – Traveling Gallery Exhibit – Museum renovation;

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00:00:29 Enjoyable aspects of job, the people - Benefit of Public History Program;
00:03:50 Commonality of recession in public history venues – Increase in Volunteerism;
00:05:32 Speaking in Public History courses at CSUS.
I am a public historian, meaning that I work directly with the public to try and engage them in our local history. Presently I am the Public Programs Coordinator for the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation, a small non-profit in Old Sacramento whose mission is to preserve the history and heritage of Old Sacramento. Within Public Programs I work directly with living history re-enactors, docents, and volunteers who in turn work with students and adults interested in the California Gold Rush and Sacramento's history.

Everyone's college and career path is unique. Mine started in the bay area and eventually moved to Sacramento. I was not sure what I could do with a degree in history other than teach, so I started my college career at a junior college in the Bay Area until I learned of the Public History Masters Program at California State University, Sacramento. After transferring to CSU Sacramento, I finished my Bachelors Degree in History and enrolled in the Public History Masters Program. The most beneficial part of the program was the requirement for internships. My internships included preservation, living history, and educational programming, which eventually turned into a full-time profession. I started on my career path wondering what I could do with a degree in history, now I can proudly say that the field of Public History, while small, is full of opportunities.
Interview History

Narrator:

Janessa West

Interviewer/Editor:

Sharon Kelley
Graduate Student, CSUS, Department of History, Public History Program
B.A. in Art Studio and Special Major in Photography, California State University, Sacramento

Interview Time and Place:

March 22, 2010
3:00 p.m.
Sacramento History Museum
101 Front Street
Sacramento, CA  95814
40 Minute Session

The narrator and interviewer met at museum, the recording was stopped and restarted five times.

Editing:

A verbatim transcript was completed and edited against the original recording. Light editing was applied including spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and elimination of redundant fillers. Dates were converted to a four-digit format even when referred to as two digits; for example 85 would be recorded to 1985. Editor insertions and narrator editing insertions are bracketed. False starts and unfinished sentences are included and are indicated with “--“.

Tape and Interview Records:

The digital original recording of the interview has been transferred to a CD in WMA format and is located at the California State University, Sacramento Library, 6000 J Street, Sacramento California 95819.
Oral History Release Form

Historic Sustainability:
2009/2010 Economic Impact Survey of Sacramento's Public History Industry
An Oral History Thesis
California State University, Sacramento
Sharon J. Kelley, Project Director

In consideration of the recording and preservation of my oral history interview,

I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, all rights, including all literary and property rights unless restricted as noted below to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use and dispose of the recording(s) and/or transcribed interview(s) conducted on: 3/22/2010

This includes the rights of publication in electronic form, such as placement on the Internet/Web for access by that medium. I hereby give the above mentioned Department the right to distribute the recording(s) and/or transcription to any other libraries and education institutions for scholarly and education uses and purposes.

Note any restrictions below:
Signature of Narrator: [Signature]
Dated: 5/20/10

Narrator's name as he/she wishes it to be used: [Name]
Narrator's address: [Address]

Narrator's phone number: [Number]

Signature of Interviewer: [Signature]
Dated: 5/20/10

Interviewer's address:
P.O. Box 9288
San Francisco, CA 94118

Interviewer's phone number: (415) 380-5570
Kelley: This is Sharon Kelley, and today is March 22, 2010, and I am interviewing Janessa West from the Sacramento History Museum and the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation. Good afternoon.

West: Good afternoon.

Kelley: To get started, can you give me a little bit of background about your education and work experience in public history?

West: Graduated from Sac State in 2005 with my bachelor’s in history, and then decided to go into the Public History master’s program there at Sac State, so I started that in 2006, and I actually started with the Historic Old Sacramento Foundation in 2006 as well. It actually started out as my internship, and I slowly worked it into a job. So I worked here while I was completing the master’s program, and then actually ended up doing my master’s thesis on a program which I actually created into a reality here in Old Sacramento.

Kelley: What was that program?

West: I created a children’s weeklong history camp, using interpretive techniques.

Kelley: Is it something that is still going and it happens once a year?

West: Yes. We’ve done it for the past three years, and it’s done every July for four weeks.

Kelley: Is there an age range on it?

West: Children ages eight to twelve, but there’s usually a six-year-old and a thirteen-year-old thrown in there.
Kelley: That’s interesting. That must feel good to have a program that you’ve started that continues on.

West: Yes, it’s nice to see it.

Kelley: What is your job title here?

West: Public Programs Coordinator.

Kelley: What type of work does that encompass?

West: It’s all over the board. I do anything from living history, which is actually what I started out as. I started out as the historic education program coordinator, and what that position was, was to work directly with the Old Sacramento Living History Program, which was a volunteer group of re-enactors that started in 1995. So the coordinator’s position was to work directly with them to keep up their membership, to do all of the admin, and then also to help them plan their historic reenactments here in Old Sacramento and then also in local historic parks.

Kelley: How often do they reenact?

West: They generally have one to two reenactments a month, depending on the busy schedule. We are coming up into the spring and summer schedule, which is when it does pick up, and then we also participate not only in our events, but also those outside the district. So coming up in May, we have the Civil War event out there at Gibson Ranch in Elverta, so we’ll participate in that as well as our own events here.

Kelley: Does that benefit the museums in any way, shape, or form?
West: Well, having multiple volunteers and having volunteers that have just a variety of expertise definitely does benefit the museum. The museum didn’t actually merge with HOSF until this last year, so it’s only been joined together since 2009. So that was a unique program, specifically of HOSF, was the Living History Program. Then, since then, with the merger of the Sacramento History Museum, my duties also now include overseeing the public programs here at the museum, which includes programs based on California curriculum standards, mainly for K through eight grades that we do here in the museum as well as outreach programs. So I wear two hats. I still oversee the Living History Program as well as the public programs section here at the museum.

Kelley: In this current economic climate of 2010, can you give me a little bit of background, what it was like when you first started working here as an intern in 2006 versus what it’s like now in the recession?

West: In 2006, we were trying to do some things and we were trying to do a lot of things and do them well, with a decent-sized budget. There was a lot of support here in Old Sacramento from the merchants at the time, and really putting the best foot forward getting living history out on the streets, doing more school programs such as the walking tours, things like that, other big events like Gold Rush Days, which is a four-day reenactment over Labor Day weekend that’s held here in Old Sacramento. So, mainly events like that.

Since the recession, as I mentioned earlier, I now wear two hats, so more duties added on to fewer people. We’ve had to cut back quite a few positions, and so
that instead of just having one job, you have multiple. So, in addition to being
the docent coordinator, I am also the volunteer coordinator and also I still
oversee Living History. So you’re doing so much more with so much less. The
budgets are much, much smaller. Our big event, Gold Rush Days, has a much
smaller budget, so especially when you’re someone that works directly with
volunteers, the call to volunteerism has generally gone up. You can see that
even with the recent call from the current mayor. There’s been a huge flux in
trying to get more people to volunteer their time, their energy, their talents,
because everyone is so reliant right now on smaller budgets to get just as much,
if not more, done, and it’s hard to do more with a smaller budget unless you
have people doing pro bono work or volunteering.

Kelley: Is the organization financially surviving, the museum aspect of it?

West: We are at the moment. We did just recently take out a loan from the city in
order to start a new program, which is Underground Tours. We would not have
been able to do that without the loan from the city, but the hope is that this
program will make us more financially independent. We currently do get
funding from the city as well as the county, not Historic Old Sac Foundation
directly, but the Sacramento History Museum. It’s a city-owned building that
we get city as well as county support, such as our phone lines, all the facilities of
the building, our Internet, things like that, that are all either done in part or we
get donated portions of from Sac city as well as the county, and funds have been
cut everywhere. So we got quite a bit of a budget cut from the county, and the
city is even contemplating dropping off certain divisions as well. We’re a direct part of the Convention Culture and Leisure Department, which also includes all the museums in Sacramento, as well as city golf and metro arts, and so we’re all getting cut. We had about a 15 percent total budget cut this year, and so trying to recover that, so it’s a huge, huge effect on what’s going on here at the museum.

We’ve been forced to close on Monday, Tuesdays, and while you’re not earning any income those days, you’re also not paying to have your front desk staff here, we have less lights on, so things like that, that we’ve had to do. We are currently financially stable, but we are having to think outside the box, be creative with office supplies, bring in more income other ways, while not trying to cost any more at the same time.

Kelley: Your sister organization is the Center for Sacramento History.

West: Yes.

Kelley: Formerly known as SAMCC.

West: That was yet another way that the city was trying to combine forces, and that was actually done a little bit before the recession, because we sort of knew this was coming, and trying to put more people in charge of more things. So there was a division down here formerly called Old Sacramento Management. Now it’s called Historic Old Sacramento District Office, and they are now in charge of the old city cemetery, which used to be overseen by the archives. The archives then swapped, and now they help us. So the executive director of the
Historic Old Sac Foundation and the museum is also the current historic city manager of the Sacramento Archives and Museum Collection Center, which is now the Center for Sacramento History. So, yes, they were combing quite a few hats in that realm.

Kelley: It sounds like these collaborations have paid off in weaving finances somewhat together to stave off the storm.

West: Yes. The history for this particular building is that the archives has always owned this collection, so in the past they have been more unified in terms of leadership. It was just the last fifteen years that they were not. So this was sort of reverting back to what it was originally made out to be, which was a genuine partnership between the archives and the museum. But basically what it allows is it allowed us to let go of the curator position and have that picked up by the curator that is on staff at the archives.

Kelley: And that person oversees then both the museum and the archives?

West: Exactly.

Kelley: You are also talking about other collaborations with other historical societies, foundations.

West: Yes.

Kelley: Did those help bolster the financial base of the museum?

West: You know, I think they do. Public history is a relatively small community, so once you know somebody, you know quite a few more, and there’s a lot of cross promotions with marketing. If you’re members of SAM, which is the
Sacramento Association of Museums, they’re the sponsors for Free Museum Day each year. Basically what SAM is, is that everybody puts a little chunk of their marketing money into the SAM fund, and then SAM helps market everyone, and that does free passes through SAM, marketing a huge brochure with a map of all the museums in Sacramento, things like that that you can do co-op marketing with, because marketing is very expensive, and anything that you can do as a co-op, you’re going to get a better-size ad for more money, and it’s going to look more polished, because you’re going to get somebody, say, perhaps from the Crocker, who has a degree in graphic design who’s going to be better able to design something than maybe I’m having to do, because we’ve had to let go of our graphic artist.

[Audio File 1 ends at 10:00]

[Audio File 2]

Kelley: What is the broadest audience for the museum?

West: In terms of?

Kelley: What group comes here? Who pays to come here?

West: We have a mixture. We have quite a few school groups.

[Audio File 2 ends at .00:26]

[Audio File 3]

West: So that’s a large majority, are the school groups that are coming in. Generally, we have a pretty good mixture of local as well as visiting schools, so I’m not
sure which would be the winner there, because we do get quite a few schools from out of state as well as from southern California.

In terms of our actual visitors that are coming in that have not scheduled in advance, we do get a lot of out-of-towners that are here. They’re either staying at the Convention Center or they’re staying somewhere local downtown, and they’ve picked up our brochure and headed on in. But probably out-of-towners.

We don’t typically get a lot of locals.

Kelley: The out-of-towners, then, the marketing that SAM does, does that bolster out-of-towners coming to visit the museum?

West: Yes, it does. It’s a very nice, polished brochure that they can pick up at the Visitors Center, they can pick it up at the airport. It’s in all of the other museums, so if they go to one and happen to pick it up, they’ll have it there. It’s a nice big map inside. So if we were just doing a brochure on our own, we wouldn’t necessarily have a map of all Sacramento. So if you’re someone that’s new to town, you’re going to pick up the brochure that has a map of the whole city, not just a part of it. So it’s nice. We do get quite a few people that come in and either take the brochure or come in and have it in their hand.

Kelley: What are your most popular exhibits right now?

West: Probably the standard of this museum in particular is the gold exhibit. It’s been here for a very long time, but people really enjoy coming in and seeing real pieces of gold and gold jewelry and things that gold has been made out of. So I would say, in general, probably the biggest lure that brings people in is the gold,
but we also have a brand-new exhibit that came in July, and that’s called Gold, Greed and Speculation, and it has some computer components to it, so it’s really nice and fancy. It also does have some gold on display downstairs as well. So it’s a very popular exhibit because it’s new, but I think if you had to survey people and say, “What’s your favorite exhibit in this museum?” I think that the gold would probably take the hat.

Kelley: In Sacramento, do you think that that one--I don’t want to call it a memory, but that one remembrance of Sacramento, gold, do you think that that overrides other aspects of what’s important in Sacramento history within the confines of the museum?

West: Within the confines of the museum, I think so. I think it’s important that the people know that we started as a temporary city and then became a permanent settlement, and that’s all because of the Gold Rush. If we hadn’t had the Gold Rush, if we hadn’t been the gateway to the gold fields, we wouldn’t have been a permanent city. We wouldn’t have been in the running for the capital. Our Sacramentan citizens wouldn’t have rised up and done everything that they could to get their hands on the capital. Then, since then, the capital has stayed, and that’s part of our new program, the underground tour, is that one of the reasons they did decide to raise the streets was because the capital was threatening to pull out because they were worried about getting to their meetings during the floodings. Indeed, the Supreme Court actually did move. The Supreme Court was here and did move to San Francisco because of the flooding.
They were going to do anything they could to make sure that the capital didn’t stay here. So I think it’s really important in Sacramento’s story that we started as just a temporary place, a temporary city, that wouldn’t have eventually ended up being the capital without the Gold Rush.

Kelley: It’s interesting in Sacramento, none of the public history venues within the museum community and the archive community, they don’t clash. It seems that your museum’s collections--

[Audio File 3 ends at 3:43]

[Audio File 4]

Kelley: Can you tell me a little bit more about technology that’s used in the museum and perhaps what challenges you face?

West: I think the biggest problem with technology is that it is expensive and it’s hard to maintain. Again, I mentioned earlier that we are partnered with the city. It is an actual city facility, so if we were to put in anything that’s really technological, we do have to work with city IT to get it to work. We had difficulty down here getting VOIP, which is Voice Over Internet phone system, and it’s just because we’re so far from some of the other city buildings. So anything technological like that, that needs to either have the city’s support to turn it on or to run it, can somewhat be difficult.

So we do have computer stations downstairs, which are a brand-new part of the new exhibit, and those are fairly basic. It’s an extremely interesting technology, and it’s very interactive and the kids love it, it’s very easy for people to use, but
in the end it is a computer system. So that we were able to maintain, but some of the other things are a little bit difficult in terms of getting something set up.

Kelley: What would be an example of that?

West: We are currently looking into getting a computer station up here. We actually have an interactive program that is a virtual tour of the original trail of the Donner party. A family member of one of the Donner party actually set out and did a trip reenacting the trail ride, and he took some gorgeous photos along the way, and we actually have the software for it. So what we’d actually like to do is create a standard computer up here where someone can sit down and actually go through and read the different diary entries that go along with the different pictures that this family member took. But in order to do that, we need to have a static computer that someone can sit down and go through the different pages on, just like a journal entry, but at the same time not have access to the rest of the computer controls. So just getting something like that set up, it needs to be collaboration between the curatorial department, as well as the facilities of the museum, as well as the city IT, just to get that in place. So it’s not hard to do, but it’s making sure that you have an extra computer, an extra keyboard, an extra mouse, in order to get all of that hooked up.

Kelley: Since your funding comes partly from city and partly from county, is there ever a debate between the two who helps the museum financially?

West: Not that I am aware of. I’m actually not sure what the breakdown is in terms of what the terms are and what it can be used for, but I know at the moment, I think
we’re getting more city support than county, just because the county’s been forced to make much heftier cutbacks.

Kelley: Has either side talked about cycling funds to the museum permanently or maybe for a static period of time?

West: The city, I believe, is moving towards cutting out different divisions completely from getting city funding.

Kelley: Is the museum in jeopardy then in respect to its funding?

West: I do not know at this moment. I think that because it is a city facility and because all of the artifacts that are here are owned by the city, I think that the current argument is that it would cost just as much to maintain them in storage offsite than it would be to keep the museum up and running, which is something that we have in our favor.

Kelley: It would sound beneficial. What are some of the missed opportunities you feel maybe the museum has had?

West: I think missed opportunities in terms of timing. Unfortunately, we’ve had to let some really good people go just because of the financial crisis. We just recently had to let two people go in January, and yet here we are starting a brand-new program that hopefully will bring in quite a bit of revenue, and that’s slated to start in May. So had we just been able to hold on to those really good people just a little bit longer, and, unfortunately, now because we no longer have that support system, we are down to bare bones in terms of employees. It just makes, overall, things a little bit more difficult. I mean, even closing the
museum, we each had a different night to close the museum, and now there’s just three of us rotating the jobs of opening and closing the museum. So it’s hard to operate 363 days a year with three people.

Kelley: The two positions that you lost, what were the positions?

West: One was the community relations. So this was someone that would update all of our information on things like Facebook, as well as the community calendar, Sacramento 365. She was also doing media and marketing. She was also doing a little bit of volunteer coordination. She was also our board liaison, so someone who was keeping track of our board members and taking the minutes and making sure that all of the meeting reminders and things like that were getting out. She also took care of the donations. We get requests from different nonprofits and schools that need donations of museum passes and things like that. So she really filled in the blanks. She did a little bit of everything, ordering office supplies, just a little bit of everything. But her direct title was community relations manager.

Then the other person was actually our financial officer, and now we have to outsource our bookkeeping. So now we have somebody that comes in once or twice every other week, instead of having someone here full-time.

Kelley: That sounds difficult.

West: Yes.

Kelley: What are some of the future plans and projects that are planned?
West: The most current future project is an underground tour which is slated to start in May. We’re going to start up slow with just having Saturday, Sunday tours, and then the goal at some point is to open up into having tours during the week as well. This will be a spring and summer only tour, simply because of the weather conditions. So it’s only looking at happening May through October. But that’s an exciting new project, and the city seems to be fully supportive of it at the moment as sort of the bright light in terms of projects.

Some other new projects that we’re working on is trying to get a new exhibit going at some point. We have a traveling exhibit gallery, and at the moment this one turned into an education gallery because we didn’t have any more funds in our exhibit fund at the moment. So we’re hoping to get a new exhibit into that area as well.

Then we just recently completed Phase One of the museum renovation, which was downstairs, and the hope is to slowly start working on the upstairs galleries as well as in updating and rotating artifacts.

Kelley: In the future, and when you’re looking back at this situation, is there any proactive plan that can be set in place that might help in case we have a--

[Audio File 4 ends at 7:04]

[Audio File 5]

Kelley: The public history field, it’s full of synergy and it’s constantly evolving. What is it about what you do here that you really enjoy?
West: I think something that I really enjoy about the field of public history is the first word, its public, and you really get to see who it is that you are trying to engage. You see who it is that you are creating exhibits for. That’s not something that you get to do if you’re necessarily behind the scenes. I know just recently I did docent training, and I asked the curator to come in and to sit down with the new docents and to explain exactly why she created the exhibit that she did, and she had the best time. She doesn’t normally get that opportunity, where that’s something that I get to do every day. Every day I see the school kids, I speak with the docents, I talk with the visitors that come in and out of the museum, and I get that feedback about what it is that they enjoy, what it is that they don’t understand. Sometimes I get to fill in the gaps if they haven’t quite gotten the whole timeline of things. And that’s something that I think you really get out of the Public History Program, is you learn how to relate to people and you really learn to work effectively with them to figure out what it is that they’re here for, because if you’re in a museum, people are going to come here for something. They’re looking for something. They’re interested. They’re curious. They’re trying to discover something. Sometimes they’re coming in because they have part of their family story and they know that they got here. Well, they don’t know how they got here, or they don’t know where they came to when they got here, or they want to know what conditions were like when they got here, and we can help to answer those questions. But, generally, people come in wanting
something. When you work with the public side of public history, you get to find out what it is that they want.

Then in terms of what I do in trying to create programs, that’s helpful, because when I go to create a program, I already know what they need. I already know what they’re looking for. That’s something I do with the curriculum standards as well for the State of California, is I can look at whatever it is that those teachers are trying to do in their classrooms, and then afterwards I can send out program evaluations and find out where we hit, where we were right on, and then where we didn’t hit and where we need to. But having that public aspect of it, really, truly getting to figure out what are their needs and what can we do, and especially right now.

You know, the schools are having just as many budget cuts as everybody else. A lot of the times they don’t have money for the buses, or maybe they have money for the buses and it’s coming from the PTA and the kids worked for it. Maybe they had to do bake sales or carwashes. So they really are so much more appreciative when they get here, because they know that they had to work for it, and they know that they’re getting something that they wouldn’t necessarily be able to get, or maybe it was normally a luxury but right now it’s something that is really just an extra luxury, because now they’ve really had to work for it. They know what it means to be able to come here. Instead of having three or four fieldtrips a year, the trend is now to book as many things in one day, because they only have one day that they can get the bus. Or perhaps all the
classes at the school had to go in a raffle to see who was going to win. So when the kids get here, they really know what they’re here for, and they’re so excited about that.

But I’ve noticed that a lot of the schools are really relying on us to put in what they haven’t been able to do, especially Title I schools that are in program improvement where they’ve had to cut out the art, they’ve had to cut out the music, they’ve had to cut out the history, and they very much rely on us to tell part of that story that’s going to meet their curriculum standard that they haven’t simply been able to do in their classrooms.

Kelley: It sounds like you have your dream job.

West: In many ways, yes, and I think one of the benefits right now is that everybody’s on the same page. It’s not a dirty secret that the economy’s bad. Everybody gets that. Everybody understands. More people are willing to share their stories or their experience. Right now I have a growing increase in docents, and that’s because everybody knows. They know that they’re needed. So while they might have a degree in history that they haven’t used in twenty years, they’re more willing to come out of the woodworks and say, “You know what? I can make a difference. I can help.” So they’re stepping out, and there’s been a huge increase in volunteers. And that’s what I’ve really noticed since the recession, is that more people are willing to take a little bit of time out of their busy schedule to help out, because we’re all in the same situation. It’s not just unique to one group. We’re not just one struggling museum. Everyone is struggling.
Museums are closing left and right. The budget cuts are forcing schools not to take many trips, and so they’re having to cut teachers, they’re having to increase class size. We’re all in it together, and so people are more willing to help out right now, and you can really see that trend in volunteers and in the increase of docents.

Kelley: I know that as a graduate of the public history program at Sac State, you have come in and given talks to other students that are in the graduate program there.

West: Yes.

Kelley: When you give these talks, do you feel that it gives students hope that they will find work in the field when they get out of the program?

West: I hope so, and I think right now you sort of have a unique opportunity. Things are bad. That’s right. Things are bad, and there’s not many places hiring right now. But there are a heck of a lot of places that are looking for interns, and while they may not have the budget to pay them, what they can give back to you is experience. So museums that before that were hesitant to take on interns, because, let’s face it, they are a bit of work. You have to interview them. Sometimes you have to get them LiveScan. Sometimes you have to pay for that. Background checks, all that. You have to do some training. You have to get a computer set up for them. There is some HR too. You’ve got to get them workers’ comp. There is a little bit of work to have an intern. But right now, more museum are willing to do that, to go out on the ledge and take in an intern, because they’ve had to let go of somebody that they couldn’t pay.
So, as a student, this is the best time to really get some experience in the field, and some experience that you might not be able to get before, because sometimes it’s hard to break in. Even as an intern, it’s sometimes really hard to get into something that you might be interested in because some museums are very picky about who they’re going to bring into their team. They’re more willing right now to accept interns because they need the help, but they cannot pay for it because everybody’s budgets are tight.

You can look at the most well-known museums in the city, and they’re all hurting. It doesn’t make a difference if they’re state-run or city-run, they’re all hurting in some aspects. So whether you want to be a registrar or a curator or public programs, which is my favorite, you can intern anywhere, because everybody needs help. So you may not get a job right away, but when you do, you’re going to have this fabulous list of references, and you’re going to have this fabulous work experience that you may not have been able to get if so many people weren’t needing that. And, plus, as an intern, you’re going to get to see and do multiple things. You might just intern one place, but you might get a little bit of a taste of marketing and media and business and accounting and exhibits and public programs and curatorial. You might get a little bit of everything, so you’re more well rounded.

Kelley: Do you think that there’s anything else that’s important to add? Since this is basically a memory log of what’s happening in public history here in
Sacramento during the recession, do you think that there’s anything important for you to add to this memoir, this oral memoir?

West: I think the most important thing is that you never know what’s going to be coming, so the best advice that I can give is to take any class that you can, especially the ones that you think, “I never want to do that.” Because in this sort of economy, if you’re dedicated and determined to stay in your field, then you may not end up doing your first pick, but you may still be in the field. So you may hate archives, but take the archive class, because you may end up getting your first job in archives. So take whatever you can so that you can get in wherever you can. Once you get in, we are such a small field that once you can get in and get your foot in the door, you will find wherever it is that you’re meant to be. But just don’t be afraid to branch out and take something, because you might, in this economy, might not end up getting your first choice. You might have to get your seventh or eighth on the list.

Kelley: That’s good advice. Where do you see yourself in twenty years from now, if you were to see yourself in the field?

West: You know, I have no idea. I can actually truly say that I started out doing strictly living history and outdoor interpretation, and now I still do living history, but on a normal day I’m indoor. So I’m an outdoor interpretation person in four walls, inside. So you never know what you’re going to end up doing. And I love it. I’m not saying I don’t enjoy it, because I do. But you might start off one way and end up another. So, who knows, in twenty years
maybe I’ll be back outside. But right now I sort of have a foot inside and a foot outside. So in twenty years, who knows?

Kelley: Thank you very much for participating.

West: You’re welcome.

[Audio File 5 ends at 9:22]
### ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>ARRA</td>
<td>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009</td>
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<td>Cultural Resource Management</td>
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<td>California State University, Sacramento</td>
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<td>HRSA</td>
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<td>HUD</td>
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<td>ICOMOS</td>
<td>International Conference on Monuments and Sites</td>
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<td>KVIE</td>
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<td>LEED</td>
<td>Leadership in Energy &amp; Environmental Design</td>
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