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**Historic House Museum Affinity Luncheon**  
**AASLH Speech**  
**Donna Ann Harris**

Hello and thanks for coming to this luncheon.<sup>1</sup>

Aren't you glad this event was changed from the traditional breakfast at 7AM? I know I am!

I am glad that you are here in my hometown, Philadelphia. I hope you will have an opportunity to get out of this hotel and go on some of the wonderful tours planned and see some of our fabulous museums and historic sites. I was a tourist in my own town on Wednesday, going to some Main Line estates I have never been in before.

Some of you may know that I wrote this book, published in 2007. I am an accidental author. I did not know that my research would end up becoming a book.

I have been working with historic sites off and on for more than 20 years. I was introduced to more than 250 of them in the Philadelphia area in the early 1990s, when I managed a \$2 million grant project to provide planning and capital grants to historic house museums. This was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts for sites in Philadelphia and the surrounding five counties.

At the time, there was no list of the historic sites in the area. So, we had to find them and create a mailing list. This list ended up being close to 300 house museums in the Delaware Valley.

We saw that so many were run by volunteers---the majority---and we could count on TWO HANDS how many of these historic house museums had an endowment of any size.

In 2003, a good friend, Barbra Silberman, who was then working for the Heritage Philadelphia Program of The Pew Charitable Trusts, asked me to help her with some research for what would eventually become a grant funded Living Legacy Project. This project was to provide one on one consulting to Philadelphia area historic sites that wanted to find a new use or user for their properties. Known locally by some as the "Death with Dignity" project, it was not meant to be palliative care for historic sites, but to find them some other use or user.

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<sup>1</sup> Red indicates slides to illustrate talk

In the two years it took to prepare this grant application, I spoke with scores of people around the country and in Canada, Australia, and England to identify how some house museums had made transitions to a new use or user, if the museum did not work any longer.

I wanted to learn more and won a **Mid-Career Fellowship** from the James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation in 2003. The fellowship paid for me to undertake travel and research to create 5 case studies on house museums that had made a transition to a new use or user.

I thought that the outcome of my research for the Mid-Career Fellowship would help me write one of those **Information Sheets** that the National Trust published at the time-- about other uses for historic house museum properties.

When I finished writing the case studies-- they added up to 100 pages--- and then what was to be the Information Sheet ----**well that was 90 pages**. Barb Silberman said, you know that's a book, you should publish it under the AASLH co-publishing agreement with AltaMira Press-- **go find out how to do a book proposal** and send it in as soon as you can. I took her advice.

**AltaMira Press** agreed to publish it, but first I needed to write some additional chapters and write a few more case studies.

My hope was that documenting how **historic sites had made a transition** to a new use or user might give struggling historic sites a way forward themselves.

The book came out the same week as the **second Kykuit Conference** held at the Rockefeller Brothers Estate in Tarrytown, NY in April 2007. I was asked to provide a brief overview of my research at that meeting. And I had some books to sell.

That summer, I published articles about my research in **History News and Forum Journal**. I also spoke at AAM, AASLH, the National Trust, and at 30 other professional meetings or conferences around the country. I did book signings from 2007 to 2009. So, a lot of people knew about my research, and these reuse ideas are pretty commonly understood now —but they were new to many in 2007.

Since it was published, I also learned that the book is used in many graduate school classes in public history, historic preservation, and museum studies programs. And Bob Beatty told me-- when he was trying to convince me to write the second edition -- that it has been the best seller in the AASLH series since its publication. I literally had no idea.

My husband and I moved back to Philadelphia in April 2007 after spending ten years in Chicago. Upon returning home, I found that the book had made me.... let's just say .....unpopular..... in some circles.

I have had some funny or strange experiences as the author of the **"Anti-House Museum Book"** as it was called by one person. I was interviewing for a contract I really wanted, and one of the three people interviewing me asked me directly-----So, do you want to close down ALL house museums? -----That is what some people thought my book represented. He clearly had not read the book.

To which I responded, actually no. I do not. House museums represent the birth of the historic preservation movement. This use has **saved countless important structures across the country**. What we have now are too many underfunded and underappreciated historic sites. If the board is ready to give up, I want to make sure they understand there are other options to ensure that the landmark remains. Oh, and by the way, I did win that contract.

I learned that some people fundamentally rejected the basic premise of the book--- that troubled historic sites needed other options. Just limping along as a failing historic house museum was not a viable future. These deniers---shall we call them that---just wanted the historic house museum to remain as is. **They wanted the board to just get better at the poor job they were already doing.**

Still others were worried that the book, by providing alternatives for weak historic sites to pursue other options, might cost them their jobs.

It was clear to me that any executive director charged with the responsibility of raising funds and dealing with **peeling paint** and outdated exhibits might want to know about other ways of looking at their properties.

Being able to sell your board on a radical remake of a troubled historic site, well..... that is for the very brave..... and I want to tell you about some of these very brave historic sites in a minute.

So, what I expected and hoped would happen as a result of the book was that a lot of weak and tired historic sites would go out of business. Their collections would go to other historic sites. The proceeds of the sale of the buildings would be turned over to community foundations to be used for grant purposes for other preservation activities. I thought there would be massive amounts of new funding available for more preservation work. Perhaps the sale of one historic site could become a cross subsidy or create an endowment for another historic site through these grant funds.

Needless to say, that did not happen. What did happen was pretty much nothing... and everything. I'll talk more about everything..... in a minute.

They say that timing is everything.

**The Great Recession** had just begun as the book was published in April 2007. The recession did make all of us hunker down, just to ride it out.

The historic sites that seemed to have fared the worst during the Great Recession were those in public ownership. The National Trust for Historic Preservation **named America's State Parks and State-Owned Historic Sites to its 2011 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places**. Most you know that the Trust uses its annual list to highlight important examples of the

nation's architectural, cultural, and natural heritage that are at risk for destruction or irreparable damage.<sup>1</sup>

Their press release about the 11 most endangered places that year said, "In response to record-breaking deficits, state governments are cutting funding for state-owned and managed parks and historic sites from coast to coast. State park systems welcome an estimated 725 million visits every year and include places of national significance – from Native American historic sites to **Revolutionary War forts** to **Civil War battlefields** to country estates."<sup>2</sup>

The thing about these state agencies is that they are government entities trying to live within mandated budgets. **They don't get too emotional about change** – unlike so many nonprofits often do. Government just goes ahead, does what is needed.

These agencies have civil servants like John Adams and Rhonda Hunter of the **Heritage Branch in British Columbia, Canada**. Their jobs over two years were to create and implement an exacting, and for them successful, effort to **"DEVOLVE" all 30 of the historic sites owned by the Province of British Columbia**. These sites were offered through an RFP for 15-year licenses to nonprofit organizations, tribes, local government, and private sector bidders to operate them as visitor attractions. After John and Rhonda were done with this exhausting work, they both retired.

My publisher wanted me to revisit all of the case studies, to see what happened in the intervening 12 years. Richard Linzey, who runs the Heritage Branch in British Columbia now, said that some of their devolved historic sites just cannot be operated without public subsidy. Of the 30 historic sites they "devolved" to nonprofit and for profit license holders from 2002-2004, eight of them, and primarily the largest ones, **Barkerville Historic Town & Park**, a gold mining town in Barkerville, BC, and Fort Steel Heritage Town, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century village in Fort Steele, need annual subsidies. Barkerville needs upwards of a million dollars each year. The agency has returned to subsidizing these eight properties, which takes up 2/3 of Mr. Linzey's yearly budget.

Here is what Mr. Linzey told me. "Over the last decade the eight provincial historic sites have also received funds to address deferred maintenance, in the order of \$30 million total." I am delighted to say they are all now on a 'routine cyclical maintenance' footing.

The staggering needs and on-going commitment to these provincial properties have made the agency reconsider how they fund and manage their most important historic sites.

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<sup>1</sup> "State Parks, Historic Sites Make 11 Most Endangered," May 20, 2010, Accessed June 14, 2019, <https://newyorkhistoryblog.org/2010/05/state-parks-historic-sites-make-11-most-endangered/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Over the last 30 years, a succession of managers at the **Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission** went through three rounds of “reviews” to their network of historic sites in the Commonwealth to reduce costs.

In the 1970s this agency had a network of 60, yes 60, historic sites.

These reviews took place in the early 1980s, in 1997, and again in the midst of the Great Recession from 2007-2009. This work winnowed down their network to the 13 statewide and nationally significant sites that the PHMC owns and administers today.

These reviews identified that some of these state-owned historic sites were of only local or regional significance. These historic sites were sold to local nonprofit organizations and municipalities or were leased to other users. **Nine of the historic sites** were turned over to existing “friends of” organizations under short term management agreements, **called Associate agreements**.

Brenda Riegel, the current head of the Bureau of Historic Sites and Museums of PHMC, has worked hard over the last seven years to boost the organizational and fundraising capacity of these 9 Associate sites. Her Bureau has developed a highly useful and rigorous set of **educational workshops and one-on-one training modules** to help build these organizations into stronger, better funded historic sites. The Bureau has also focused on developing these organizations so they can meet basic museum standards for governance, disaster planning, and financial management. A better museum experience for visitors is their ultimate goal.

**What I learned from my interviews** to update these case studies is that what seemed to trip up most sites considering a transition to a new use or users were the uncertainties surrounding **deaccessioning collections** contained in the house itself. The money and time needed to go through a quality deaccessioning process just seemed too hard, too much, too difficult, and too expensive.

So, instead, some sites just decided to reinvent themselves and I applaud that.

What I have found based on research since the publication of the book, is that, **except for one highly disappointing case study**, by in large the organizations I profiled have all weathered the recession. **Most have really and truly.... prospered**. I want to tell you about a few of them

The smallest site I profiled was the **Adel Historical Society in Adel, IA**, a town of 3000 people. In 2002, they DONATED their 1863 former schoolhouse to the city because they could not care for it any longer. Well, Jan Price, their volunteer executive director, raised \$129,000 from local people for a major expansion campaign in 2018. She wanted to create a new exhibition wing attached to the brick historic building to honor **a famed local football player and 1939 Heisman Trophy winner, Nile Clarke Kinnick, Jr.**<sup>3</sup> **So everything changed in Adel, IA.**

For organizations that have multiple sites, like the Nantucket Historical Society and Historic New England, both organizations have added new historic house museums to their rosters in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the last 12 years. But only if they came with very substantial funds----tens of millions of dollars - --for an endowment.

At Historic New England, President Carl Nold told me that they have owned at least 135 historic properties since 1910 when they were founded. Today, visitation to the 35 historic sites they manage is now more than 210,000, and up from last year. Their newest **site, the Eustis Estate Museum and Study Center**, located in Milton, MA just opened, and they manage it with a multimillion-dollar endowment.

Mr. Nold told me that “The Lyman Estate in Waltham, MA, the **Codman Estate in Lincoln, MA**, and the Eustis Estate have the most active programs of function rentals. Today, nearly all of Historic New England’s properties, **except the STUDY HOUSES that I profiled in the first edition**, are available for special events. The events—weddings, receptions, business meetings, and private parties--- are all scaled to the size and preservation needs of the property.<sup>4</sup>

The Nantucket Historical Association has more than 100,000 visitors to their Whaling Museum and 22 historic properties each year. I profiled one site, **the 1800 House**, which had been restored for use as a workshop space for teaching about **Nantucket Island Decorative Arts and Crafts**. It has been a wildly successful MISSION BASED REUSE.

They too have bought and sold some historic sites over the last 12 years. James Russell, their president, told me that all 22 historic properties owned by the NHA are “undergoing a review by the NHA Board to determine if they are meeting the highest and best use” for this old and highly regarded history organization. Much has changed at these two sites as well.

**The Margaret Mitchell House in Atlanta**, which MERGED with the Atlanta Historical Society in 2002, is in great shape because the three commercial properties connected to the house on the Peachtree Street side generate revenue for maintenance. Sheffield Hale, the CEO of the Atlanta History Center, said that visitation has increased considerably there. Upwards of 40,000 people visit Margaret Mitchell’s apartment in what she referred to as “the Dump,” where she wrote **her Pulitzer prize winning novel of the Old South in 1938**. Because of the high international visitation, their brochures are now in 9 different languages. So, a lot has changed in Atlanta.

We all know that change takes time, especially for historians.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has worked for over ten years to create a “shared use” for the **Cooper Molera Adobe** in Monterey, CA. When the California State Park System pulled out of their long-term lease agreement with the Trust in 2007 during the recession, the Trust was left with no endowment, no state lease, no sustainable sources of funding for

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<sup>4</sup> Property Rentals, Historic New England, Accessed January 13, 2019, <https://www.historicnewengland.org/visit/property-rentals/>. The properties available for rental include Beauport, the Sleeper McCann House In Gloucester MA; Codman Estate in Lincoln MA; Cogswell Grant in Essex MA; Eustice Estate Museum in Milton MA; Governor John Langdon House in Portsmouth NH; Hamilton House in South Berwick ME; Lyman Estate in Waltham MA, and Roseland Cottage in Woodstock CT.

operations, and the site's needed major rehabilitation work. Given these things, the National Trust recognized the future of the Cooper Molera Adobe was precarious.<sup>5</sup> At best.

Their for-profit partner initially suggested an all commercial venture for the site, but the Trust backed off after getting feedback in the press and at meetings. This led to their concept of "Shared Use." Katherine Malone France, Chief Preservation Officer at the Trust, said that **the Trust is doing what it knows best**: managing and interpreting a National Historic Landmark—the Cooper and Diaz Adobes-- to the public.

As the master lease holder, they wisely chose highly qualified businesspeople as operators for the new restaurant, the event center, and bakery café that use the other buildings on the grounds. The Trust believed that this "shared use" would provide sufficient funds to **restore and seismically retrofit the historic barn buildings**. A portion of the revenue generated by these businesses supports the programs and exhibits in the Diaz and Cooper Adobes.<sup>6</sup> The \$6 million project is now complete, and all of the components of the complex are open and operating in this wealthy and prosperous downtown district. Basically, everything changed for Cooper Molera. The Trust is pleased, and **the catering operation is very, very successful**.

For those of you that have vacant or underutilized buildings, consider creating lodging as explored by the Canal Quarters Program. **The small lock houses along the C & O Canal** in Maryland are being used as guest cottages. This is a unique opportunity, and the National Park Service is **calling these interpretive experiences**. Becky Curtis, the coordinator of the Canal Quarters Program, said they have seven lock houses that you can rent along the towpath for a getaway. This has been a profitable venture for **the C & O Canal Trust** over the years, and with **the popularity of Airbnb**, there might be real opportunities for you too. But do a business plan first to determine if this is really viable in your marketplace. If you would like to see for yourself what these lock houses look like, the C & O Canal Trust is offering an incentive for you to learn more. Heidi can explain more after the luncheon.

In the past 14 years, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has turned **25 vacant and vandalized park buildings into homes**, restaurants, and offices through their Historic Curatorship program. They market these properties on parkland to individuals and companies who want to restore a historic building in return for **a 25 to 60-year lease**. **Everything has changed for these 25 properties**.

So, some of these ideas might be good for your outbuildings, or properties that don't have a house museum use yet.

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<sup>5</sup> Cooper Molera Adobe, History, Accessed July 1, 2019, <https://coopermolerabarns.com/history/>

<sup>6</sup> Cooper Molera: Shared Use, National Trust for Historic Preservation web site, Accessed June 28, 2019, <https://coopermolera.org/shared-use/>

Returning historic sites to their original purpose as a family home is a frequent recommendation.

It took ten years for Cliveden, which MERGED with the former house museum Upsala across the street in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia in 2004, to reach the conclusion that **Upsala** should revert back to a family home. David Young, former Executive Director at **Cliveden**, said that they came to this conclusion after a widely shared RFP came up with weak submissions. They turned to the local real estate market to see if they could find a buyer who had enough money to purchase the building and provide the endowment needed for the easement agreement. A **young couple** bought Upsala. And they are extraordinarily community minded.

What do I hope or expect from the second edition? Who will read it? What will it mean? Will more house museums go out of business? Or fundamentally change their mission? And finally, who will succeed? I am as excited for the next ten years I was for the last ten.

**But what I do know is that it will all come down to money and mission.**

Those sites that have an endowment—**especially a big endowment**--are starting with a big leg up, because the endowment principal throws off interest, a portion of which can help sustain the organization each year for the future.

If your organization is at least 10 to 20 years old, you should be asking your founders to **think about planned gifts right now!** Get some help from your state or regional museum association and get started on planned giving. This is not a hard sell. **You are asking people who already love the organization to bring that love to the next generation through their estate plans.**

Successful sites will have **diverse revenue sources**. Both earned and contributed revenue sources will make each one of us stronger.

Earned revenue is not a crime. In fact, it can be exciting! So, what about that **coffeeshop in the disused dairy barn?** Or why can't the wing now used for storage **become your new bookshop?**

So many of you with gardens do exceptionally well with **weddings and events**, I know that your gardeners are busy all the time anyway. Even something as simple as a tent pad site can create a place for crafts classes and school groups to use as a lunch or story telling area. **The tent can create a new revenue source for you.**

Contributed revenue is critical and I hope that you continue **to gather email addresses** for your newsletter and for possible crowd sourcing for small projects. **But good old-fashioned stewardship –you know--- thanking, recognizing, acknowledging, and gift publicity**, helps. Cultivation of this crowd is essential for its long-term success. I will talk in a minute about how two sites have made individual giving the heart of their operating budgets.

Sustainable historic sites have many revenue sources. The ones that fare the best are the ones that have government as a **significant partner, perhaps even as the owner**. This arrangement



should have government providing regular maintenance of the historic house. The nonprofit is the programming partner. I call these co-stewardship agreements in the book, but they can just be considered public private partnerships.

Those that already have these kinds of arrangements, where government owns the building and your nonprofit owns the collection and coordinates the programming, my hat is off to you. You have just **rid yourself of a significant budget responsibility**, but I know, it does not come without cost.

While some may say that these are landlord tenant relationships, I disagree. You divide up the tasks necessary for running a quality historic site, each by doing what they do best. Government knows how to and has the staff to **do routine maintenance. You know how to run kids' programs** or run events. **Both should do what they do best.**

One co-stewardship arrangement that has really blossomed in the 12 years since the first edition is in Deadwood, SD. **I profiled the Historic Adams House** in the first edition and was delighted to learn that continued tourism interest there has spawned the creation of Deadwood History Inc, a new umbrella organization to provide day to day management of the now 4 museums: the Historic Adams House, the Adams Museum, the Days of '76 Museum, and the Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center.

These **nonprofits were combined**, said Carolyn Weber, the Executive Director of Deadwood History Inc. Their unique co-stewardship arrangement continues.

The city owns and maintains all the buildings, but the nonprofit partners the **Days of '76 Museum** and the Adams Museum & House Inc. own the collections and endowments. They also get an annual subsidy from gambling proceeds. Visitation there has soared.

When I first wrote about the Historic Adams House Museum in 2006, they had an operating budget of \$636,000 and visitation of about 45,000 yearly.<sup>7</sup> Today, **Deadwood History Inc.** is a \$1.1 million-dollar operation that manages four museums and archives and employs 11 full time and 13 seasonal or part time staff.<sup>8</sup> The annual visitation is up to 65,000 between the four facilities, three of which are open year-round. Growing bigger has made them more successful.

As I conclude this talk, I wanted to share three examples from the chapter I have not yet finished about diverse historic sites. Because to me, these historic sites are showing me the way forward about being a sustainable historic house museum,

**The Louis Armstrong House Museum** in Queens, NYC is a beautifully restored National Historic Landmark that opened in 2003, in all **its midcentury modern splendor**. After the passing of Lucille Armstrong in 1983, the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation--a private foundation which administers the Armstrong estate-- gave the house to the Department of

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<sup>7</sup> Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic House Museums*, Lanham MD: AltaMira Press, 2007, 127.

<sup>8</sup> Deadwood History Inc., 2016 Internal Revenue Service 990 form, Accessed August 20, 2018, <https://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2016/320/373/2016-320373094-0e7bc8d3-9.pdf>

Cultural Affairs, arranged for Queens College to operate it, and gifted Armstrong's personal collection of photos, scrapbooks, music, manuscripts, and other materials to Queens College. <sup>9</sup>The Armstrong House today is left almost exactly as it was when **Lucille and Louis Armstrong lived there** until his death in 1971, and when she died in 1983.

A new 14,000-square-foot education and performance center is being built in a lot across the street from the home. Another grant of \$1.9 million from New York City last year to renovate the house next door, Selma's House, will provide office and storage space for the organization. These capital grants are critical to the development of this museum.

But the Armstrong house also undertakes traditional fundraising each year too. They earned more than \$80,000 from admissions and tours, and \$132,000 from fundraising events, according to their 2017 IRS 990 form. It also helps when **Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones** shows up for a tour

So, what is very interesting to me is their series of partnerships. The house is owned by the city, the collection is owned by Queens College—they just spent \$3 million digitizing the collection, and it will come back to the education center when it is open to the public. The Louis Armstrong Foundation provides an annual grant. They build their budget with traditional fundraising. All of these partners make this site, I believe, sustainable for the long term.

Lucy Beard, who is the Executive Director of the **Alice Paul Institute**, told me about their work at Paulsdale, Alice Paul's birthplace in Mt. Laurel, NJ over the last 30 years. You might not know about **Alice Paul**, but she was a leading suffragist and the author of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923. Lucy said that many don't know about her because she was deliberately written out of the history of the suffragist movement in the US when she pressed for a different tactic—a constitutional amendment—toward gaining women the right to vote.

A group of feminists bought Alice Paul's birthplace in 1990 for \$465,000 and spent more than \$1.4 on the property's restoration. Their founder, Barbara Irvine, said, "We will return the exterior to the way it looked when Alice Paul lived here, and we will use period paint colors and wallcoverings on the interior, **but this will NOT be a museum. It's got to be a living, breathing place, perpetuating the things she stood for.**"<sup>10</sup>

For the last 30 years, the birthplace home has been a **leadership center for women and girls**. Over 70% of their budget of \$450,000 annually comes from individual donations. And by the way, they have almost an entire year's worth of operating funds in the bank. So, Paulsdale is a sustainable historic site too, in my mind, because they have no mortgage now, have money in

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.louisarmstronghouse.org/faq/>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

the bank, and raise more than 70% of their revenue from people—individuals—year in and year out.

And finally, I wanted to introduce you to **Patrick Weems, the Director of the Emmett Till Interpretive Center in Sumner, MS**. Patrick has been working for the last seven years on an extraordinary project. You may know the name of **Emmett Till**. He was the 14-year-old black boy visiting from Chicago who walked into the Bryant grocery store to buy candy. After being accused of whistling at the white woman behind the counter, Emmett Till was kidnapped, tortured, lynched, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River in 1955.

In 2006, Jerome G. Little, the first African American President of the Tallahatchie County Board of Supervisors, organized the **Emmett Till Memorial Commission**. Their website says, “The Emmett Till Memorial Commission, made up of a multi-racial group of citizens, realized that in order to properly remember and honor Emmett Till, that they needed to first break the silence and take responsibility for their role in the injustice.”<sup>11</sup> In 2007, the Emmett Till Memorial Commission offered a **formal apology to the Till family** in a public ceremony in front of the Sumner County Courthouse.

Afterwards, the Commission decided to raise funds to **restore the Sumner County Courthouse**, the location of the 1955 murder trial, because it had fallen into disrepair. This organization has spent more than \$3 million restoring the courthouse, which the county uses three days a month. The museum and interpretive center are located across the street. This is where they offer tours each week from 11am to 1pm Monday through Friday.

Early on, the Commission also placed interpretive markers around town at the various sites in the Emmett Till story. **These signs have been repeatedly vandalized with bullet holes and replaced three times**. Photos of the vandalized signs somehow went viral starting in 2016. Stories about the signs on CNN and in *The New York Times* led people to their website, where donations of \$5 and \$10 and higher began to show up. In a year, more than 1000 people had made a donation.

Weems has cultivated these donors over the years, and now they generate more than 40% of his annual operating budget. This sum, along with shop sales, tour admissions, and grant funds, support their operating budget.

**The Emmett Till Interpretive Center** is a sustainable historic site, because they don’t have to spend their money to maintain the courthouse, which is an integral part of their interpretive program. The county maintains it. They raise money each year from 1000 people who are interested in the programming being done there around race, social justice, and memory.

What is important to me about these three sites is how they are owned and funded—which is ultimately tied to and driven by their missions.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.emmett-till.org/our-vision>

The Emmitt Till Interpretive Center does not own the courthouse where the trial took place. While this is a highly important property for them, they are happy that the county continues to own it and maintain it, thus freeing them from that expense. Today, 1000 individuals support this organization's mission to teach about racial reconciliation.

The Louis Armstrong House Museum is owned by the City of New York and the City has funded the historic structures report and the restoration of Armstrong's home. Yet another entity, Queens College, owns the collections. A third entity, the Louis Armstrong Foundation, supplies an annual subsidy. Today, they get more than 12,000 visitors to their site, where they share Louis Armstrong's music.

The Alice Paul birthplace is owned by a nonprofit, and it took them 20 years to pay off their mortgage, but they did it. Today, 70% of their budget comes from individuals that support their mission to serve women and middle school girls.

These three organizations have also learned that individuals, through their donations and special event attendance, are the ones that support the majority of the operations of these organizations. They all actively cultivate their donors through events, newsletters, or by special recognition.

All of these important historic house museums I talked about today are driven by their missions. They have found that creative ownership and management partnerships can fuel growth. These partnerships provide financial stability. And I am all for that.

Thank you

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