Becoming American: A Case Study of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract:

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Chair: Susan F. Semel, PhD.

This is a historical study of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM) that examines its educational philosophy and practices, from its inception in 1988 to the present, and how its policies and practices have changed (or remained the same) during the past 20 years. This study also examines LESTM in the geographic, historical, and cultural context of the Lower East Side; provides a historical overview of its role as an educator of the public; and describes the evolution of American identity from 1880 to the present and how this identity impacts the LESTM.

The aims of this research are two-fold: to obtain a clear understanding of LESTM's past and present role as a cultural and educational institution and to gain an understanding of whether of not it has fulfilled its mission from 1988 to the present. Qualitative research methods include **a)** archival research; and **b)** interviews with individuals who are, or have been, closely associated with the museum, or who support, or have supported, LESTM through grants and other subsidies. Close examination of two data sources will provide a crosscheck on

the reliability of the findings and will serve to fill in any gaps that might have resulted had only one data source been used.

This work will inform professional museum educators and other scholars of the importance of LESTM—as a documenter, preserver, and disseminator of the urban immigrant experience from 1880 to 1920 to the public at large and to the educational community, and in particular that of New York City. This study also is intended to describe an effective institution developed to educate the public, within the context of education writ large, as conceived by Lawrence A. Cremin, and to encourage other scholars to examine the structure and function of other similar institutions.[1]

[1] Lawrence A. Cremin *The Genius of American Education* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1965), pp.28-29.

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The life of a historical inquiry only comes to life when personal voices are added to archival research. I would like to thank all my interviewees for taking time from their busy schedules to meet with me and share their experiences of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Each interview shed different lights on my research and provided me with a more accurate picture of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: first, the streets weren't paved with gold; second, they weren't paved at all; and third, I was expected to pave them.

– –Anonymous quotation from a southern Italian immigrant

Preface: **The Birth of the Hyphenated-American**

We are living in an extraordinary time: A time when major American cities and suburbs house populations from all parts of the globe: a time when the flow of cultures within our cities is continual, a time when economic markets have become global, a time when information and communications are at our fingertips, not only in our workplaces but in our homes. The vast oceans that separate continents can be thought of as narrow, easily crossed streams. Sonia Nieto, Professor of education Emerita at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst, describes the diversity of the United States:

> At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the United States is more ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse than it has ever been. The 2000 Census . . . found that, whereas whites decreased from 80% to 75% of the population . . . from 1990 to 2000, the African American population slightly increased (from 12.1% to 12.3), as did the American Indian population (0.8% to 0.9%). Even more dramatic, the Asian population increased from 2.8% to 3.6 %, and the Latino population grew by more than a quarter—from 9% to 12.5% of the total. . . Unlike previous immigrants, who were principally from Europe, over half of the new immigrants came from Latin America and a quarter from Asia . . . Nearly 18% of the total US population now speaks a language other than English at home, with over half of these speaking Spanish.[2]

With all of these demographic changes, questions regarding the American identity arise: Who is an American? What does it mean to be an American? What does it mean to be an American citizen? Such questions are discussed in symposia, fill the pages of books and articles, scholarly and otherwise, and are debated in our classrooms—from middle school through college and beyond.

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[2] Sonia Nieto Series Forward: *Language, Culture and Teaching* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003), p. xiii.

Such inquiry has occupied American intellectuals, writers, and artists and those of other countries—from our nation's beginnings to the present.

Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a French intellectual visiting America in the 1780s, was one of the first visitors in search of understanding of the new nation to raise the question of American identity, which he then endeavored to answer:

> What then is the American, this new man? . . . He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys. Here individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, who labors, and whose posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.[3]

His observation represents the conception of America as a "transforming nation, banishing old identities and creating a new one."[4] Although the population that Crevecoeur observed, as Nieto points out, differed vastly from that of today, his question is as relevant now as it was then.

Just as individuals have reflected, and continue to reflect, on the American identity, cultural institutions also have examined, and continue to examine, whether or not they have kept their promises to their constituents. With the advent of the civil rights and the feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, American notions of social membership, economic opportunity, equality, and assimilation have expanded. Fortunately, so have educational and career opportunities for minorities. Over the past 15 years, American museums have reaffirmed their

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[3] Hector St. John de Crevecoeur "Excerpt from letter to an American farmer 1782" http://www.assumption.edu/ahc/. Accessed on August 12, 2007.
[4] Arthur Schlesinger "The Return to the Melting Pot" in *Debating Diversity Clash Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2002), p. 257.

commitment to recognizing diversity and have taken measures to become more representative of their audiences' values and interests. This increased recognition of our country's religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity has led to the blossoming of a new type of public institution. Museums that focus on minority cultures both the established and the relative newcomer—are burgeoning. Those in Manhattan are: the African American Wax Museum, History in the Village of Harlem, El Museo del Barrio, Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Studio Museum in Harlem, National Museum of Catholic Art and History, National Museum of the American Indian, the Jewish Museum, and the Ukrainian Museum. An impressive list.

To explore the diversity and complexity of immigration and migration in New York City, the founders of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM), fully restored a pre-law (prior to any housing regulations) tenement building to tell the story of "ordinary people" who had lived there during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Unlike earlier NYC museums, which typically celebrated a more patrician culture, and whose audiences typically comprised the upper-middle class and upper class, the LESTM was established to commemorate the struggles and triumphs of the urban poor, and to relate the issues of their times to those of the present.

To understand contemporary American identity and the circumstances that led to the founding and evolution of the LESTM (the focus of this investigation), it is necessary to briefly discuss the evolution of American identity. Three periods in United States history are of particular importance to the development of the American identity:

the 1770s; the 1880s to 1920s; and the 1960s to today. To better understand the great experiment of democracy, it is necessary to understand how specific events and circumstances resulted in the gradual inclusion (or exclusion) of diverse voices. Eric Foner, Professor of American history at Columbia University, summarizes the importance such understanding:

> At different periods of American history, different ideas have been conceived and implemented, and the clash between dominant and dissenting views has constantly reshaped the idea's meaning. Freedom has always been a terrain of conflict, subject to multiple and competing interpretations, its meaning constantly created and recreated.[5]

American identity has changed over time, and it is important to trace its roots to better understand what it means to be an American today.

E pluribus unum is the motto on the first Great Seal of the United States in 1776.[6] The Latin translates to "From many, one," and represents the founding fathers' determination to form a single nation that would welcome people from many lands and that would represent the great, and risky, experiment in governance: democracy. Through the years, *E pluribus unum* serves to remind us of America's courageous attempt to forge, out of many people, a unified nation with a Constitution and a Bill of Rights that would represent all of them. The challenge was not easy, and, of course, the struggle for a truly representative government continues to this day. Joel Spring, an educational historian, at Queens College commented on the struggle:

> Certainly, a major strand of American history has been the quest for democracy and equality. However, another strand, dating from the first

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[5] Eric Foner *The Story of American Freedom (*New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), p. xv.

[6] Charles Thomson's design for the Great Seal of the United States, 1782; http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs accessed on August 12, 2007.

> arrival of English settlers, is characterized by claims of racial and cultural superiority. The most violent and troubled parts of American history were a result of the clash between racism and demands for equality.[7]

Spring's remark demonstrates the importance of examining two historical threads: on the one hand, the idealism that underpins our Bill of Rights and Constitution, and on the other hand, the grass roots pragmatism that governs the human struggle to survive. Examining conflicting interpretations of events can empower the analysts: "History can be used to teach people that the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions that delimit contemporary life are not timeless, but rather are products of human agency and historical choices."[8]

In the 1770s, the Declaration of Independence asserted the inalienable rights of a new man starting out in a newly autonomous nation. Although, at the time, only a small proportion of the population enjoyed these inalienable rights, the content and intent of those initial political documents set a precedent for other nations that intended to democratize their governance and carry the torch of individual liberty for their citizens. But, just as the American identity is brightened by the ideals of egalitarianism, it is darkened by the realities of racism. Arthur Schlesinger, a historian, reflected on the molding of American identity,

> For better or worse, the white Anglo-Protestant tradition was for two centuries—and in crucial respects still is—the dominant influence on America. This tradition provided the standard to which other immigrant nationalities were expected to conform, the matrix into which they would be assimilated.[9]

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[7] Joel Spring *The American School* 1642-2004 Sixth edition (New York, NY: Mc Graw Hill, 2006), p. 5.
[8] Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig, ed. *Presenting the Past Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), p. xxiii.
[9] Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America,* p. 34.

In spite of its claims of liberty, the Anglo-American culture that dominated American society was clearly exclusionary. Not only was it not receptive to newcomers, it dishonored Native Americans, and enslaved and oppressed Africans and West Indians who had been brought, against their will, to America. Despite their miserable treatment, many non-Anglo-Americans, people of color, and women made significant contributions to every aspect of the national character—transforming our landscape, our economy, our literature, art, and music—in short, transforming the soul of the nation.

Ronald Takaki, Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California–Berkeley, described our pluralistic society thusly: "America does not belong to one race or one group . . . Americans have been constantly redefining their national identity from the moment of first contact on the Virginia shore."[10] Takaki explained the importance of listening to, and heeding, the many voices that comprise the American identity, ". . . allowing us to see events from viewpoints of different groups . . . enables us to reach a more comprehensive understanding of American history."[11]

As America entered the nineteenth century, the immigrants—fleeing from poverty and intolerance, searching for wealth and acceptance—came mainly from western and northern Europe: England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. It was their belief in *E pluribus unum* that solidified this new population . . . and the American Revolution that secured it. These hardy Europeans wanted to forget their past and embrace a new beginning, and with it, a new identity: "The point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but

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[10] Quoted in Ronald Takaki *A Different Mirror A History of Multicultural America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 17.
[11] Quoted in Ibid., p. 4.

to produce a new American culture."[12] The emerging American identity was a by-product of British political philosophy, law, institutions, customs, and the English language. These influences would shape American educational and cultural institutions. The Anglo-American, Protestant culture would continue to dominate, as evidenced by its acculturation, or more precisely, its "deculturalization" (that is to say, the dominant group's destruction of the cultures of other groups, supplanting them with its culture[13]).

In the 1880s, a "new immigrant" came to America's eastern shores. They came in record numbers from southern and eastern Europe, and from Asia, and "between 1880 and 1924, more than 25,000,000 immigrants poured into the country."[14] They differed radically from the earlier immigrant. They looked different, they spoke different languages, and they practiced different religions. Those who were established (the "old immigrants") feared the newcomers because of their differences, because they were viewed as an economic threat, and because they were regarded as a threat to the established American character.[15] Historian Oscar Handlin described the deprecation of the new immigrant: "It was [argued] that the "old immigrants," who had arrived in the United States before 1880, were drawn from the superior stocks of northern and

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[12] Arthur M. Schlesinger *The Disuniting of America Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), p. 17.
[13] Spring, *The American School,* p. 183.
[14] Quoted in James R. Barrett "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930." *The Journal of American History* vol. 79 no. 3 (December 1992): p. 997.
[15] Charles Jaret "Troubled by Newcomers: Anti-immigrant Attitudes and Action During Two Eras of Mass Immigration to the United States" in (*Journal of American Ethnic History*, 1999, Vol. 18, #3), p. 11.

western Europe, while those who came after that date were drawn from the inferior breeds of southern and eastern Europe."[16]

This "ethnic eruption" occurred after the Civil War and before World War I. The process of assimilation was perceived to be more difficult for these new immigrants.[17] James Banks, Director of the Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington, in Seattle, described the stereotypical attitudes and the paranoia:

> As the twentieth century approached and new waves of immigrants began to arrive in the United States from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe, the immigrants from Northern and Western Europe began to perceive themselves as the old immigrants and rightful inhabitants of the nation. They saw the new immigrants as a threat to US civilization and its democratic traditions. Sharp, and often inaccurate, distinctions were made between the new and the old immigrants.[18]

To ensure that the new immigrants would rapidly fit the mold of Anglo-American, Protestant culture, a movement gathered momentum after the turn of the century. Teachers, settlement house workers, and cultural institutions worked hard to "Americanize" these immigrants, to guide them into mainstream America.[19]

Most of the new immigrants settled in urban areas, so they were confronted with the challenges of urban life for those who lacked material resources: disease, inadequate housing, overcrowding, poor working conditions, discrimination, and racism. Schlesinger pointed out: "The rise of scientific charity, social settlements,

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[16] Quoted in Oscar *Handlin Race and Nationality in American Life* (New York, NY: Double Day Anchor books, 1957), p. 75.
[17] Spring, *the American School*, p. 264.
[18] Quoted in James Banks *Cultural Diversity and Education Foundations, Curriculum and Teaching* (New York, NY: Pearson, 2005), p. 45.
[19] Barrett, *Americanization from the Bottom Up*, p. 997

public health agencies, and playgrounds was prompted by their presence."[20] Social activists, no matter what their cause, ensured the stability of the democratic experiment. Motivated by the ideals of freedom and human dignity, social reformers of the late nineteenth century fought for decent wages, and the protections afforded by child labor laws, free public education, housing regulations, and civil rights for Negroes and women. This ethos motivated the social reformers, Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, to establish settlement houses that provided goods and services for immigrants and guidance to help them to become "Americanized."

A new American credo was being formulated. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, described this transformation of American identity:

> We suggested that ethnic groups, owing to their distinctive historical experience, their cultures and skills, the times of their arrival and the economic situation they met, developed distinctive economic and political patterns. As the old culture fell away—and it did rapidly enough—a new one, shaped by the distinctive experiences of life in America, was formed, and a new identity was created.[21]

As the new stock melted in the pot containing the old stock, the metaphor of the "melting pot" was embraced as an accurate reflection of the new American identity in the early part of the twentieth century. Analyzing the melting pot concept, the thoughtful researcher perceives it as a device for imposing Anglo-American, Protestant values and mores, and observes that the new American identify continued to be exclusionary. Native Americans, African Americans, and Asian

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[20] Quoted in Arthur M. Schlesinger *Paths to the Present American Manners and Morals Seen in the Light of the History Conditioned Them* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 76.
[21] Quoted in Nathan Glazer, and Daniel Patrick Moyhnihan *Beyond the Melting Pot The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City.* Second Edition (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T Press, 1970), p. xxxiii.

Americans were not “in the pot.” The “old stock” Americans never truly welcomed the newcomers; they merely tolerated them. This is patently evident in the housing patterns of immigrants as ethnic enclaves were established, some of which exist to this day: Little Italy, Chinatown, Kleinedeutschland, and the Jewish Quarter. However, despite the fact that the “new stock” was not accepted, the composition of America was changing.

During, and immediately after World War I, America showed its xenophobia and chauvinism, exacerbated by Germany’s sinking of the *Lusitania*. Religious, cultural, and linguistic differences in addition to fierce competition for jobs fueled the nativist sentiments and movements. Suspicion and distrust swept the nation, racist reactions to the flood of immigrants aroused public support for the Chinese Exclusion Act (1892), the Quota Act (1921), and the Immigration Act (1924). America was closing its portals. These restrictive policies were enacted and enforced to eliminate the “new” immigrant and to perpetuate the “old” immigrant,[22] and they would remain in place until 1965.

Several philosophers such as Randolph Bourne (1916), Julius Draschsler (1920), and Horace Kallen (1924) vigorously defended the rights of immigrants, arguing “. . . that a political democracy must also be a cultural democracy.”[23] To counter the melting pot image, they created the “salad bowl” image, maintaining that each culture would maintain its identify while making unique contributions to the greater society. Angelo Patri, an elementary school teacher, and subsequently principal of Public School 4 (Bronx), became a role model for the new immigrant. In 1917, he published

[22] Handlin, *Race and Nationality*, p. 76.
[23] Quoted in Banks, *Cultural Diversity*, p. 41.

Schoolmaster of the Great City, which described his early life, pursuit of education and, most important, how he became a productive citizen, adopted American values, and made a significant contribution to society.[24] The year his book was published, the United States entered World War I. During the war years, a nativist agenda cast its pall on the landscape. As anti-immigrant sentiment aroused public support of the Quota Act and the Immigration Act, Patri's concept of the Americanization of immigrants helped calm public fervor by reminding the ordinary American that immigrants not only could successfully adapt to mainstream society, but also would become loyal, patriotic citizens.

Patri's early experiences made him acutely aware of the importance of acculturation. He was a "cosmopolitan cultural pluralist" who supported immigrants' maintaining their cultural heritage and language, while adopting American values and ultimately becoming active participants in society.[25] Patri had become "an American, while maintaining his Italian heritage; equally important, he had become a professional educator, while keeping the ability to look at life from the standpoint of a child."[26] Patri's emphasis on the importance of respecting human dignity, welcoming newcomers to the table, and valuing universal education paved the way to universal acceptance of his ideas during a period that was characterized by extremist views.

Despite this impetus for greater tolerance of immigrant cultures and customs, most of the nation's business and educational leaders also were continuing to militate for their total assimilation. "They felt that only in this way could a unified nation be

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[24] James Wallace *The Promise of Progressivism: Angelo Patri and Urban Education*. (New York, New York: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 29.
[25] Wallace, *The Promise of Progressivism*, p. 34.
[26] Quoted in Wallace, *The Promise of Progressivism*, p. 27.

made out of so many different ethnic groups."[27] The immigration policies of 1921 and 1924 vindicated this view. Strong reactions to this ethos would occur in the 1960s, when "the unfulfilled promises and dreams of the assimilationist ideas were the major causes of the Black Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s."[28] However, from the 1930s to the 1960s, assimilationist policies dominated American society.[29] For the most part, assimilation worked fairly well for ethnic groups that were white.[30] However, many individuals felt compelled ". . . to become marginal individuals and to deny their heritage."[31] Despite the loss of native language and cherished customs, most of the white immigrant populations were able to climb, however slowly, the ladder of economic and social class.[32]

Several policies and programs challenged assimilationist ideology, and gradually evolved, but did not come into play until the 1960s.[33] In the aftermath of World War II, American identity was tested as Americans were forced to come to grips with a primarily racist landscape. By the 1950s, overt discrimination in employment, housing, and education had caused many disaffected groups to push back, giving rise to highly vocal civil rights and feminist activists. Too many who had fought to protect the American way of life in WWII would no longer wait patiently for inclusion in what was called "The Land of Opportunity." The American Dream was their birthright too. Throughout this period of upheaval, Americans continued to debate what it meant to be an American. Minorities began to proclaim ethnic pride

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[27] Quoted in Banks, *Cultural Diversity*, p. 41.
[28] Quoted in Ibid., p. 45.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Quoted in Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

and proudly wore badges of race and ethnicity. The "hyphenated American" was born. Immigrants were maintaining, and passing on, their cultural heritage, were speaking their native tongue, while simultaneously adopting American values and becoming participants in America's democracy.

A telling sign of cultural democracy is that, during the past 40 years, research on the immigrant experience in the United States has changed drastically. In the early part of the twentieth century, immigrant history was written from the perspective of the detached outsider, and often the narratives used language such as "immigrant problem." In mid-century, the focus shifted to the assimilation of immigrants and the profound changes felt by, and manifested by, second- and third-generation Americans. In the latter part of the century, social historians examined broader issues of race, religion, ethnicity, and gender.[34] Not only had the perspective changed but the identity of the narrator as well. According to Nancy Foner, "Unlike nascent scholarship on immigration at the turn of the century, the present era has many immigrants themselves becoming leading scholars of immigration."[35] By having the story told by insiders, a more insightful reconceptualization is produced, the narrators give testimony to diverse ways of knowing; and their approach helps restore broken spirits. With the civil rights and feminist movements, American notions of enfranchisement, social equity, economic and educational opportunity have changed, allowing for an expansion of opportunities

[34] Foner, Nancy, Rumbaut, Ruben. and Gold, Steven. (eds) *Immigration and Immigration Research for a New Century (*2000) from http://www.russellsage.org/publications/books/0-87154-260-9/chapter1_pdf) accessed on January 28, 2007.
[35] Ibid., p. 2.

for minorities and women.[36] It should be noted that, in spite of such advances, anti-immigrant attitudes that resemble the nativism of earlier generations still prevail.[37]

Another feature of contemporary immigrant research is its interdisciplinary perspective, in which all of the social sciences may come into play. But the examination does not stop with the application of psychology, sociology, and economics; immigrant groups and subgroups are observed and analyzed applying the lenses of anthropology, history, and political science. These interdisciplinary approaches serve to deepen the scholarship and enrich the narratives.

Oscar Handlin, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning study*, Uprooted*, was one of the first historians to open the door to a more inclusive scholarship stated that: "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then, I discovered that immigrants were American history."[38] Although Handlin paved the way ". . . for the study of the common people rather than presidents," his subject matter tended to exclude the newcomers from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[39] However, concurrent with his work were the works of other serious chroniclers of the American ethos as evidenced by seminal studies including, but by no means limited to, Irving Howe's *World of Our Fathers* and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.[40] Takaki pointed out that all of this attention, although it "has given a more expanded understanding of the mosaic called America," is not sufficient for our present

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[36] Ibid., p. 9.
[37] Jaret, *Troubled by Newcomers*, p. 10.
[38] Quoted in Oscar Handlin *The Uprooted The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1951), p. 3.
[39] Quoted in Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, p. 6.
[40] Ibid.

situation.[41] Nothing less than a comprehensive study of the American past from a comparative perspective is needed.[42]

Scholars such as Richard Alba, Nancy Foner, Charles Jaret, Victor Nee and Ruben G. Rumbaut have compared the immigrants of the turn of the century (southern and eastern Europe) with post-1965 immigrants (Latin America, Mexico, Philippines, Korea, and China[43]). Rumbaut points out the immigration patterns of today are quite different than they were at the turn of the 20th century, the "story, as it is now unfolding, in not reducible to a simple or single unilinear master trend."[44] To better understand the present immigrant patterns, he formulated a concept called "segmented" assimilation.

Concurrent with Rumbaut, Alba and Nee rejected the assimilation theory as the lens to view the current immigrant condition because they believed it to be "out of touch with contemporary multicultural realities.[45] For them, "segmented" assimilation theory was more applicable to today's immigrant because it took into account the socioeconomic realities that confront them. Alba and Nee commented on how assimilation would not work for the new immigrants:

> The descendants of European immigrants of the nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries experienced a close link between social mobility and assimilation . . . The question of whether the possible narrowing of opportunities in contemporary United States will limit the prospects for socioeconomic assimilation.[46]

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[41] Quoted in Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Banks, *Cultural Diversity*, p. 47.
[44] Quoted in Ruben Rumbaut "Turning points in the transition to adulthood: Determinants of educational attainment, incarceration, and early childbearing among children of immigrants" (*Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 6 November 2005), p. 1083.
[45] Richard Alba and Victor Nee Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration (*International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 winter, 1997), p. 863.
[46] Quoted in Ibid.

An example of the enactment of "segmented assimilation": "Many labor migrants, with the Mexican as the preeminent example, may end up in the lower rung of the stratification order, while human capital immigrants, common among Asians and Russian Jews . . . experience rapid social mobility."[47] The findings of Alba and Nee should be kept in mind as one examines American identity in the twenty-first century.

Jaret, in his comparative study, pointed out similarities and differences between anti-immigrant attitudes and activities during the two heaviest influxes: 1880 to1924 and 1970 to1998. Jaret stressed the importance of respective historical circumstances: "The anti-immigrant phenomena discussed in each era are not constant—they rise, recede, and may rise again within or across decades."[48] Jaret's findings: "First, nativism became, in the 1990s, more widespread than it had been in several decades; second, that while its core beliefs resemble the nativism of earlier eras, new ideas have been added that give nativism support beyond its traditional conservative following.[49]"

Unfortunately, a common characteristic of the most recent immigrants was that they encountered widespread intolerance and discrimination that often ended in violence. Jaret's work demonstrated the importance of creating forums to provide representatives of conflicting factions to dialogue on immigration in order to defuse the resentment and distrust that often lead to acts of violence. Jaret recognized the various causes of anti-immigrant activity, but believed that a clearer understanding of the destructive consequences of a vicious cycle of violence might prevent activists from resorting to violence.

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[47] Quoted in Ibid.
[48] Jaret, *Troubled by Newcomers*, p. 11.
[49] Ibid, p. 10.

Applying "micro" and the "macro" lens, Foner examined the effects of immigrant groups on New York City and, conversely, the effects of New York City on immigrant groups. To this end, she commissioned seven immigrant writers to describe in detail seven immigrant populations now settled in New York City—namely, Chinese, Koreans, Mexicans, Dominicans, Jamaicans, Russian Jews, and West Africans—and the interrelationship between the individual and the city . . . and the city and the individual.[50] Where Handlin's scholarship had not considered the experiences of nonwhite immigrants in the early twentieth century, Foner's compendium on the multi-hued, twenty-first century immigrants makes up for it.

Just as the hyphenated American is an unmistakable aspect of the American identity, the LESTM has become entrenched in the American cultural landscape. Its objectives are honorable: **a)** to commemorate the struggles of the urban working class poor [both immigrants and migrants]; **b)** to springboard from the history of immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to contemporary political, social, and economic issues relevant to today's immigrants and to all Americans; and **c)** to examine the LESTM's ongoing role as preserver, communicator, educator, and forum for debate.

Ruth Abram, LESTM's founder, created this public institution to help visitors connect present immigration issues with those of earlier immigrants, to examine the meaning of American identity, and to consider what it means to be an American today. As the founder of the LESTM pointed out,

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[50] Nancy Foner *New Immigrants in New York Completely revised and updated Edition* (ed.) (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 1.

> In looking for a thread strong enough to weave "Unum" out of the American "Pluribus," we need look no further than the experience of immigration. No matter how long-rooted now, at some point in their past, the great majority of American families arrived here from some other country. Indeed, even Native Americans are believed to have immigrated to this continent from Asia. Thus, the dislocation and disorientation associated with being a stranger in a new land is so embedded in the collective memory that it lends itself as a nearly perfect foundation upon which to establish our common ground.[51]

With a firm commitment to *E pluribus unum*, Abram continues to ensure that LESTM's programs and events illuminate the multiplicity of issues that surround immigration—and immigrants—past and present. America is experiencing its second largest wave of immigration.[52] Unlike previous patterns, in which the newcomers arrived from Europe and Asia, these newcomers are heterogeneous, coming here from all parts of the world. Indeed, the ethnic and linguistic composition of our country is more diverse than it has ever been. For this reason, it is incumbent upon those who are comfortably established to extend hospitality, to exert the effort required to understand the newcomers' needs, and to provide sufficient opportunities for education and employment.[53] "American [identity] is still forming; its processes are mysterious, and its final form, if there ever is to be a final form, is yet unknown."[54] It is up to future generations to decide—and to remember the adage: "You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world."[55]

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[51] Ruth Abram "Immigrants in America" (*The Public Historian*, 1997, vol.19, No.1), p. 45.
[52] Banks, *Cultural Diversity*, p. 46.
[53] Carola Suarez-Orozco "Afterword: Understanding and Serving the Children of Immigrants" in (*Harvard Educational Review*, 2001. Volume 71,Number 3), p. 579-589.
[54] Quoted in Glazer and Moyhnihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot, p. 315.*
[55] Quoted in Herman Melville *White Jacket* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1970), Chapter 6.

Becoming American: A Case Study of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum

By: Joelle J. Tutela

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Introduction to the Investigation

"The belief that every man's experience ought to be worth something to the community from which he drew it, no matter what that experience may be" Jacob Riis began his critically acclaimed, *How the Other Half Lives*, first published in 1890.[56] Riis wrote this book to call attention to the deplorable living and working conditions of New York City's poor at the turn of the twentieth century. Central to *How the Other Half Lives* was Riis's emphasis on the humanity of the inhabitants of this tenement. Using stark commentary, the author's goal was to depict these tenement dwellers as capable individuals who responded positively to reform efforts. Through investigative reporting and photojournalism, Riis exposed the horrific conditions of tenement life that the working poor of New York City had to endure. Known as a "muckraker", which was a member of the press that investigated corruption in order to expose problems to the American people. He had a great amount of influence, often resulting in the passage of laws designed to reform the abuse that he reported. Eventually, his reportage brought reforms such as: adequate street lighting, improved sanitation, and city parks. Riis was the voice of the marginalized, the neglected, the immigrants, and his vivid descriptions of their daily lives laid the groundwork for future reformers.

Ninety-eight years after the publication of *How the Other Half Lives*, Ruth Abram, founder of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM), created a public space that celebrates the lives of the same people that Riis had advocated for: the working poor, the immigrants. Just as Riis had pioneered in bringing reform

[56] Quoted in Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*-2nd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1971), preface.

to the New York slums, Abram established a new type of museum: one that honors these hardy people by capturing the texture of their lives and the intensity of their yearnings. Unlike typical historic house museums like Mt. Vernon and Monticello that pay homage to the culture of America's political elite, the LESTM pays tribute to the struggles and triumphs of America's impoverished and disenfranchised. Housed in a five-story, red-brick tenement building, the LESTM has six permanent exhibitions consisting of apartments restored to resemble the cramped quarters of the immigrant families who had lived at 97 Orchard Street between 1863, when the building was constructed, and 1935, when it was closed to residents.[57] In restoring these apartments, LESTM's curator in charge of furnishings drew from Riis's photographs as a primary reference.[58] The LESTM gives "a vivid sense of the living conditions experienced by the tenants, conditions that were shared by millions of tenement dwellers."[59] Both Riis and Abram were fascinated by the story of these people and their contributions to building and shaping America.

Research Focus

This is a historical study of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM) that examines its educational philosophy and practices, from its inception in 1988 to the present, and that considers how its policies and practices have changed (or remained the same) during the past 20 years. This study also examines LESTM in the geographic, historical, and cultural context of the Lower East Side; provides a historical overview of its role as an educator of the public;

[57] *Frequently Asked Questions* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[58] Quoted in Pamela Keech, *Historic Furnishings: Levine Family Apartment* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).
[59] Quoted in *Application for the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1996).

and describes the evolution of American identity from 1880 to the present and how this identity impacts the LESTM.

The aims of this research are two-fold: to obtain a clear understanding of LESTM's past and present role as a cultural and educational institution and to gain an understanding of whether or not it has fulfilled its mission from 1988 to the present. Qualitative research methods include **a)** archival research; and **b)** interviews with individuals who are, or have been, closely associated with the museum, or who support, or have supported, LESTM through grants and other subsidies. Close examination of two data sources will provide a crosscheck on the reliability of the findings and will serve to fill in any gaps that might have resulted had only one data source been used.

This work will inform professional museum educators and other scholars of the importance of LESTM—as a documenter, preserver, and disseminator of the urban immigrant experience from 1880 to 1920 to the public at large and to the educational community, and in particular that of New York City. This study also is intended to describe an effective institution developed to educate the public, within the context of education writ large, as conceived by Lawrence A. Cremin, and to encourage other scholars to examine the structure and function of other similar institutions.[60]

Introduction: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum—An External Educational Agency

> The fact is we need a vast number of systematic, scholarly studies of education in all its forms, studies that will take us far beyond where we now are in comprehending the peculiar

[60] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Genius of American Education* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 28-29.

> potency of institutions' . . . Only in light of such studies shall we ever be able to talk authoritatively about popular education in its most comprehensive and significant sense.[61]

The above words of Lawrence A. Cremin, a leading historian of American education, who wrote this, urge scholars to pay attention to a wide array of situations and institutions that educate in order to establish a more expansive history of American education. In *Traditions of American Education*, Cremin presents the history of education as a narrative that chronicles and investigates the many institutions that have shaped American thought and character. These include families, peers, churches, libraries, museums, benevolent societies, publishers, newspapers, and mass media.[62] Each of these institutions—and in some cases individuals—has had a profound impact on shaping our thinking about schooling, and Cremin insists that these educational agencies be explored to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their function and their influence. Throughout his book, Cremin examines the ways in which the presence and proliferation of external institutions have molded "The American."

To help scholars understand the scope and power of external educational institutions, Cremin defined education broadly as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort."[63] Cremin's notion of learning directs our attention to the complexity of education, both in its intended and its inadvertent outcomes, and emphasizes the importance of examining all educational

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[61] Quoted in Ibid.
[62] Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980 (*New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1988), p. x.
[63] Quoted in Lawrence A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc. Publishers 1977),p. viii.

institutions. Although Cremin insisted that external agencies be studied, it is not enough to analyze only educational agencies. He urged the modern historian of American education to go beyond investigating educational institutions in isolation and analyze the patterns that emerge in their relationships to one another "and give them their educational significance, and the ways in which their outcomes confirm, complement, or contradict one another that determine their educational effects."[64]

For a quarter century, Cremin worked on a comprehensive history of American education, expanding both the definition and type of scholarship applied to it. With his expansive approach to the study of American education, time has afforded him the opportunity to broadly examine institutions. Cremin's groundbreaking scholarship opened many doors for the contemporary educational historian to venture through in order to better understand America's myriad educational experiences. Thus, it has become incumbent upon the educational historian to scrutinize how these external agencies educate and in the process, their rationale. To meet this challenge, the thoughtful educational historian must investigate both the external agency and its connection to the larger society to accurately understand the full force of its educational potential.

One external educational agency worthy of such investigation is the museum. Museums are remarkable spaces that set the stage for a tremendous range of experiences. In Western society, the museum has been a symbol of a nation's greatness, wealth, and influence, and it has mediated many of society's basic values, mores, and cultural politics. George Hein, a museum educator, asserts that "museums were included among the agencies available to help people better themselves and to

[64] Quoted in Cremin, *Traditions of American Education*, p. 128.

appreciate the value of modern life" as well as to uncover the past.[65] In fact, the first museums provided education for the general public through their practice of "showing and telling," an approach that exhibits and communicates cultural meaning and values.[66] Thus, the concept of the museum as a symbol and as a vehicle for educating the masses represents a complex, multilayered, multifunctional institution that needs to be closely examined.

One such museum that invites such examination is the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, which is housed in a pre-law tenement building on 97 Orchard Street, in one of our country's most well renowned immigrant neighborhoods, Manhattan's Lower East Side. Investigating the LESTM as an external educational agency allows the contemporary educational historian to examine both its educational practices and the cultural history of the Lower East Side community, which according to Cremin, are two critical elements in illuminating the role of education. The LESTM is an ideal site for exploring a museum as an external agency; not only does it meet Cremin's criteria but it also adds another dimension to the examination of ethnic and class biases, two issues that until recently have been overlooked in historical interpretation.

The LESTM differs from other museums in that it reconstructs the stories of the poor immigrant workers rather than those of America's autocracy, and recreates the past using a new approach. Through the meticulous restoration of six tenement apartments, the LESTM presents, and interprets, the lives of families who actually had lived in the tenement building from 1863 through1935, enabling visitors to understand

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[65] Quoted in George Hein, *Learning in the Museum* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), p. 4.
[66] Quoted in Tony Bennett, *The Birth of A Museum* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), p. 6.

and empathize with the spectrum of urban immigrant experience on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Because the LESTM is a national historic landmark that has "pioneered the interpretation of the home and community life of urban, immigrant, working class, and poor peoples" and because it gives voice to the untold stories of the millions who immigrated to Manhattan in their search for a better life, it is an ideal site for an educational researcher to apply Cremin's theory of the importance of external agencies as loci for the transmission of knowledge.[67]

[67] Quoted in Ruth Abram. (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).

Chapter 1: History of Manhattan's Lower East Side

Becoming American: A Case Study of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM) is a two-year, qualitative study, or more precisely, a historical inquiry about a contemporary museum that presents and interprets the social, economic, and political struggles and triumphs of the impoverished immigrants who settled in Manhattan's Lower East Side during the years 1863 through1935. Unique to the LESTM is its use of a landmark pre-law tenement built in 1863 at 97 Orchard Street. The LESTM chose this venue to vividly recapture the experiences of the inhabitants of this tenement and to present the findings of its extensive research of these people. The LESTM "represents the nation's first effort to preserve a tenement, and through it, to pay tribute to the grit and determination of America's pioneers."[68] One important feature of the LESTM was its collection of physical evidence gathered from diverse sources about urban, immigrant, and migrant workers and are now part of our country's historical record.

To understand the educational philosophy and practices of the LESTM from its inception, in 1988 to the present, it is necessary to situate the museum in the geographical, historical, and cultural context of Manhattan's Lower East Side, as these are essential features of this museum.

A Desirable Location: History of the Lower East Side

The history of Manhattan's Lower East Side (LES) is critical because this area houses the LESTM. The history is a rich tapestry of immigrant, and migrant,

[68] Quoted in *Lower East Side Tenement Museum* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).

occupancy as well as early American architecture and serves as an important backdrop to understanding the role of the LESTM. Unlike the museums that line the Upper East Side of Manhattan's Fifth Avenue, the LESTM is located at 97 Orchard Street, between Broome Street and Delancey Street, in the heart of the LES. This neighborhood embodies the myriad challenges faced by its early residents as they worked hard to achieve the "American Dream." For this reason, a close examination of the area is an essential task of the researcher. This research identifies the need for the museum, describes the American character commemorates the fortitude and perseverance of these immigrants and migrants, whose labor contributed to the growth and vitality of urban society in the years that bridged the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. This research also addresses the charge issued to historical researchers by the educational historian, Lawrence A. Cremin, to analyze American educational institutions and individuals and their connections to the larger society in order to better understand the American educational phenomenon. (See Introduction, pp. 4-6.)

Walking down Orchard Street today, the visitor encounters (in addition to ethnic eateries) trendy restaurants and chic bars, expensive boutiques, art galleries, renovated tenements, and new condominiums. The street teems with young professionals, students, and "hipsters." In the 1990s, real estate developers aggressively targeted the Lower East Side for commercial and residential development, constructing luxury apartment buildings with astronomical rents. Their residents are "mostly white, college-educated, in the 20 to 40 age range, who live alone or in shared households"— a radically different population from that which had

made this area notable.[69] According to *The New York Times* (August 29, 1997), the neighborhood is "an appealing address for young professionals seeking a less costly alternative to neighborhoods like Greenwich Village and SoHo." Once the squalid home to the immigrant and migrant working-class, the LES has undergone gentrification. In early 2008, The National Trust listed the LES among America's most endangered sites for Historic Preservation.[70] Underneath the concrete of renovation lie millions of individual stories of despair and hope, stories of the struggles of the "newcomers of yesterday," who arrived in New York City with nothing in their pockets but with their heads filled with dreams of a better life for themselves and their children.

The area that later would be called the LES always has been a desirable location, but for different reasons. Although the history of the LES is a distinctly American tale, it begins well before the arrival of the Europeans in the 1600s. The first inhabitants were the aboriginal Lenni-Lenape tribe (Lenape). The ecology of this location provided the Lenape with abundant natural resources to sustain hunting, fishing, and small-scale agriculture, which produced maize, beans, pumpkins, and tobacco.[71] The Lenape named this area "Mannahata." which means "hilly island."[72] The legacy of the Lenape lives on in some of the city names, like Pearl Street, which was named for the oyster shells the Lenape offered to their sacred spirits.

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[69] Quoted in Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side: Culture, Real Estate, and Resistance in New York City* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 306.
[70] National Trust for Historic Preservation, "11 Most Endangered The Lower East Side," http://www.preservationnation.org (accessed on July 4, 2008).
[71] Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City A Visual Celebration of 400 years of New York's History* (New York, NY: An Owl Book Henry Holt and Company, 2005), p.16.
[72] Joyce Mendelsohn, *The Lower East Side Remembered and Revisited History and Guide to a Legendary New York Neighborhood* (New York, NY: The Lower East Side Press, 2001), p. 2.

Political, economic, technologic, social, and cultural changes spurred the Europeans to explore the African coastline and then to cross the Atlantic Ocean in the late 1400s. Their explorations led to a commingling of cultures that resulted in both conflict and eventual assimilation and adaptation. Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian navigator who sailed for France in 1525, was one of the first to arrive in New York; he entered the Bay of New York, between what is now the Narrows and Staten Island.[73] The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, opened in 1964, and the world's longest suspension bridge at that time, honors his achievements.[74]

In the 1600s, England, Spain, and Holland established permanent settlements in North America. On September 11, 1609, an Englishman, Henry Hudson, employed by the Dutch, anchored his ship the *Half Moon* in New York Bay, and was given credit for "discovering" the region.[75] In tribute to Hudson, the major river flowing through the region and emptying into the ocean, was named after him. In 1615, the Dutch purchased a piece of land on the west bank of the Hudson River, where they erected a trading house, thereby establishing a lucrative fur trade. To ensure that the Dutch maintained economic control in the region, in 1621, the States General granted a charter to the West India Company to organize and oversee all Dutch ventures in North America.[76] Sponsored by the West India Company, "five vessels . . . bringing colonists with furniture, farming implements, and upwards of one hundred cattle, besides stallions, mares, sheep, and swine" arrived to establish a permanent,

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[73] Ric Burns and James Sanders *New York An Illustrated History* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), p. 6.
[74] Metropolitan Transportation Authority, "Verrazano-Narrows Bridge," http://www.mta.info/bandt/html/veraz.htm (accessed on July 4, 2008).
[75] Burns and Sanders, *New York*, p. 6.
[76] Ibid., p. 9.

commercial settlement, New Amsterdam.[77] Once again, this setting was a desirable location for trading fur of otters, foxes and minks as well as metal tools.[78] To guarantee the ongoing prosperity of this busy trading post, in 1626, the Dutch, under the leadership of Governor Peter Minuit, purchased the island of "Manahatta" from the Lenape for twenty-four dollars.[79] These early commercial dealings led to a convergence of cultures that would transform North America.

In 20 years, this busy trading post attracted Europeans of various religious faiths, earning New Amsterdam the epithet, "commercial metropolis of America."[80] It flourished and became a multiethnic community in which more than 18 languages were spoken, including (but not limited to) Dutch, English, Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, Italian, several Native American languages, and the languages of West Indians and enslaved Africans.[81] The diverse population and mix of languages and cultures earmarked New Amsterdam as a cosmopolitan community not unlike the one that flourishes today.

Most of the settlement that occupied the western side of the island housed flour and saw mills, bakeries, and churches, while the eastern side was a rural area that belonged to three families: Peter Stuyvesant, James De Lancey, and Henry Rutgers.[82] Ironically, this countryside, once the site of the mansions of the wealthy, would become an infamous slum that would house millions of immigrants.

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[77] Quoted in Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Macoy, *The Centennial Guide to New York City, p. 12.*
[81] Mendelsohn, *The Lower East Side Remembered, p.* 2.
[82] Ibid., p. 3.

The popularity of Manhattan was evident in its rapidly expanding population and the rising conflict between the Dutch and the English. In 1664, the English gained control of the island and renamed it New York, after the Duke of York.[83] Life was different under British rule as it no longer was chiefly a temporary residence for traders. Rather, it became the home of merchants, professionals, and public officials who interacted with the British colonial government on commercial and legal affairs. The colony of New York continued to flourish with the most heterogeneous population compared with the other American colonies. According to historians Ric Burns and James Sanders, " With a population of nearly eleven thousand, New York was the home now to people from everywhere– . . . Packed into a bustling and surprisingly picturesque enclave . . .they formed a physically compact harmonious society, with a high degree of mingling of the classes."[84]

During the American Revolution, New York's situation was unique. The only American city to remain occupied by the British throughout the war, it suffered more physical damage than any other city. In 1778, a fire destroyed a quarter of the city, including Trinity Church.[85] It is worth noting that on the day the British officially evacuated New York (November 25, 1783) George Washington made his ceremonial entry into the city to deliver his farewell address to his troops at Fraunces Tavern in the LES, still in operation today.[86]

After the war, Manhattan, like the Phoenix, arose from the ashes to become the first capital of the new republic. In a relatively short period of time,

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[83] Burns and Sanders, *New York*, p. 19.
[84] Quoted in Ibid., p. 25.
[85] Ibid., p. 34.
[86] Ibid., p. 6.

the city's population doubled, public buildings, roads, and wharves were rebuilt. New roads were extended to Broome Street (east) and Reade Street (west); special attention was given to Broadway and Wall Street, which became major thoroughfares; and City Hall was extravagantly refurbished.[87]

After the American Revolution, many loyalists, who had supported England, fled the city. One loyalist family of particular importance to the history of the LES and to the LESTM was the DeLancey family. Their farm included much of the LES north of Division Street. The orchards on their farm would eventually become the site of Orchard Street. In the 1760s, the DeLanceys established a grid pattern of roadways on a portion of their property; these became the streets (running north-south) that paralleled Bowery Avenue, which eventually extended to Houston Street and which became the first public roads.[88] After the DeLancey family returned to England, the Commissioners of Forfeiture were forced to sell their main estate, which encompassed more than a mile of prime waterfront property, and divide it into city blocks. Small lots 15 feet wide by 100 feet deep were established. The eastern portion of the DeLancey farm was purchased by wealthy merchants who built stately homes there, while the western portion, was sold to other merchants and to attorneys.[89] Four lots were sold to carpenters, tobacconists, brewers, masons, and teachers.[90] Various economic interests would soon "divvy up" the city, which marks the beginning of that division.

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[87] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City, p.* 51.
[88] Andrew S. Dolkart *Biography of An Architectural History Tenement House of 97 Orchard Street in New York City*. (Santa Fe, NM: The Center for American Places, 2006), p. 7.
[89] Sanna Feirstein *Naming New York Manhattan Places and How They Got Their Names* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), p. 49.
[90] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 61.

Some of the buyers immediately constructed residences, while others held onto the land, hoping to sell or lease it for substantial profit. The plot of land that included the lot that would become 97 Orchard Street was bought and sold several times by, for example, distinguished personages such as Morgan Lewis, third governor of the state of New York State; Edward Livingston, third mayor of New York; and William Cutting, a sheriff of New York County.[91] On December 14, 1814, John Jacob Astor, a wealthy merchant who had come from Germany, and made his fortune in the fur trade, purchased the property.[92] To generate a profit, in 1828, Astor sold four of his lots (95, 97, 99, and 101 Orchard Street, situated between Delancey Street and Broome Street) to the Reformed Dutch Congregation, which proceeded to build a large church on the land. Unfortunately, this real estate venture was unsuccessful for the Reformed Dutch Congregation; it lost the property in a foreclosure auction. In 1836, the property was transferred to the Second Universalist Society of New York.[93]

Just as property of 97 Orchard Street changed hands many times, the ethnic and religious composition of the LES changed too. Manhattan's population increased from 123,706 in 1820 to 813,669 in 1860; one quarter of the 1860 population was Irish-born.[94] As Manhattan continued to grow, the common denominator of its evolution was change. In fact, New Yorkers often remark "change is the only constant in New York."[95] The almost sevenfold increase of its population is just one example of Manhattan's growth. Streets extending to Tenth

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[91] *History of 97 Orchard Street* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[92] Dolkart, *Biography of A Tenement*, p.10.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 70.
[95] Interview with Richard Rabinowitz, June 28, 2008.

Street originally were considered the northern-most section of the city, but in 1860, commissioners were appointed to build avenues and streets north of what would become 155th Street.[96]

In an 1847 letter to his sister, the American short-story writer, Washington Irving, described the changes in New York: ". . . and that corner is all changed, pulled to pieces, burnt down, and rebuilt—all but our little native nest in William Street, which still retains some of its old features; through these daily alterings, I can hardly realize that within my term of life, this great crowded metropolis, so full of life . . . was a quiet little city of some fifty thousand inhabitants."[97] During the 1840s, when Irving wrote this letter, Manhattan was experiencing another major transformation resulting from the addition of "railroads, tenements, and other accoutrements of the modern city."[98]

Luc Sante, a Belgian writer who lived in the LES during the 1980s, and who wrote about New York City from 1840 to 1919, also remarked on the metamorphosis of Manhattan "New York . . . founded on progress, on change, on bulldozing what has faded for the next thing, the thing after that, the future. The lure of the new is built right into its name . . . The myth of New York, therefore, is cast into the future tense . . . New York is founded on forward motion."[99] Manhattan during its adolescent years, 1880s to 1920s, provides the basic "architecture" of the city's current life and is the primary focus of this investigation.

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[96] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 70.
[97] Quoted in Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 70.
[98] Quoted in Luc Sante *Low Life of New York Lures and Snares* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1991), p. ix.
[99] Ibid., p. x.

A number of factors, many of them complex and interrelated, contributed to the desirability of the location and to Manhattan's advance into adulthood.

Before examining the city's new faces, it is necessary to discuss some of the changes America was undergoing. The original development of the LES was a product of the city's stunning industrial development and population growth. Technologic innovations dramatically affected agriculture, manufacturing, communications, and transportation, transforming American life, and especially life in Manhattan. By the 1850s, "many of the goods once handcrafted on a small scale by local artisans were now mass produced."[100] Manufactured items continued to grow less expensive as more efficient processes lowered prices, making virtually everyone a consumer. This "market revolution" drastically changed the United States' economy, "In fact, in the decade of 1840 to 1850, the national economy grew more than it had during the first 40 years of the century."[101] New inventions like I. M. Singer's foot-treadle sewing machine and Charles Goodyear's vulcanized rubber tires made life more fast-moving.[102] People and products from various parts of the country were increasingly interconnected because of the telegraph, the canals, and the railroads. One of most striking changes in American life was the newly invigorated entrepreneurial spirit that swept the nation, as individuals started to invest in these new industries. Indeed, unprecedented change took place in the period after the Civil

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[100] Quoted in Tyler Anbinder *Five Points the 19th Century Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance Stole Elections and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York, NY: A Plume Book, 2002), p. 17.
[101] Quoted in Gerald Danzer. J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Nancy, Woloch and Louis Wilson *The Americans (*Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Little, Inc., 199), p. 255.
[102] Ibid.

War and before the First World War, as immense natural resources, new inventions, and receptive markets combined to fuel the industrial boom: America's Second Industrial Revolution.

This period marked the transformation of our nation from agrarian to industrialized status, broadened America's multicultural composition, and set the stage for the United States to become a world power. It brought our country into the modern age as industrialization manifested itself in the transcontinental railroad, electric power, indoor plumbing, the expansion of older cities and the development of new ones. Further changes were the introduction of department stores and supermarkets, and the construction of skyscrapers. Business men like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller accumulated tremendous personal fortunes and contributed to the growth of New York City by funding the construction of libraries, concert halls, and museums as well as institutions to promote public education and public health. In fact, this was the age when the United States came to be called the "Giant of Industry." Industrialization created a new employment market; to fill these jobs, migrants from rural regions and immigrants—primarily from southern and eastern Europe—flocked to urban areas. Tyler Anbinder, a history professor from George Washington University, comments on this transformation: "As these changes took place, immigration and migration swelled the city's population."[103] Anbinder also remarks on the growth of the Manhattan, "The population of the city swelled tremendously in these years, more than doubling from 1825-1845 (from 166,000 to 371,000), and then increasing 70 percent . . .to nearly 630,000 by

[103] Anbinder, *Five Points,* p.18.

1855."[104] Despite these advances in American life, new problems plagued society: they included increased poverty, corruption in government, and racial segregation and discrimination.

New immigrants came to America from different shores but with the same dream. The first wave of immigrants arrived from England in search of greater economic opportunity and religious freedom. Faced with a rugged terrain, they were the first Europeans to settle in North America and establish the foundations of a "civilized society." As mentioned earlier, before the Revolutionary War, many groups had come to America from lands such as Africa, the Caribbean, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. It would not be until the second half of the nineteenth century that immigrants would arrive in record numbers. Burns and Sanders point out, "For years, the number of immigrants in the city has been on the rise, as the demand for workers, spiraled."[105] As industrialization increased, so did the numbers of people: "Over seventeen million immigrants arrived in the single period from the Civil War to WWI, more than America's total population in 1840."[106] Former President John F. Kennedy remarks on the immensity of this immigration: "Immigration flowed toward America in a series of continuous waves. Every new migration gathered force, built momentum, reached a crest, and then merged imperceptibly into a great tide of people already on shore."[107]

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[104] Ibid., p. 45.
[105] Quoted in Burns and Sanders, *New York*, p. 86.
[106] Quoted in Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present,* p. 56.
[107] Quoted in Ibid., p. 10.

Three forces economic hardship, political oppression and religious persecution were the principal impetus for the migration to the United States. In the 1830s, most settlers in lower Manhattan came from Germany and Ireland. Although this area was known to house, "every nationality of the globe," Anbinder points out that the diversity of the population during this period has been exaggerated and that, in fact, most of the immigrants had come from Germany, Ireland, and Italy.[108] For purposes of this study, a brief look at the immigrant groups who lived in the pre-law tenement at 97 Orchard Street warrants further explanation. It is important, however to note that many other ethnic groups lived and worked in the area and were important contributors to its vitality and growth.

The Irish

Due to economic hardship particularly the suffering inflicted by the great potato famine and political oppression by the British, 1.5 million left Ireland for the United States.[109] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, politician and sociologist, points out the impact of the Irish in New York City in the mid-1800s, "New York used to be an Irish city. Or so it seemed. There were sixty or seventy years when the Irish were everywhere, *They* felt it was their town.[110]

Most Irish came in family groups, which included, women, the elderly and children.[111] Generally poor, illiterate, and unskilled, the Irish settled in the cities,

[108] Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror A History of Multicultural America* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), p. 140.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Daniel Patrick Moynihan "The Irish (1963-1970)" in *Making the Irish American History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States,* ed. J.J Lee and Marions R. Casey (New York, NY: New York University Press), p. 475.
[111] Takaki, *A Different Mirror,* p. 144.

where they provided general labor and domestic service.[112] Irish males provided the labor for the construction of canals, railroads, and roads; frequently, they were "assigned to the hazardous jobs," while Irish females became maids and factory workers.[113] Moynihan explains the impact of the Irish's labor, "They quickly enough got into the businesses of digging ditches and hauling freight and Irish contractors have eviscerated, built up, knocked down, and again built up a good deal of New York City."[114] They were "mostly country folk, small farmers, cottagers and farm laborers . . . Few could read and write; some only spoke Gaelic."[115] Despite the fact that some spoke Gaelic, most spoke English. J.J. Lee, a history professor at New York University comments on the importance of speaking English, "The Irish were the only major English-speaking immigrants . . . [it was] a major asset in the social mobility stakes."[116] Harriet Martineau, a 19th century British author and social critic, valued the hard work of the Irish: "Every American acknowledges that few or no canals or railroads would be in existence now in the United States, but for the Irish labour by which they have been completed."[117] Unfortunately, because of their low economic status, heavy brogue, and devout Catholicism, the Irish found many doors closed to them; they often encountered advertisements that read, "Irish need not apply." Irish laborers complained about their treatment in America, "[we were] thought nothing more

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[112] Ibid.
[113] Takaki, *A Different Mirror, pp.* 147 and 154.
[114] Moynihan "The Irish," p. 499.
[115] Quoted in Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, p. 18
[116] J.J. Lee "Introduction Interpreting Irish America" in *Making the Irish American History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States,* ed. J.J Lee and Marions R. Casey (New York, NY: New York University Press), p. 27.
[117] Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present*, p. 63.
[117] Ibid. p. 70.

than dogs . . . despised, and kicked about."[118] Despite the fact that they were considered hard workers, the Irish were one of the first groups to endure discrimination and disdain, and were "perhaps the only people in our history with the distinction of having a political party, the Know-Nothings, formed against them."[119] By the early twentieth century, "two thirds of the Irish were citizens by birth, were better educated, and had greater occupational mobility than their parents."[120] As new generations were born and assimilated, life began to change for the Irish as they slowly climbed the economic and social ladder. Historian, Bill Williams comments on the Irish immigration in the United States,

> Irish Catholics were in many respects the first "ethnic" groups in America . . . the first immigrant group to arrive in extremely large numbers, to gain high visibility by clustering in cities, to retain a strong identification with the old homeland, and to appear sufficiently "different" in religion and culture so that acceptance by native born Americans was not automatic, and assimilation was, therefore, prolonged.[121]

John F. Kennedy acknowledged their contribution to the United States: "The Irish eased the way for other immigrant groups and speeded their assimilation. They firmly established the Catholic Church . . . the schools they founded offered educational opportunities to children of later immigrants of other tongues."[122]

The Germans

The Germans, "fleeing from bad crops, avaricious landlords," as well as political reasons came to United States in three waves.[123] Before the Civil War, 1.3

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[118] Quoted in Takaki, *A Different Mirror,* p. 147.
[119] Quoted in Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, p. 18.
[120] Quoted in Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, p. 161.
[121] Quoted in Williams H. A. Williams, "'Twas Only an Irish Dream": The Image of Ireland and the Irish in *American Popular Songs Lyrics, 1800-1920* (Urbana and Chicago, Il: University of Illinois Press, 1996), p. 1.
[122] Quoted in Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, p. 19.
[123] Quoted in Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present,* p. 63.

million Germans landed on America's shores, marking the first wave; between 1865 and1879, the second wave of German immigration occurred; the final wave began in 1880 and included nearly 1.8 million Germans.[124] Unlike the Irish, most of the Germans were skilled tradesman and not necessarily accustomed to living in the cities. They came as tailors, boot and shoemakers, cabinet builders, piano makers, upholsterers, and cigar makers.[125] German artisans were highly sought after because of their specialized skills and work ethic, and they became an important factor in the industrial expansion of the United States. In fact, "Americans admired the industriousness, moral values, and character of the Germans."[126] By the 1840s, the newly arrived Germans who came to Manhattan settled in a 400-block area east of the Bowery that came to be known as "Kleinedeutschland" (Little Germany) and the center of German-American cultural life.[127]

The Italians

More than 4.5 million Italians entered the United States by 1930.[128] Like the Germans, they came in waves. Jerre Mangione, a professor of English at University of Pennsylvania and his co-author Ben Morreale, a professor of history at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh comment on the large influx of Italians, "There [were] more Italians in New York City alone than in Rome, Milan or Naples."[129]

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[124] Ibid., p. 69.
[125] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 98.
[126] Quoted in Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale *La Storia Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1992), p. 33.
[129] Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia,* p. 133.

The first Italians to settle in the United States came from northern Italy in the 1820s, and most were farmers and artisans. In fact, many of these Italians were recruited to work on projects like the construction of the Capitol building in Washington, DC, because of their artistic skills.[130] However, most of the Italian immigration to this country took place between 1880 and 1924, after the *Risorgimento (*when Italy was unified); these immigrants came from the *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy, south of Rome).[131] Although foreign rulers had been expelled during the *Risorgimento*, life did not improve for the peasants who lived in southern Italy. Social disorder, conflict between the upper and lower classes, malaria and cholera, drought, earthquakes, and a rapidly growing population ravaged the Mezzogiorno, overwhelming Italy's ability to provide food and employment, and creating the impetus for southern Italians to leave their homeland in phenomenal numbers.[132] It is interesting to note that less than a decade after Italy became a unified nation, more than one third of its population had left.[133] In 1901, the mayor of Moliterno, introducing Italy's prime minister, Giuseppe Saracco, remarked on the exodus: "I greet you in the name of 8,000 fellow citizens, 3,000 of whom are in America, and the other 5,000 preparing to follow them."[134]

Southern Italians came to America in search of a brighter future. In fact it was the "The promise of a financed voyage and a guaranteed job on arrival were strong

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[130] Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler *The Italian American Family Album* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 19.
[131] Mangione and Morreale, *La Storia,* p. xvi.
[132] Ibid.*,* p. 11.
[133] Ibid., p. 32.
[134] Quoted Ibid., p. 17.

enough incentives to overcome the worker's instinctive fear of leaving his native village for an unknown land."[135] In many ways, the Italians encountered treatment similar to that accorded the Irish. This second wave of Italians lacked special skills and could not speak English, so they performed hard labor and menial tasks to earn a living. Most Italians at this time, performed "dirty work, which entailed a variety of unskilled jobs such as sewer laying, tunneling, subway construction, street grading, general construction, and street cleaning."[136]While other Italian immigrants, mostly women, "worked in the factories of lower Manhattan that became notorious as "sweatshops," where employees worked for hours and scandalously low pay."[137] In 1890, a New York City official paid tribute to the contributions of the Italians: "We can't along without Italians. We need someone to do the dirty work . . . We want someone to do the dirty work: the Irish aren't doing it."[138] This comment represents the change in immigration discrimination, as the Irish gained economic mobility the Italians filled their roles in the lower rungs of the ladder to the American dream. Thus "The greatest metropolis in the world arose from the sweat and misery of Italian labor.[139]

The Jews

The Jews came to the United States for religious asylum and economic advantage. (Their colorful story warrants separate discussion because of the richness and diversity of their ethnic, cultural, and religious background.) During the 1880s the Jews of Russia and eastern Europe began their migration to the

[135] Quoted in Ibid., p. 71.
[136] Quoted in Ibid. p. 138.
[137] Quoted Ibid., p. 133.
[138] Quoted in Ibid., p. 138.
[139] Quoted in Ibid. p. 139.

United States.[140] The assassination of Czar Alexander II of Russia (March 1, 1881) marked the beginning of a major exodus of Russian Jews because of the pogroms that followed.[141] Many Jews left Russia for America in search of a refuge, in which they could worship without fear of imprisonment and murder, and driven by the desire to establish a Jewish community. Irving Howe, an American literary and social critic writes about the allure of America for many Jews:

> The spiraling energy, strength, hopes, dreams of the European Jews enabled many of their sons and daughters to make their escape to America, sometimes for mere personal relief, often with the wish for a fulfillment of those collective aspirations which had been nurtured, but could not be realized, in the old country. America, even as it drained millions of Jews from shtetl and city, helped the Jews of Eastern Europe to survive and, for intervals, to flourish as a community. America was a safety valve and a haven, a place for renewal and a source of support.[142]

The Jewish immigrants were "a highly select group. They were educated: 80 percent of the men and 63 percent of the women who arrived between 1908 and1912 were literate. While most of them were poor, they were not inadequately trained in a profession or a handicraft."[143] At first, some Jews found worked as peddlers. Peddling for Jews, "often served as a path to advancement."[144] With their skills in the sewing trades and the fact that many garment bosses "were willing to let religious Jews keep the Sabath and work on Sundays", most Jews "flocked to the needle trades."[145] German and Russian Jewish garment makers revolutionized

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[140] Quoted in Takaki, *A Different Mirror,* p. 277.
[141] Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 5.
[142] Quoted in Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 24.
[143] Quoted in Takaki, *A Different Mirror, p.* 282.
[144] Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p.78.
[145] Quoted in Ibid., p. 77 and p. 82.

the way clothes were made as they established a standard measurement sizes for clothing.[146]

When the Russian Jews began arriving in the 1880s, the Jewish community blossomed, as they established organizations and created a community.[147] "By 1905, the Lower East Side had a population of a half million Jews."[148] Early on, Jewish immigrants established communities in large cities, so that they could sustain their religious and cultural traditions, thus "The Jewish immigrant world kept thickening its communal life, encasing itself layer upon layer of protective institutions, agencies of self-help, charity, education, mutual benefit, all designed to" advance the whole group.[149] Historians concur that, "The Jews had come to America with middle-class values of thrift, sobriety, ambition, desire for education, and the delay of immediate gratification for the sake of long-range goals Kennedy observes: "Every immigrant served to reinforce and strengthen those elements in American society that had attracted him in the first place. The motives were commonplace . . . Taken together, they add up to the strengths and weaknesses of America."[150]

Birth of the Manhattan's Lower East Side

Now that the main reasons for mass immigration to the United States have been addressed, it is appropriate to examine the development of Manhattan's Lower East Side (LES). The end of the 19th century is the birth of the LES as an immigrant enclave; like a powerful magnet, it would draw refugees from around the world. Social

[146] Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, pp. 286-289.
[147] Ibid., p. 283.
[148] Quoted in Ibid.
[149] Quoted in Ibid., p. 129.
[150] Quoted in Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, p. 30.

Historian, Elizabeth Ewen, comments on the transformation of the LES, "The Lower East Side was an amalgam of old and new: it contained vital old world institutions and the most modern cultural offerings."[151] With the enormous influx, finding adequate housing was a serious problem; the immediate solution was the tenement. Before the development of the tenement, most New Yorkers lived in row houses built for single families on lots that were 25 feet wide and 100 feet deep. However, these row houses were not enough for the many newcomers, which gave rise to the need for multiple-family dwellings.[152] James Allaire, a building speculator who anticipated the demand for cheap, multifamily homes, built the first tenement on Water Street in 1833.[153] Other builders quickly followed suit. "In its prime, the tenement was to Manhattan as the tree is to the forest, the basic and irreducible unit of measure. Between the Civil War and World War I, the tenement plantations spread throughout the whole of the East Side."[154] Within 30 years, more than 15,000 tenements lined the streets of lower Manhattan.[155] And by 1900, there were 42,700 tenements in Manhattan, housing 1,585,000 people.[156] The tenements solved the problem of providing housing in lower Manhattan; however, other serious problems were created by such overcrowding in a relatively small geographic area, among them, disease, increased risk of fire, and a woefully inadequate sewage system.

After the arduous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, to be followed, upon arrival, with the need to pass proof-of-identification and health tests at Ellis Island,

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[151] Quoted in Elizabeth Ewen *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1985), p. 16.
[152] Ruth Limmer and Andrew Dolkart "The Tenement as History and Housing" http://www.thirteen.org/tenement/logcabin.html (accessed on July 14, 2007).
[153] Sante, *Low Life*, p. 29.
[154] Quoted in Ibid. p. 25.
[155] Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, p. 110.
[156] Ibid.

many immigrants were too exhausted and too poor to travel farther, so they found their way to lower Manhattan, where most settled in a notorious neighborhood called Five Points and the LES because of the cheap rents. Social reformer, Jacob Riis, commented on tenement life: ". . . in its beginning, the tenant house became a real blessing to that class of industrious poor whose small earnings limited their expenses."[157]

Typical of the day, most tenements "were built in one of two patterns. The most common design in the antebellum years called for a structure 25 feet wide by 50 feet deep."[158] Before 1845, most tenement buildings were three or four stories high, but after 1845, these buildings added yet other level, making them five or six stories in height. The front, ground- level of the building usually was reserved for commercial spaces like saloons and stores; each floor above ground level typically contained four two-room apartments, with two apartments in the front and two in the rear. The apartment buildings sat on lots 25 feet in width by 100 feet in depth; the dimensions of each apartment usually were identical and were calculated at 225 square feet.[159] The main room of each apartment served a triple function; it was the kitchen, dining room, and living room and had either a front or a rear window; the second room, called the "sleeping closet," was windowless .[160] Since the apartments at the front of each tenement had access to light and air, they were the most desirable ones.

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[157] Quoted Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* 2nd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1971), p. 5.
[158] Quoted in Anbinder, *Five Points*, p. 74.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

Some landlords built a second building in the backyard, next to the outdoor privies; these "double-deckers," which measured 25 feet by 25 feet had two apartments per floor.[161] Anbinder described what it was like for the unfortunate tenants who occupied these rear apartments; they were "suffused with the odor emanating from the cesspools . . . rarely did enough fresh air reach them to allow the noxious odors to escape."[162] The number of people who had to squeeze into these small living spaces was large, so overcrowding was a major problem. Anbinder described the densely populated tenements of the 1850s: ". . . 46 percent of these apartments housed six or more people, and one in six accommodated eight or more."[163] These figures were the result not only of the landlord's avarice but also of the strategy of taking additional tenants to help pay the high rents. Two types of arrangements were offered: "boarder," one who paid for both food and rent and "lodger," one who paid only for a place to sleep.[164] Both abject poverty and the landlord's lack of scruples kept these tiny apartments at maximum occupancy.

Overcrowding led to the rampant spread of serious diseases. New York had the reputation for having the filthiest streets in America.[165] One factor that led to the filth on New York streets was the crude disposal of garbage. Garbage was supposed to be placed garbage boxes, which were in front of each tenement. In theory, the garbage boxes seemed to be a good idea, but in practice, it was a different matter. The garbage boxes lacked the capacity to contain the amount of

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[161] Ibid., p. 75.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Quoted in Anbinder, *Five Points*, p. 75.
[164] Ibid., p. 77.
[165] Ibid. p. 82.

the refuse generated by each tenement building. An 1863 article from *The New York Tribune* described the sordid conditions.

> In front of each of these tenement blocks is placed a garbage-box, Which is only another name for a receptacle of heterogeneous filth and corruption, composed of potato peelings, cabbage heads, turnips, dead lobsters, oyster shells, night soil, rancid butter, dead dogs and cats, and ordinary black street mud—all forming one festering, rotting, loathsome, hellish mass of air-poisoning, death-breeding fifth, reeking in the fierce sunshine, which gloats yellow over it like the glare of a devil whom Satan has kicked from his councils in virtuous disgust.[166]

Heavy street traffic, mounds of refuse, as well as "unsanitary business practices of slaughtering, bone-boiling, and rag-picking," coupled with horse manure and other animal droppings created layers of offal and filth, which were the breeding grounds for pathogens, which, in turn, caused life-threatening diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis.[167] With such filth on the city streets, residents inevitably tracked it into their apartments, so women had to perform the odious weekly task of carrying up buckets of water from the street to their third-, fourth-, or fifth-floor apartments to scrub the floors.

Another hazard of tenement living was the very real threat of fire. Sante described the conditions that led to tenement fires:

> The standard means of heating and cooking were unreliable kerosene stoves, which were bad enough, but the use of tenements by industry— whether in ground-floor establishments or through piecework done by tenants in their own apartments —provided tremendous hazards from the storage of materials like gasoline, naphtha, benzene, turpentine, and the simultaneous generation of sparks by machines— the scenario is not hard to imagine.[168]

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[166] Quoted in Dolkart, *Biography of A Tenement, p.* 50.
[167] Quoted in Sante, *Low Life*, pp. 30-31.
[168] Quoted in Ibid. p. 32.

A particular tenement, on which this investigation focuses, is 97 Orchard Street, one of the first new tenements on the block and now, one of the oldest still extant. In 1863, three tailors from Germany—Lucas Glockner, Adam Stumm, and Jacob Walter— purchased the church of the Second Universalist Society of New York, as joint owners. Without delay, they divided the property into three separately owned units.[169] The church was demolished; Walter took ownership of 95; Glockner, of 97; Stumm, of 99.[170] The three men built tenements on their lots. Walter built a separate five-story tenement, while Glockner and Stumm built a pair of identical, five-story tenements.[171] Lucas Glockner moved his wife and young son into the second floor of his tenement.[172] The structure had an estimated value of $8,000 .[173] The fact that Glockner moved his family (only three persons) here could be used to support the argument that living conditions were better compared to those already described; however, this fact also could be used to support the ability of some of the early immigrants to achieve the American Dream of home ownership and economic mobility.

Architectural design of this tenement was representative of its time. The façade was a simplified Italianate style, one that bears some resemblance to the Italianate facades of the brownstones owned by wealthy merchants and professionals.[174] The original basement consisted of two wooden storefronts.[175]

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[169] Dolkart *Biography of A Tenement, p.* 22.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ruth Limmer and Andrew Dolkart "The Tenement as History and Housing" http://www.thirteen.org/tenement/logcabin.html (accessed on July 14, 2007).
[173] Ibid.
[174] *History of 97 Orchard Street* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[174] Dolkart *Biography of A Tenement,* p. 10.
[175] Ibid., p. 27.

Ninety-seven Orchard was red brick and consisted of 20 three-room apartments, each about 325 square feet, with four apartments on each floor, two in the front of the building and two in the rear. The front entrance was a small vestibule with a centrally positioned, unlit, unventilated wooden staircase.[176] Each apartment had one wooden door with a glazed, operational transom above it; when open the transom allowed a modicum of light and air to enter the apartment.[177] The first room was a windowless kitchen. The largest of the three, the "front room," faced either the street or the back alley; the kitchen was adjacent to the front room; the only other room was a small bedroom. Only the "front room" in each apartment received light and air. "Amenities," if one can call them that, were rudimentary; they included a fireplace in the kitchen that burned either coal or wood; an external fire escape; and privies in the backyard. Tenants had to purchase their own stoves. There was no running water; so of course, there were no toilets, bathtubs, or shower stalls. Although pipes delivering fresh water from the Croton Aqueduct had been installed beneath Orchard Street, no law mandating that landlords hook into the system had been passed.[178] Glockner provided his tenants with a privy vault known as school sinks; located in the backyard, they housed six wooden compartments, measuring 2 feet, 6 inches wide and 3 feet, 9 inches deep.[179] Each compartment had a wooden seat and a door with a small opening for light and ventilation.[180] Although the apartments at 97 Orchard Street were very small and had limited "amenities," they actually were an improvement over the overcrowded row houses.

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[176] Ibid., p. 36.
[177] Ibid., p. 43.
[178] Ibid., p. 47.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

As early as 1834, there were official reports documenting the dangerous living conditions and high morbidity/mortality rates New York City's poor. In 1842, John Griscom a physician, and public dispensary, at New York Hospital, sent a report to the city government about the detrimental effects of the overcrowded, filthy living conditions of the underprivileged, "those damp, dark and chilly cellars [whose] vapors, with malignant breath, rise thick and scatter midnight death."[181] To protect the health and lives of the poor, he asked New York City's government for protective legislation and a sanitation police force.[182] Unfortunately, his pleas on behalf of the poor were dismissed. Concerned citizens, including Peter Cooper, formed the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP) and conducted research to compel the City Council to pass tighter housing regulations.[183] However, this did not happen. The only governmental oversight of housing, in New York City, were regulations for fire prevention. In its fourth annual report, published in 1847, the AICP provided the following description of tenement life, ". . . generally defective in size, arrangement, supplies of water, warmth, and ventilation; also the yards, sinks, and sewerage are in bad condition. The occupants consequently often suffer from sickness and premature death; their ability for self-maintenance is thereby impaired or destroyed; social habits and morals are debased; and a vast amount of wretchedness, pauperism, and crime is produced."[184]

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[181] Quoted in Anthony Jackson *A Place Called Home A History of Low-Cost Housing in Manhattan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 4-5.
[182] Ibid., p. 5.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Quoted in *New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor Fourth Annual Report* (New York, NY, 1847) pp. 22-23.

During the next several decades, as New York City's population swelled, and living conditions continued to deteriorate, some citizens organized to urge city officials to take action to improve the living conditions in the tenements. Conditions in 1862 are better understood after one reads the words of the Superintendent of Buildings: "The greatest amount of profit is sought to be realized from the least amount of space, with little or no regard for health, comfort, or protection of the lives of the tenants."[185] To deal with the myriad hazards to physical and psychological health associated with tenement occupancy, a group of social reformers organized the Council of Hygiene and Public Health (CHPH) with the aims of municipal reform and public improvement.[186] Their 1864 research of Gotham Court found ". . .4 cases of smallpox, 8 of typhus, 4 of measles, 7 of scarlatina, 5 of dysentery, 12 of consumption, and 27 of infantile maramus."[187] In 1865, the CHPH published a 350-page report on the deplorable status of sanitary conditions in the city. To prepare one segment of the report, the CHPH surveyed the city and found that among the population, estimated to number 495,592, more than half lived in tenements. In addition, CHPH members (who included many physicians) questioned how "the entire tenement house population is not devastated by the domestic pestilences and infectious epidemics that arise from overcrowding and uncleanness."[188]

Finally, New York City Officials listened to the reformers' pleas and ratified the Tenement House Act of 1867. This Act was passed as a direct response to the

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[185] Quoted in *A Tenement Story The History of 97 Orchard Street and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum* (New York, NY: Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 1999), p. 14.
[186] Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens Association of New York, *Sanitary Conditions of the City* (New York, NY: D Appleton and Company, 1865), Introductory statement.
[187] Quoted in Jackson, *A Place Called Home,* p. 7.
[188] Quoted in Council of Hygiene and Public Health of the Citizens Association of New York, *Sanitary Conditions*.

report of the Council of Hygiene and Public Health.[189] The new law defined a tenement as a building housing three or more families, and it required that the following five provisions be enacted:

1. One toilet or privy to be provided for every 20 people; and it must be connected to the city sewers
2. A three-foot-square transom to be provided over the doors of all interior rooms
3. Banisters on all staircases
4. Minimum ceiling heights
5. No animals except for dogs and cats from residential apartments.[190]

Although the law's provisions were weak, and often ignored by landlords, it succeeded in a setting a precedent.[191] Since 97 Orchard Street already provided privies in the backyard for its tenants, provision number one did not affect it.

Housing regulations passed in 1879, called the "old law," mandated that apartments have better ventilation and that 35% of the lot on which a new building was erected had to have a backyard. Once again, these provisions did not affect 97 Orchard Street since it already had privies in the backyard as well as the requisite internal windows.

Despite the hazardous tenement conditions, immigrants poured into the LES in search of affordable housing. Between 1880 and 1924, America experienced another massive wave of immigration; during these years approximately 20 million immigrants arrived. This time, they were coming from Portugal, Italy, Greece, Austria-Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Serbia, Turkey, Russia, and China. As these recent arrivals made their homes, as best they could, in cramped quarters, they also were forced to deal with overt racism and sometimes with acts

[189] Dolkart, *Biography of A Tenement*, p. 60.
[190] Quoted in Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

of violence. Anti-immigrant sentiment was clearly in evidence with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), the Emergency Quota Acts (1921 and 1924) and the National Origin Act (1929).

Deterioration of the tenements alarmed many of the social reformers who continued to expose the grim realities of tenement life. An article (1896) in *The New York Times* summarized the concerns of those who pressed for reform legislation.

> The chief objectives of old style tenements are contracted quarters; lack of privacy and promiscuous toilet arrangements, inviting moral deterioration; lack of light and air, and sanitary accommodations, ensuring a large death rate; and danger from fire—that ever-present tenement horror. All of these are wickedly cruel when such houses are new; when they become old, dilapidated, infested with vermin and infected with disease germs, they are a disgrace to humanity and a menace, not only to the health of the unfortunate residents therein, but to the health of the whole community.[192]

Progressive social reformers like Jacob Riis and Lillian Wald paved the way for the passage of a third series of housing laws, the first ones that "had teeth." The Tenement Housing Law of 1901, known as the "new law," addressed the reformers' concerns. It banned dumbbell tenements, mandated improved lighting and ventilation, and the removal of privies, to be replaced by water closets. The most important aspect of the law was the creation of the Tenement House Department.[193]

Although no longer the property of Glockner, who had sold it in 1886, 97 Orchard Street was affected by the "new law," which changed the physical character of the building. To meet the new regulations, the new owner cut into the bedrooms

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[192] Quoted in Ibid., p. 74.
[193] Ibid., p. 81

on the south side of the building to install two fireproof airshafts and two internal gas-lit water closets with toilets that flushed and lighting on each floor. The space required for the addition of these features caused the "sleeping closets" to become inhabitable, so the partitions were moved inward to create three smaller rooms.[194]

As the architecture of 97 Orchard changed, so did the hustle and bustle of the LES. In 1910, the neighborhood had peaked, with a population count of 550,000.[195] By the 1920s, the restrictive immigration acts, the enforcement of housing laws, and the attraction of the burgeoning outer boroughs would cut the population of the LES in half. Added to the list of causes of drastic population reduction was the 1934 amendment to the Multiple Dwelling Law, which demanded fireproofing of public hallways, an important reform. But, during the Depression, this mandate had become too expensive for compliance by many landlords, forcing them to evict their tenants and close their buildings. This was the case with 97 Orchard Street. Its doors would not be reopened until 1988, when Ruth Abram and Anita Jacobson founded the LESTM.

Selecting 97 Orchard Street as the site for their museum is a testament to the radical changes of this historic neighborhood. Ninety-seven Orchard Street, a pre-law building, has not been changed since 1935. It now stands a tribute to the immigrant urban poor to the unfortunates who did not survive and to those who did survive, and ultimately thrived. This building also pays tribute to the reformers who fought to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants.

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[194] Limmer and Dolkart "The Tenement as History and Housing" http://www.thirteen.org/tenement/logcabin.html (accessed on July 14, 2007).
[195] Ibid. p. 32.

Although this is where the story ends for 97 Orchard Street, never the less, the story of the neighborhood continues. As a consequence of the Civil Rights Movement, nation-based quotas were abolished in 1965, enabling thousands of Asians to arrive in New York City, the newest wave of immigrants, willing to work hard, and in so doing, to once again reinvigorate the LES.

By the end of 1970s, many of the manufacturing jobs that had been the lifeline of urban immigrants for more than a century had evaporated, causing the neighborhood to lose two thirds of its population.[196] Real estate speculators seized this opportunity to purchase many properties, to renovate old tenements, and to build new condominiums. Today, a four-room apartment with a bathtub in the kitchen on Broome Street (between Orchard Street and Ludlow Street) rents for $1,952.00 a month.[197]

The story of the LES is living proof of the hardiness and adaptability of the many who arrived in the United States to pursue the American Dream, as they conceived it. The immense diversity of their heritage and their experiences has left its mark on the city and on our country. Were we to gather a “patch” from each of them, we could create an amazing “quilt” one that protects and warms all of them, indeed all of us, leaving no one to shiver in the cold. “What a mighty change since the Half Moon first sailed up the noble river!”[198]

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[196] Ibid., p. 37.
[197] Interview with Brian Karpinski, June 18, 2008.
[198] Quoted in Macoy, *The Centennial Guide to New York City,* p. 27.

Chapter 2: History of the American Museum

To better understand the functions of The Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM) as a modern, interpretative educational institution, it is necessary to identify its place in the historical evolution of the museum in the United States. For the purposes of this study, the discussion of the development of museums is limited to certain events in America. Although many of the most prestigious museums in America, for example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Art, were modeled after European museums in their intent and architecture such as the Louvre (Paris) and The National Gallery (London), they arose different historical circumstances.[199] This study restricts its scope to the American museum in order to examine what they have to say to their visitors about American culture and the American experience, and to situate the LESTM in its historical context.

The history and development of museums in the United States are distinctively an American story. The American museum was not born out of the riches of monarchies, nor does it reflect the traditions of great masters.[200] Rather, this history was born out of the American spirit of democracy and progress. Just as the first Americans ploughed the wilderness to create productive farmland, later transformed their towns into bustling cities, and later still, expanded their community-based industries into powerful conglomerates, the American museum, started from scratch. Its beginnings were prompted by the ambitions and ideals of

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[199] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals Inside Public Art Museums* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), pp. 49 and 53.
[200] Nathaniel Burt, *The Palaces for the People A Social History of the American Art Museum (*Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), p. 87.

its founders and from the donations of the more affluent community members. Over time, American museums amassed collections of "exceptional quality" and of lasting interest to the public.[201] The American museum was based on the promise of being palaces for the people, created by the people. Through more than two centuries, this promise would be fulfilled. Over the last 235 years, the role of the museum in the United States has shifted from focus on awakening public awareness of the democratic ideals, as set forth in the Declaration of Independence, to an emphasis on bringing Americans closer to these ideals.

In 1773, the same year a group of Bostonians, disguised as Mohawk Indians, protested The Tea Act by dumping more than 300 chests of precious tea into Boston Harbor, members of the Charleston Library Society were collecting artifacts to represent a history of South Carolina, to be "put on view for the enjoyment of all of the people."[202] Thus, the first museum in the United States was the Charleston Museum in South Carolina, and its founders were the sons of the plantation aristocracy, who had requested public support in the form of monetary donations, through a newspaper advertisement.[203] Its first acquisition was "a drawing of the head of a bird," which marked it as a scientific museum, devoted to natural history.[204] Displaying artifacts, illustrations, and paintings, America's first museum served as an educational institution for the upper (literate) classes, and it was not until the leadership of Laura Braggs (1909) that the

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[201] Herbert and Marjorie Katz, *Museums, USA A History and Guide* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), p. 6.
[202] Quoted in Ibid., p. 1.
[203] Ibid., p. 1.
[204] Quoted in Ibid., p. 5.

Charleston Museum would fulfill its original mission: to provide education and amusement to the American public.[205]

From the outset, the American museum was "an amalgam of contraries," not unlike the American political system.[206] The United States is considered a democracy, and to identify with this "work-in-progress," it is essential to bear in mind historical circumstances. It would not be until after the Civil War, World War I, and the passage of two amendments that African-Americans and women would be enfranchised.[207] Further, it would not be until the end of the twentieth century that all Americans could enjoy according to the law full inclusion in this country's political, economic, and social life. For these reasons, it is "hardly appropriate to hold museums of the 1850 or 1900 to the standard of democracy we embrace today."[208] Museums, like other American institutions, were "direct products of the American democratic culture and developed in synchronization with the evolution of the general climate . . . the great majority had serious and egalitarian aspirations."[209] As the American museum continued to evolve, it continued to mirror and also to shape the changing values and norms of its time. The American museum, much like the American experiment in democracy, embodied ideals of intellectual enrichment for the public, and challenged itself to live up to its mission of serving that public.

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[205] Alan Sadovnik and Susan Semel, *Founding Mothers and Others: Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002), pp.178 and 185.
[206] Karl E. Meyer, *The Art Museum Power, Money Ethics* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1979), 17.
[207] George Hein, *Learning in the Museum* (New York, New York: Routledge, 1998),p. 6.
[208] Quoted in Ibid., p. 6.
[209] Quoted in J.J. Orosz, *Curators and Culture: The Museum Movement in America, 1740-1870* (Tuskaloo: The University of Alabama Press, 1990), p. 3.

In those early days of independence, other museums were established in major East Coast cities such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Art historians Herbert and Marjorie Katz commented on how "the vitality with which the new nation's social and political life were charged, characterized our cultural development as well."[210] Charles Willson Peale, an artist, expressed disappointment that there was no public space in which the people of Philadelphia could view his paintings. To make his dream come true, in 1786, Peale "turned a wing of his home into an exhibition hall."[211] His portrait gallery of distinguished Americans such as George Washington, Martha Washington, John Adams, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, in addition to a collection of natural history specimens were on view.[212] By 1794, his burgeoning collection had outgrown his home, and the American Philosophical Society invited him to exhibit his collection in their venue. Peale's early efforts to create a museum for the enjoyment of others earned him the epithet, "Father of the American Museum."[213] His vision and efforts led to his being considered "the principal inspiration for and progenitor of, the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts" which was founded in 1805, and which continues to thrive as America's oldest art institute.[214]

In 1782, another Philadelphian, Pierre Eugene du Simitiere, opened his home to the public.[215] Unlike Peale, du Simitiere displayed historical documents and other artifacts that he had collected during the Revolutionary War. He was one of the first

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[210] Quoted in Katz, *Museums, USA,* p. 2.
[211] Quoted in Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Quoted in Burt, *The Palaces for the People,* p. 28.
[214] Ibid., p. 26.
[215] Katz, *Museums, USA,* p. 4.

Americans to advocate the documentation and display of historical events as soon as possible after their occurrence.

The first museum in New York was in 1790 and made possible, by The Society of St. Tammany, under the leadership of John Pintard and Gardiner Baker.[216] Their intent was to showcase a collection of Indian and patriotic artifacts and to extend the educational benefits both to the society's members and to all New Yorkers. It was Pintard's brainchild to share with the public his scholarly dream: "to collect and preserve what relates to our country in art or nature, as well as every material which may serve to perpetuate the memorial of national events and history."[217] Pintard's and Baker's first collection was Indian relics housed in a room in City Hall.[218] For two shillings (per visit), members and their guests were welcomed on Fridays and Saturdays; they also were solicited for donations of articles of interest in order to expand the collection.[219] American museums would continue to entice the public with their collections and special exhibitions, but the cost of entrance and the days of visitation prohibited visits by virtually all of the working class poor.

By 1841, St. Tammany Hall had changed hands and intent; its objectives had shifted from the educational to entertainment; unfortunately, its "sideshow" aspect became a predominant—and infamous—feature. Now, it was "the waxworks, automatons, chemical and electrical experiments, primitive implements,

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[216] Ibid., p. 6.
[217] Quoted in Ibid., p. 161.
[218] Ibid., p. 6.
[219] Ibid., p. 6.

mummies, magicians, minstrels, and ventriloquists that brought in $150 a week."[220] Once again, the stewardship of the Tammany Society's collection changed. The entire collection was sold to P.T. Barnum, and became the keystone of Barnum's entertainment empire, which ten years later, would absorb Peale's natural history collection.[221] This dichotomy between the educational and entertainment aspects of museum classification is an important one and would eventually become a financial issue.

Two of the most prominent historical societies to emerge in the late 19th century and still exist today are the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) in Boston (1791) and the New York Historical Society (NYHS) in New York (1804). Pintard established both institutions.

Reflecting on the inception of American museums, one observes the emergence of patterns of leadership and patronage. Although American museums claimed to have been created by the people, for the people—as evidenced by their humble grassroots origin—in actuality, it was "the educated classes, made up of professional men and well-to-do merchants and landowners" who established these public galleries . . . and it would be the generous gifts of affluent private citizens that filled its halls.[222] Thus, American museums became "repositories of knowledge, values, and taste" of America's elite culture.[223] The first template for American museum making was set in motion by the end of the 19th century. America's

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[220]Quoted in Ibid., p. 7.
[221] Ibid., p. 8.
[222] Quoted in Karl E. Meyer. *The Art Museum Power, Money Ethics* (NY, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1979), p. 24.
[223] Quoted in Ivan Karp and Christine Muller Kreamer, *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), p. 5.

museums now embraced the patriotic mission of serving the American public through "collecting, preserving, interpreting, and exhibiting."[224]

By the mid-nineteenth century, every state in the Union, and most major cities, witnessed a proliferation of historical societies, cultural institutions, associations, and academies that would showcase historical and aesthetic objects. Each of these early institutions was the product of individual initiative and was organized as a nonprofit entity under the control of a board of trustees.[225] This pattern of local initiative eventually would spark sufficient interest and energy to found a national gallery.

As the nineteenth century progressed, two types of museums flourished: public galleries and dime museums. The public gallery—typically an appendage of an academy, library, historical society, college, or private club—was a space where individuals "could come to be informed of the meaning of history, instructed in the workings of science, and exalted by the presence of art."[226] In contrast, the dime museum was "an emporium of curiosities operated for profit and dedicated to entertainment."[227] The most famous dime museum was owned and operated by PT Barnum; its main attractions included anything "—living or dead—that would draw a crowd: the spurious Feejee Mermaid, bearded women, Siamese twins, and twenty-five-inch-tall Tom Thumb."[228] The aim of the dime museum was to

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[224] Quoted in Ibid., p. 3.
[225] Meyer, *The Art Museum*, p. 24.
[226] Quoted in Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 6.
[227] Quoted in Ibid., p. 22.
[228] Quoted in Meyer, *The Art Museum,* p. 23.

entertain and turn a profit, and it did just that. "The American museum became associated in the public mind with showmanship and theatricality."[229]

The years between the American Revolution and the Civil War, filled with innovation and enterprise, enabled the concept of the American museum to come to fruition, as evidenced by the development of numerous educational, scientific, historical, and literary institutions, in addition to flamboyant exhibitionism. During this period, America museums served two purposes: to educate and to entertain. Most important was the fact that generous benefactors had been identified, and that important collections were being amassed and preserved. In the years after the Civil War, American museums experienced their first major growth spurt. Larger, more impressive museums were being built, and these institutions reflected the nation's growing nationalism, industrial prowess, and the values and norms of the new American elite.

The museum movement was in full swing by the time the United States was ready to celebrate its Centennial construction of its first national museum, The Smithsonian Institution, excited inhabitants of the nation's capital. Although its charter had been ratified, in 1846, by an act of Congress, the nation lacked the means and will to create a national museum until after the Civil War.[230] Furthermore, Katz points out "The Centennial also witnessed construction of the first wings of what would be three of the largest, most influential museums in the country:

[229] Quoted in Ibid., p. 24.
[230] Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 18.

the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), the Museum of Natural History (MNH), and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (BMFA)."[231]

The chronology of events that underlay the founding of the MET is exemplary of how such an important cultural institution came into existence. The MET, like America's most previous museums, began as "a group effort, and the effort started from scratch," sparked by a speech made at a Fourth of July Jubilee in 1866.[232] The words of John Jay (grandson of America's first Chief Justice) inspired a group of men to form a committee to establish this premier venue. By 1870, a Board of Trustees had been elected, and it had raised $250,000 through the donations of 106 wealthy donors.[233] In only five years, The Committee of Fifty had secured a prime location on Fifth Avenue in New York City to house its first collection of Dutch masterpieces.

One of the most interesting aspects of the MET's founding was the change in its leadership, patronage, and funding. The Committee of Fifty comprised men who "emerge in a sort of composite picture as a collection of business men or professionals, some self-made, some of the one or two generations of wealth, of respectable but seldom prestigious family backgrounds, much of this family background from New England originally, who had made their fortunes before the Civil War."[234] More important, this group of men developed a new paradigm for the museum's organization, which established a precedent for the funding of most

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[231] Quoted in Ibid., p. 18.
[232] Quoted in Ibid., *USA*, p. 87.
[233] Burt, *The Palaces for the People,* p. 87.
[234] Ibid., p. 88.

museums. Previously, museums had been established by individuals, societies, and academies that funded their endeavors. However, this new plan

> . . . provided for a corporation governed by a board of trustees and aided, in New York, by city tax funds; in Boston, by public subscription. In return for this fiscal benefit, the American and Metropolitan Museums were urged by their city to repay their debt by being as "important and beneficial an agent in the instruction of the people as any of the schools or colleges."[235]

Throughout the country, other museum boards followed suit. The museum movement spread west of the Allegheny Mountains, and by the end of the 1800s, major American cities—namely Chicago, Cincinnati, Detroit, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Sacramento, and San Diego—had museums.[236] And, "in nearly every case, they were governed by self-perpetuating boards, and in time . . . museum trusteeship was synonymous with wealth."[237] This explosion of museum development and government support signifies the increasing importance of museums as symbols of the cultural maturation of the United States.

This new design for governmental funding of museums, and this new compact that required museums to serve as public spaces intended for the instruction, enlightenment, and enjoyment of all people, from all walks of life, became the ideal of all museums. Although, most museum operations were guided by this ideal, it would not be until the end of the twentieth century that this ideal would be fully realized. In fact, museums earned a dubious reputation: they were perceived to be purveyors of a singular point of view that of upper-class and upper-

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[235] Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 18.
[236] Burt, *The Palaces for the People*, p. 173.
[237] Quoted in Meyer, *The Art Museum*, p. 28.

middle-class society.[238] In fact, a major criticism of major museums was that their broad educational goals and their exclusionary policies were in direct conflict, and that the latter hearkened back to the dubious practices of the earlier museums.[239]

In the early twentieth century, the American museum reexamined its goals. As museums grew in number and in scope, as larger collections were accrued and grander buildings were erected, museum directors came to the realization that their enterprises needed highly educated, fully qualified staff members to carry out the various functions of the museum. It was time to "professionalize" the museum. As museum work came to be viewed as a profession, and a prestigious one at that, it attracted a variety of trained scientists and scholars. Another major factor in the improvement of museum services was the founding of its first scholarly association, The American Association of Museums (AAM). Its inaugural session was held at the AMNH in New York City, on May 15, 1906.[240] The attendees were very busy during their first meetings: they formed an organizational committee, and drafted and subsequently adopted a constitution: "The object of this organization shall be to promote the welfare of museums, to increase and diffuse knowledge."[241] To signal to the public the importance of education, AAM members drafted a resolution that proposed an alliance with the National Education Association (NEA).[242] Unfortunately, the alliance of the AAM and NEA was not realized; nevertheless, the educational functions of museums remained a priority.

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[238] Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, pp. 54-55.
[239] Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, p. 6.
[240] Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 21
[241] Quoted in Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 21.
[242] Ellen C. Hirzy, "The AAM after 72 years," *Museum News,* June/July, (1978) p. 2.

The twentieth century gave rise to the modern museum. No longer would American museums merely be places of "surprise and wonder." Now their focus would be "order and rationality."[243] Significant developments in the scientific community, in particular, Darwin's theory of evolution were catalysts for manner in which museums exhibited their collections. The efforts of AAM directly affected the level of training and competency of museum personnel and the degree of diversity of museum subject matter.[244] Most important, no longer was it sufficient for museums to display objects in an orderly, and aesthetically pleasing manner. Museums now were expected to be skilled interpreters of these objects for the instruction, enlightenment, and enjoyment of its audience, the general public.

Initially, the AAM held annual meetings, but as museum consciousness grew, the AAM became an increasingly active force, involved in virtually every facet of the museum world. In 1918, the AAM published a monthly magazine, *Museum Work*; in 1923, it established permanent headquarters in Washington, DC; its offices were set up and a permanent staff was hired to work under the leadership of an appointed director.[245]

Eleven years after the founding of the AAM, scholars including Laurence Vail Coleman, John Dana Cotton, Benjamin Ives Gilman, G. Brown Goode, Henry Watson Kent, and Paul M. Rea began to write with enthusiasm about the ideals and innovative functions of museums in the United States. Such writing was a new development since very few scholarly papers had been devoted to studying the

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[243] Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, p. 2.
[244] Katz, *Museums, USA*, p. 21.
[245] Theodore Lewis Low *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums in the United States* (New York, NY: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1948), p. 29.

philosophy and mission of American museums. There were, of course, "histories of museums, descriptions of their content, or perfunctory museum reports of elaborate and technical discussions of individual objects, and of methods of installing costly special objects or special groups."[246] At this time, there were more than 600 institutions called museums, but only 80 were considered "live museums," an epithet attributed to museums that met the following basic criteria: "A home, collections, an income, and, most important of all these essentials, . . . museum activities as may fairly be supposed to produce beneficial effects in their respective communities."[247]

Although most museum officials were in agreement regarding the basic characteristics of a "live museum," there was intense debate over whether the mission of the museum should be essentially educational or essentially cultural.[248] Two distinct philosophies emerged: the first was espoused in the writings of John Dana Cotton, who believed that "the museum was considered fundamentally an educational institution, deriving its character from the needs and desires of the community, which it served."[249] The opposing view was held by Benjamin Ives Gilman, who believed "that aesthetic considerations should dominate, and that education was a minor, if not actually unnecessary, function of museums."[250] Fortunately, most museums embraced a dual philosophy and a dual mission that valued, and pursued, both educational and aesthetic (i.e., cultural) objectives.

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[246] Quoted in John Dana Cotton, "The New Museum," in *The New Museum Selected Writings* by John Dana Cotton, ed. William A. Peniston (Newark, NJ and Washington D.C.: The Newark Museum and The American Association of Museums, 1999), p. 22.
[247] Quoted in Ibid.
[248] Low, *The Educational Philosophy,* p. 30.
[249] Quoted in Low, Ibid., p. 62.
[250] Quoted in Ibid.

An insightful scholar, John Dana Cotton understood "that museums were far less used than they should be; that they did not make much impression on the taste, manners, or activities of those who visited them, and that they soon would be neglected or greatly changed in content, intent, and activities."[251] Therefore, he advocated that museums should fulfill their civic mission of serving all members of the community, not only the upper-middle and upper classes. At the same time that the AAM initiated all manner of endeavors with the aim of professionalizing the museum, Cotton founded the Newark Museum (1909) as "a museum of experiments," publishing the results of his observations and experiments in *The New Museum*.[252] By "a museum of experiments," Cotton meant a public institution that "we wished to make useful to the city as a quite definite educational enterprise."[253]

The tenets of the new museum movement, according to Cotton, included eleven standards that placed the entertainment and instruction of adults and children (at the appropriate age level) at its core, provided for selected museum objects to be lent to individuals, groups, and societies, ensured that the museum's activities were publicized by the daily press, and published and distributed brochures and posters describing the museum's acquisitions and activities.[254] It was essential that the new museum no longer serve merely as "a storage house"; rather, it would be "a living thing . . . an active institute of visual instruction."[255] Cotton, in his influential paper, *Gloom of the Museum,* proposed that the main function of the enhanced American museum was to meet the needs of all the people and to serve as a reflection of

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[251] Quoted in Cotton, *The New Museum*, 21.
[252] Quoted in Ibid.
[253] Quoted in Ibid.
[254] Ibid. pp. 27-29.
[255] Quoted in Ibid., p. 29.

American culture. With the surge of museums in the United States, many enthusiasts yearned to "produce imitations of European Institutions" as they were "long established and greatly admired."[256] Cotton argued that it was incumbent on the American museum to move beyond the recognition and promotion of patrician culture and values that kept it "distinct from the lower classes in its pleasure and pastimes."[257]

Cotton was not interested in the didactic presentation of objects, an exchange that expected the museum visitor to merely "look, trust the experts, and admire."[258] Rather, Cotton wanted "to discover talent and encourage its development here at home."[259] Like Cremin, who was interested in understanding the functions of educational institutions in the context of the larger society, Cotton was concerned with the comparison of artifacts and objects in order to elicit analytical thinking. For him, a true understanding of the value of an object in the greater society could be achieved by juxtaposing "ancient and rare, modern and commercial pottery" and challenging the viewer to engage in analytical thinking: "Here are what some call the fine products of potter's art when it was at its best in Italy long ago, and here are the products of potters of America today. You will find a comparative study of the two very interesting."[260] To ensure that museums were truly "alive" Cotton undertook a museum training program at the Newark Museum, directed by Louise Connolly; that

[256] Quoted in Ibid., p. 49.
[257] Quoted in Ibid.
[258] Quoted Ibid., pp. 45-47.
[259] Quoted Ibid., p. 47.
[260] Quoted in Ibid., p. 57.

elicited in the trainees a new awareness and appreciation gained through a genuine apprenticeship model, enriched with practical hands-on experiences.[261]

One of Cotton's contemporaries, Benjamin Ives Gilman, also questioned the "next step for museums," in *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method*. He pointed out that, "Wealthy men have done a great deal in providing collections and buildings to house them; but the important thing for the future is to use money for increasing the efficiency of these acquisitions, and obtaining results from them."[262] In his preface, Gilman remarked that both curated, systematic collections of science and curated, systematic collections of art are called museums, yet each has a very different function and purpose. "Objects of art were made to be looked at . . . Objects of science were not made to be looked at."[263] Just as Gilman elaborates on the distinct purposes of these two types of museums, he also clarifies the difference between education and culture.

> Culture is an affair of the feelings, of what are called "sensibilities." Education may train the sensibilities, but it may also train other capacities, bodily or mental. Moreover, the sensibilities without training are often capable of the sympathetic responses we call culture. While the scope of education extends beyond culture; culture is in a measure independent of education. Not all education is cultivating, and not all culture is educated.[264]

Thus, according to Gilman, educational institutions and cultural institutions serve different functions. Gilman became an advocate for the museum as a forum of culture: "The ideal of the museum purpose . . . affirms that such an institution ought

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[261] Hirzy, *The AAM after 72 years*, p. 3.
[262] Quoted in Benjamin Ives Gilman *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method* (Cambridge, MA: Order of the Trustees of the Museum at the Riverside Press), p. i.
[263] Quoted in Ibid., p. x.
[264] Ibid., p. xii.

to offer its contents primarily for the exercise of the likings they illustrate."[265] Historical events and cultural evolution would, in the years ahead, challenge these two points of view on the core functions of the public museum.

Throughout this debate on what should be the principal functions of museums, one trend became evident; new studies gave rise to fresh, stimulating ways of exhibiting a museum's collections. An amalgam of European and American practices manifested itself in the 1920s and 1930s as the period room, the outdoor museum, and the industrial museum.[266] Originating in Germany and France, period rooms caught on in America during the Colonial Revival movement of the late nineteenth century.[267] The most notable period rooms opened in the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York in 1924.[268] A year later, John D. Rockefeller acquired George Grey Barnard's collection of "architectural relics from the great medieval monasteries of France and Spain."[269] This acquisition led, in1938, to the opening of The Cloisters (as a satellite of the MMA) in Fort Tryon Park, New York.[270] Former director of the Musée du Louvre in Paris, Germain Bazin, described The Cloisters as "the crowning achievement of American museology."[271] This manner of exhibition represented an important link to that of the LESTM, as its six restored apartments are similar in their intent to the striking and evocative period rooms of The Cloisters.

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[265] Quoted in Ibid.
[266] Philip D. Spiess II, "Toward a New Professionalism: American Museums in the 1920 and 1930s" *Museum News*, March/April, (1996): pp. 38-48.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Quoted in Ibid.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Quoted in "Introduction" www.metropolitanmuseum.org/works_of_art/introduction. (accessed on July 4, 2008).

Several circumstances of American life increased the popularity of the outdoor museum. They were the automobile and construction of the first national highways, which, throughout the 1920s, fostered tourism and visitation of outdoor museums. "Touring Americans began to wax nostalgic for the past."[272] The creation of the first outdoor museum, funded by John D. Rockefeller, was the tidewater city of Williamsburg, Virginia in 1926.[273] The first building to be restored was the Raleigh Tavern; restoration of other buildings soon followed. Early visitors were amazed and delighted at being immersed in Colonial splendor.[274] Costumed guides and the shops of artisans and craftsmen greeted visitors and provided a somewhat inaccurate version of Williamsburg's past. Rockefeller's recreation, skewed toward celebrating the lives of the plantation owners, omitted presenting information on the other half the population, the slaves.[275] While Rockefeller was romanticizing America's past, he also was changing the face of city life by tearing down 228 brownstones and stores to clear the way for a "mammoth entertainment-business complex" in the heart of Manhattan: Rockefeller Center.[276]

Another American industrialist who sought to preserve the past by way of the outdoor museum—one that bore a resemblance to an outdoor village was Henry Ford. To safeguard America's past, he purchased the Wayside Inn, in Sudbury, Massachusetts. The inn, built in 1702, inspired American bard and educator, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to write a few of his most well known works, namely, *Tales*

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[272] Quoted in Spiess II "American Museums in the 1920 and 1930s", p. 42.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past History Museums in the United States," in *Presenting the Past Essays on History and the Public,* ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 143.
[276] Ibid.,p. 148.

of a Wayside Inn and *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* during his 1862 stay at the Inn. Ford not only purchased and restored the Inn, but also bought "2,667 surrounding acres and transported there a gristmill, a saw-mill, a blacksmith's shop and a little red school house, allegedly once attended by the Mary of the *Mary Had a Little Lamb*."[277] Ford's bold move represents his vision, which was "to show how our forefathers lived and to bring to mind what kind of people they were is to reconstruct, as nearly as possible, the exact conditions under which they lived." [278] To further his goals of preserving the early American culture and values, Ford set out to collect every item that had ever been made or used in the United States, making him, at the time, the world's greatest collector of Americana.[279]

His mission became the impetus for the creation of a second grand endeavor, the creation, in 1929, of an industrial museum to showcase his vast collection. Housed in a fourteen-acre building, modeled after Independence Hall, in the village of Greenfield, in Dearborn, Michigan, Ford created an Americanized version of the village of Skansen, in Stockholm, Sweden.[280] Greenfield showcased the progress of American industry, underscoring the evolution of "agriculture, industry, lighting, communications, transportation, and the development of objects used domestic life."[281] Here, Ford celebrated the achievements of the common man, paying homage to ". . . blacksmiths, machinists, and frontier farmers, celebrated craft skills and domestic labor, recalled old customs like square dancing and folk fiddling, and praised the timeless and dateless pioneer virtues of hard work, discipline, frugality and self-

[277] Quoted in Ibid.
[278] Quoted in Ibid.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid., p. 145.
[281] Quoted in Ibid., p. 144.

reliance."[282] Ostensibly, Greenfield exemplified and celebrated the American spirit, but there also was an underlying message. According to Michael Wallace in *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States*, Ford's implicit message was: ". . . life was getting better and better since the good old days. Progress—as evidenced by ever-improved machines and commodities—had been made, not by the farmers and craft workers, but by the mental labor of great men of genius and rare vision."[283] It should be noted that preservation of the American past was in the hands of a few industrialist multimillionaires who brought history to the masses, Michael Wallace, in *Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation*, argues that the new rich became interested in preservation of our past because they "sought partly to celebrate their newly won preeminence and partly to construct a retrospective lineage for themselves by buying their way into the American past."[284] The philanthropy of Rockefeller and Ford (and others) represents a new American identity, one that reflects both forward-moving progress and backward-looking preservation of American traditions in order to protect their class culture. These paradoxical actions fuel the debate. Were they "ruthless robber barons" or "effective captains of industry"? However one argues, resurrection of the American past on their terms suggests that members of the ruling class, the cultural elite, created permanent legacies that preserved their position of power and privilege.

Three days after the opening of Greenfield village—which combined forces with the engineers at General Electric to reenact Thomas Edison's discovery of the

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[282] Quoted in Ibid., p. 145.
[283] Quoted in Ibid.
[284] Quoted in Michael Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation," in *Presenting the Past Essays on History and the Public,* ed Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), p. 170.

incandescent light bulb—the stock market crashed. "Black Monday" created a cascade of economic catastrophes that led to the Great Depression; during this period of unemployment and bread lines, many museums were compelled to shut their doors. Despite prolonged adversity, three enterprising women established what would become one of the preeminent museums of the twentieth century. They were Abby Rockefeller, Lillie Bliss, and Mary Quinn, and their museum was The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). Needless to say, they brought substantial financial resources to the project, as well as courage, vision, and business acumen. MOMA, then and now, is committed to the acquisition and exhibition of the finest works of contemporary art. MOMA's, mission, then and now, is to educate the public about modern art, and through modern art, to evoke a deeper understanding of the artists' aims and to engender a genuine appreciation of this genre.[285] Its "sister museums" of modernism also were founded during this period. They are The Whitney Museum of Art, founded by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Juliana Force in 1930, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, named after its founder, in 1937.[286]

Under the aegis of Roosevelt's New Deal, the federal government joined forces with various American museums to "preserve the nation's heritage and to provide cultural and educational stimulus for the people."[287] To preserve the American heritage, just three months after his inauguration on June 10, 1933, FDR signed an executive order that transferred all historic sites under federal jurisdiction to the National Park Service. Of the various agencies created under the New Deal to reinvigorate the economy, provide

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[285] Russell Lynes, *Good Old Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 2-3.
[286] Burt, The *Palaces for the People*, p. 332.
[287] Quoted in Spiess II "American Museums in the 1920 and 1930s," p. 44.

services for the needy, and reform United States social and financial institutions, three were of particular significance to museums. 1) The Civil Works Administration (CWA) funded museums to continue to carry out current projects and to arrange, catalog, and collate their inventories; 2) The Public Works Administration (PWA) funded other museums and memorials in national parks; 3) The Works Progress Administration (WPA) created jobs for many unemployed architects, artists, writers, film makers, musicians, and performers. Among the fruits of their labors were guidebooks, anthologies of local narratives (including those of enslaved blacks), murals on public buildings, and traveling repertory companies. Michael Wallace, a public historian and museum scholar notes that many of these new anthologies were local folklore, reflecting "a populist shift away from the approach fostered by traditional and corporate elites, uncovering legacies of struggle and redefining American history as something that included common people as historical actors."[288]

Another major victory for museums, especially those considered historic, was the Historic Sites Act of 1935, the first preservation law that had teeth.[289] The 18 provisions of this Act explicitly protected many historic sites and structures that were being threatened by the rapid growth of industry. The Act mandated the preservation of buildings, objects, and sites of national historic significance for the inspiration and benefit of the American people; ordered a national survey of historic sites; and undertook the restoration and maintenance of historic properties throughout the nation. According to Wallace, these actions "demonstrated that the state could compete with

[288] Quoted in Wallace, *Visiting the Past*, p.150.
[289] "Historic Site Act of 1935" www.blm.gov/heritage/docum/histsite.pdf (accessed on July 4, 2008).

private capital as guardian of the public memory."[290] Together, these acts broadened the meaning of "historic," so that it no longer connoted only those persons and events relating to the elite, and provided a powerful stimulus for the Americana movement.

The compilation of local and regional anecdotes, folk tales, and other narratives that illuminated the attitudes and behaviors of common folk represented a distinct change in direction of American museums. They were becoming more inclusive, more focused on representing the concerns of the common man, and more interested in appealing to a broader base of the American population. Nevertheless, scholarly articles written at this time note that museums were still confronted with a dilemma. In his 1930s article, "Museums in a Changing World," Francis Henry Taylor described this quandary in these words: ". . . the museum has succeeded in meaning nothing vital to anyone in particular, yet at the same time, it has strangely meant all things to all men."[291] Taylor went on to describe the evolution and dilemma of the American museum:

> The American Museum is not an abandoned European Palace, a solution for storing and classifying the accumulated wealth of the past, but an American phenomenon, developed by the people, for the people, and of the people. . . . It is simple American history; and our most important contributions during the last 75 years have been made when we have recalled this fact to our consciousness . . . . We have reached a critical period in American museums, as anyone confronted with a budget can tell too plainly. It is impossible to for us to continue as we have done in the past . . . . The people have had their bellyful of prestige and pink Tennessee marble . . . . They resent the spending of vast sums of tax-levied funds . . . . We must . . . solve this problem in a purely American way.[292]

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[290] Quoted in Wallace, *Visiting the Past*, p. 145.
[291] Quoted in Francis Henry Taylor, "Museums in a Changing World." *The Atlantic Monthly*, (July-December 1939), p.785.
[292] Quoted in Ibid., p. 785.

Taylor's position makes it clear that museums had come under scrutiny: ". . . the result was a sudden outpouring of self-criticism concerning policies and practices."[293] The financial crises of the 1930s made museums and other public institutions more dependent on support from governmental agencies.[294] Museums had to "broaden their base of support within the community if they hoped to justify their funding."[295] The far-reaching effects of the depression, followed by the outbreak of World War II, broke "the old patterns of thought and action," and led to the recognition that "the primary function of the museum is education and that all other functions are a subsidiary."[296]

During the period from 1930 to 1946, the mantra of museum analysts/critics was that these public institutions were not fulfilling their mission to serve the public. Theodore Low, in his article, "The Museum as a Social Instrument," cites two reasons for the museum's failure to achieve its mission. First: the museum staff had been recruited primarily for their scholarly achievements rather than their social consciousness and commitment to serving the public. Second: museum curators and administrators were unduly influenced by the European model for museums.[297] Those involved in the museum culture had, unfortunately, "failed to realize that that there could be such a thing as a museum with distinctively American characteristics."[298] An important lesson of Low's study is the changing role of the

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[293] Quoted in Low, *The Educational Philosophy*, p. 67.
[294] Terry Zeller, "From National Service to Social Protest: American Museums in the 1940s, '50s, 60s and '70s." *Museum News*, (March/April,1996), p. 42.
[295] Ibid., p.48.
[296] Quoted in Low, *The Educational Philosophy*, p. 69.
[297] Theodore L. Low, *The Museum As A Social Instrument* (New York, NY and Washington D.C.: The Metropolitan Museum of Art for Committee on Education of the American Association of Museums, 1942), p. 9.
[298] Quoted in Ibid.

museum as a people's university. Low wrote: ". . . the purpose and the only purpose of museums is education in all its varied aspects, from the most scholarly research to the simple arousing of curiosity. That education, however, must be, active not passive, and it must always be intimately connected with the life of the people."[299]

The need to totally redesign the American museum is asserted in Francis Taylor's *Babel Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum*. The title suggests the ongoing challenges to American museums in an environment that had become increasingly diverse, strident, and chaotic. According to the *Old Testament*, the city of Babel was dedicated to glorifying the works of mankind. Taylor exhorts museum directors to think of the museum as a public institution: "Museums are an American creation and, as such, they can play an exceedingly important role in maintaining and strengthening the things which we like to call "the American Way of Life."[300] Taylor describes the potential of the museum to attain its ideals thusly:

> The museum and the library have been called two halves of the public's memory of the past. But, the museum, because of its obligatory emphasis on quality, is indeed more; in its disposition to preserve the fragments of the past, it can . . . teach the truths of the ages, which produced them and thus develop in the individual a capacity for improvement.[301]

Taylor's conception of the museum is that of a "gymnasium for the development of these muscles of the mind. Here, by coming again and again, we gradually begin to realize the lesson which the works of art can teach us."[302]

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[299] Quoted in Ibid., p. 21.
[300] Quoted in Ibid, p. 27.
[301] Quoted in Francis Henry Taylor Babel's Tower The Dilemma of the Modern Museum (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 26.
[302] Quoted Ibid. p. 30.

Another strong advocate of the museum's role as raiser of social awareness is Thomas R. Adam. It is interesting to note that two of Adam's most well known books, *The Museum of Popular Education* and *The Civic Value of Museums*—had been written at the request of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE). As an impartial observer who had been commissioned to evaluate American museums, Adam was able to offer a unique perspective: "Museums can be seen to be powerful instruments of popular education, affecting the social history of our people . . . . It is this element in museums—their use as "weapons" in the struggle for popular enlightenment—that has caused them to flourish in our times. Separated from its social content, a museum is meaningless to all but its curators."[303] Adam's fundamental message was that museums in America found themselves at a crossroads; at a time that compelled them to redefine themselves in order to justify their existence.

Taylor, Low, and Adam were spokespersons for a new philosophy of museums, one that joined Gilman's and Cotton's concepts and visions. As these three men saw it, museums should serve three roles: 1) the collection and preservation of artifacts and objects; 2) the advancement of knowledge and understanding through the study of these artifacts and objects; and 3) the further diffusion of knowledge and understanding through public education.[304] The core of this tripartite was education.

It is a striking irony that, despite the fact that a preponderance of writings about museums focused on education, this function continued to be inadequately

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[303] Quoted in Thomas R. Adam *The Museum and Popular Culture* (New York, NY: American Association for Adult Education, 1939), p.15.
[304] Low, *The Educational Philosophy*, p. 94.

served. During World War II, all American industries and American citizens were bound by strict rationing policies. In 1942, the United States Ration Board labeled museums as recreational sites, thereby placing them under the same restrictions as amusement parks and other recreational centers.[305] Their new legal status was a serious setback; the number of school [and other] visits plummeted.[306] Only in the 1970s did museums regain their status as educational institutions, so that they could, once again, have badly needed tax-exempt status.

During World War II, when American democracy was being threatened by fascism, Americans banded together to support the troops abroad as well as the preservation of American values. Despite heavy sacrifices, in the aftermath of the war, America emerged an economic and cultural super power.[307] Dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought home the fragility of human life. Nevertheless, after a period of mourning, most Americans turned inward. The post-WW II years brought a new climate: "The worries of the war were now replaced with anxieties of the Cold War."[308] Many earlier advancements—the inclusion of women and the Negro in the political process and in narrating America's populist story—were suppressed by the "ideology of domesticity [that] encompassed gender-specific roles, celebrated the nuclear family, promoted the new work-to-consume ethic, and fostered consensus politics."[309] It became apparent that America had grown considerably more complex, politically and culturally. Fear (in some quarters, paranoia) of communism and the

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[305] Zeller, "From National Service to Social Protest," p. 50.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Lisa Phillips *The American Century Art and Culture 1950-2000* (New York, NY: Whitney Museum of Art in association with W.W. Norton and Company, 2000), p.11.
[308] Quoted in Ibid.
[309] Quoted in Ibid, p. 51

threat of nuclear disaster worked in tandem to create a conservative political climate. Museums, whose funding was mainly dependent on corporate and taxpayer financial support, ". . . realized that it was better to support the status quo than to challenge it, wiser to mount safe exhibitions than ones that might spark controversy."[310] During the McCarthy era, museums avoided aesthetic and social issues that were perceived to be controversial.[311]

It is ironic that as most museums avoided controversy and, therefore, did not invite debate of the significant social challenges that Americans were facing, some American artists were, for the first time, acquiring world recognition. As a consequence, artists from all over the country flocked to New York City to create new genres that would "express aspiration, risk, and freedom."[312] Independence for this liberated American artist "was best communicated through unconstrained individual expression; their break with tradition represented risk, and their epic scale spoke of ambition."[313] Under the aegis of Abstract Expressionism, a variety of striking artistic styles flourished. The support of forward-looking contemporary art dealers and of several museums "formed the basis of what became an explosive vanguard—the New York School."[314] While Europe was rebuilding its ruined cities and towns, New York was elbowing Paris out of the way and, for a time, Manhattan became the art capital of the world.

An important advancement in the sensibility of museum directors was the recognition that museums ". . . must adopt their educational missions to the assumptions of and needs of a market economy. They had to adopt the methods of the

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[310] Quoted in Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Quoted in Phillips, *The American Century*, p.12.
[313] Quoted in Ibid.
[314]Quoted in Ibid.

corporate sector if they hoped to compete successfully in the educational-recreational marketplace."[315] To meet the new market demands, museum scholars began to focus their efforts on the quality of the educational experience of museum visitors. Freeman Tilden influenced the manner in which museums exhibited their collections and communicated their interpretations and commentaries in order to improve the visitor's experience. In his seminal work, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* Tilden proposed six principles of interpretation that would make history and culture "more intelligent to the man on the street."[316] Tilden was interested in closing the communications gap between the "professional and the amateur," and he also was convinced that museum visitors made sense of objects if they were able to personally connect with them. Based on this assumption, Tilden encouraged interpreters to tell a story rather than to merely list their inventory.[317] Tilden's work not only changed museums' modus operandi regarding their presentation, exhibition, and communication with the public, but also influenced the policies and practices of a specific museum—the LESTM.

Although the Cold War had had a wide-ranging impact on America's domestic affairs throughout the 1950s, the decade was a time of growing prosperity for many Americans. The dream of a secure job, owning a home in the suburbs, and sending one's children to college became a reality for many. Popular culture celebrated the growing middle class and a more affluent lifestyle. But, this idealized image ignored the plight of the nation's poor. As World War II paved the way for the establishment of democratic governance worldwide, minority groups renewed their struggle for

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[315]Quoted in Ibid.
[316] Quoted in Freeman Tilden *Interpreting Our Heritage* 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1967), p. xv.
[317] Ibid., p. xvii.

inclusion—not only for the right to sit astride the gaily painted horses moving up and down on the carousel but also for the right to reach up and grab the golden ring. African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, women all began to organize in response to the inequities of discrimination and segregation.

In 1954, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) waged a successful campaign to challenge the legality of segregation in public facilities. The Supreme Court, in the Brown v. Board of Education, overturned the 1898 Plessey v. Ferguson ruling, and declared that school segregation was unconstitutional. The case set a precedent. Although it became *de facto* law, it would take years to become *de jure* edict. During the turbulent 1960s, throughout South and North, activists used nonviolent strategies in open opposition to racial barriers, while more militant groups carried out aggressive self-defense tactics. The radical, sometimes inflammatory, oratory and behavior of the Black Power groups was a harbinger of future political turbulence. Other highly vocal, well publicized movements—including feminists fighting for women's rights, Chicano activists of El Movimiento and other similar groups, and the gay and lesbian coalitions—indirectly affected museum policies and practices.[318] The consciousness-raising activities of all of these minority groups prompted self-examination on the part of museum directors, who understood that their institutions needed to become more responsive to the needs of a diverse population that was hungry for recognition, representation, and justice.

Until the 1960s, virtually all museums "were admired and were written and spoken about in terms of the selfless contributions made by their founders in support of

[318] Zeller, "From National Service to Social Protest," p. 54.

communities and the nation"[319] The Civil Rights Movement provided a major impetus for museums. Their stewards, and those who provided financial support, were acutely aware that a reexamination of function, purpose, and rationale was in order. These were thorny issues that posed difficult decisions. One of the issues that had to be wrestled with was: Should museum exhibits, special programs, and events continue to be supportive of the dominant culture (i.e., remaining "neutral") . . . or should the museum by way of its exhibits, special programs, and events signal that it was taking steps to "raise public awareness" (i.e., becoming "political"). Whichever path each institution chose to take, it knew that it now was required to adhere to the new AAM regulations.

In 1967, President Johnson asked the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities (FCAH) "to study thoroughly the status of American museums" and to report on the three issues affecting museum: 1) What is the present condition of museums? 2) What are the unmet needs of America's museums? 3) What is the relation of the museum to other educational and cultural institutions?"[320] Commissioned by the FCAH, the AAM issued the *Belmont Report*, which described the existing conditions and needs of American museums. With sharp increases in potential educational and cultural opportunities, and with pressure on museums to better serve all ages and interests, museums clearly needed more federal financial support. According to the *Belmont Report*, "Museums have arrived at the point where they can no longer preserve and exhibit the national treasure without substantial national aid." [321] Museums claimed that

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[319] Quoted in Ibid., p. 54.
[320] Quoted in Letter from the Chairman of Council of the Arts and the Humanities, *Belmont Report* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums,1968).
[321] Quoted in Ibid., p. v.

they could not meet the demands of the day for a simple reason: “They could not afford to.”[322] The case for federal support rested on six claims:

1. Museums provide educational and cultural services that no other institutions in the nation either do provide or can provide.

2. A number of museums provide nationwide services on funds that are disproportionately local in origin.

3. Although museums cooperate in antipoverty programs, and other federal programs, they have not received appropriate reimbursement for these services from the federal government.

4. Although the resources of museums are made available to schools, colleges, universities, and individual scholars for research that is financed by the federal government, the government has not helped museums meet the costs of this service.

5. The collections, facilities, and staffs of museums produce research that government agencies use and the value of which is recognized by federal departments and agencies. Increased federal support for such research is in the national interest.

6. The federal government has an obligation, as yet not met, to assist in preserving, maintaining, and wisely utilizing the national treasure in museums on behalf of the American people. This report does not suggest that the federal government assume primary responsibility for the financial support of America’s museums, but it does suggest that the time has come for the government to assume a partnership role.[323]

For the first time there was agreement in the national museum community regarding the role and purpose of museums. Although it would be years before museums would live up to their potential of serving as “universities for the people,” change was underway. In a letter from Roger Stevens, Chairman of the FCAH, to President Lyndon Johnson, Stevens asserted that museums needed federal support because of the broad scope of museum services to the public and because:

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[322] Quoted in Ibid., p. vi
[323] Quoted in Ibid., p. vii.

> . . . the nation's museums play an authentic and major role in the nation's cultural and intellectual life. . . A strong case can be made for federal support. It is in the national interest to protect our cultural heritage as other countries have effectively done for many years. Collectively, museums preserve, exhibit, and interpret the irreplaceable treasures of America.[324]

In light of the greater demand for expanded services to meet the needs of a diverse public, Stevens made six recommendations for greater effectiveness of museum practices and higher levels of public service. Of the six, two were particularly significant: a) to establish consensus on a set of national standards for museums; and b) to revise the tax code, so that museums no longer were classified as sites of "entertainment" but rather as educational institutions, thereby restoring their tax-exempt status.[325]

Museums were successful in obtaining federal funding. Throughout the 1970s, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Institute for Museum Services (IMS), and the National Science Foundation (NSF) provided subsidies to expand museum services for the enjoyment and education of a wider audience in the form of exhibitions, educational outreach, and educational programming.[326] However, it would be several more decades for museums to regain their tax-exempt status.

With the maturation of AAM's accreditation program, which had been established in 1970, museums would be evaluated on the effectiveness of their

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[324] Quoted in Ibid.
[325] Quoted in Ibid., p. xv.
[326] Zeller, "From National Service to Social Protest," p. 58.

programs, not on their so-called professional competencies.[327] Thus, two fundamental questions were: 1) What is the purpose of the museum? 2) What outcomes does a museum hope to achieve vis a vis those who visit it and the community in which it is located? No longer could museums make unsubstantiated claims; metrics to measure/assess these claims were now in place.

Most mainstream museums were slow to respond to the issues of the day. One of the first museums to confront the challenges posed by under-represented ethnic groups was the MET. Thomas Hoving, director of the MET, was one of the first to establish initiatives for museums to meet their public responsibilities. Hoving made it clear that he would mount exhibitions with the intent of exerting significant social impact.[328] In January 1969, MET's exhibit, "Harlem on My Mind," a photographic documentary of daily life in Harlem, opened. Indeed, it did have an impact, but not the kind that Hoving had expected. "Harlem on My Mind" elicited intense criticism on several counts for: a) its implication of homogeneity within the black community; b) its naivete; c) its failure to accurately depict the complex relationships between blacks and whites; d) its distorted views of Harlem [those of outside observers] and Jews.[329] Even MET's catalog had to be withdrawn because some of the commentaries contained anti-Semitic remarks.[330] Although the exhibition had been ill-conceived on several levels, it did mark the first effort of a major American museum to address contemporary social issues and concerns. Terry Zeller, Associate Professor of Art at Northern Illinois University, commented on at least one of the outcomes of the first

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[327] Stephen E. Weil *Rethinking the Museums and Other Meditations* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999), Preface.
[328] Zeller, "From National Service to Social Protest," p. 55.
[329] Ibid.
[330] Ibid.

major museum exhibit to confront contemporary social issues: “Its marriage seems to have strengthened the resolve of those within the profession who thought museums are, can, or should be above politics.”[331]

The Brooklyn Children’s Museum (BCM), in November 1969, held a seminar for stakeholders living in the community to identify strategies and tactics that could make BCM more representative of the myriad of voices in the community. The response was unexpected but significant. Instead of learning how BCM could be more relevant and useful, BCM administrators encountered the frustration and anger of individuals and groups representing minorities; the voices spoke as one: mainstream cultural institutions did not represent minorities and did not serve their needs.[332] *A Museum for the People*, documenting the results of this historic meeting, was published in 1971. Emily Dennis, one of its editors, commented on the turmoil: “[the meeting was] overshadowed by the realization, brought home at times with brutal force, that such discussions are premature until more basic issues that concern minority groups have been dealt with.”[333] The conference revealed that, while the intention of the museum to expand its educational mission to include outreach programs were beneficial, its outspoken critics continued to perceive museums a “instruments for disseminating the ideology of the dominant culture,” not as educational institutions.[334]

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[331] Ibid.
[332] Dennis Harvey and Bernard Friedberg *A Museum for the people; a report of proceedings at the Seminar on Neighborhood Museums, held November 20, 21 and 22, 1969, at MUSE, the Bedford Lincoln Neighborhood Museum in Brooklyn,* (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1971.), p. ix.
[333] Quoted in Ibid.
[334] Quoted in Zeller, “From National Service to Social Protest,” p. 55.

Given a generally agitated political and social climate, it was no surprise then that the 1970 AAM annual meeting was taken over by a coalition of activist artists, feminists, and leaders of minority groups who identified themselves as the New York Art Strike and Art Workers' Coalition. These demonstrators condemned museums for trying to carry on "business as usual in a time of crisis.[335] The activists' message was clear: museums needed to address important issues—racism, sexism, and repression in American society—and they needed to take an active, and outspoken, role in helping to mitigate the conditions that fuel these social problems.

Between 1950 and 1980, the number of museums increased dramatically. Stephen Weil, a museum scholar, commented: "During the thirty years ending in 1980, a period of some 1,566 weeks, nearly 2,500 new museums opened their doors. The rate was better than one museum per week and represents the needs and interests of marginalized groups and subgroups."[336]

An interesting development that characterized museums in the 1970s and 1980s was the increasing influence of corporations. Accompanying tighter budgets and closer oversight was the growing demand for accountability on the part of administrations and boards of trustees. These conditions resulted in an atmosphere in which financial managers, marketing and public relations, human resources, and other components of the corporate commercial world were integrated into the fabric of museum governance.[337] In fact, "more and more, the vocabulary of corporations and advice on how to apply business school methods to museum management appeared in

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[335] Ibid., p. 56.
[336] Quoted in Stephen Weil, *Rethinking Museums*, Preface.
[337] Ibid, p. 58.

museological literature."[338] However, the most significant impact "corporate speak" had on museums was "the blockbuster phenomenon."[339] Trustees valued "blockbusters" because these events increased corporate support, increased federal funding, increased ticket sales, increased traffic at museum shops, and increased press coverage. To popularize exhibit content and attract a cross-section of the population, "blockbusters" were publicized by museums' promotional departments as reflections of the museum's egalitarian ethos. Critics of this aggressive marketing, mainly academics and others outside the profession pointed out their concerns: wear and tear on the museum's facilities; increased security threat (i.e., the safety of the art works); neglect of the museum's permanent collections; marketing "overkill"; and perhaps most important, the superficiality of the educational experience.[340]

In the latter part of the1980s, the most prominent development was the continuing expansion of the museum's educational mission: to increase its reach to diverse audiences; to create compelling programs targeted to special subgroups; to strengthen relationships with those members of the public whose interests already were being met; and to continue to improve transparency vis a vis financial accountability.[341] Revived interest in financial accountability resulted from the demands of the subsidizers such as philanthropic foundations, major corporations, and governmental agencies who, understandably, demanded to know precisely how their funding was being used, to be assured that, indeed, their money was wisely spent.

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[338] Quoted in Ibid.
[339] Quoted in Ibid.
[340] Ibid., p. 59.
[341] Ibid.

In 1984, the AAM published *Museums for a New Century*, a comprehensive report that described current trends affecting museums and their activities. *Museums for a New Century* identified the current operations and needs of museums and the obstacles and the opportunities museums were encountering and would continue to encounter.[342] Like the *Belmont Report*, this report provided an update on current conditions and an action plan to guide planning for the future. The report contained 16 recommendations. These include: 1) museums must establish, and then implement, clear goals; 2) the growth of a collection must be consistent with these goals and must also represent educational endeavor and academic research; 3) continuing, systematic research on museum collections should be supported; 4) education of the public should always be given top priority; 5) consideration should be given to developing closer, more productive relationships between museums and schools; 6) staff recruitment should be conducted in order to promote greater diversity, and qualified female candidates should be (whenever appropriate) assigned/ promoted to positions of greater responsibility; 7) collaboration among museums and other institutions should be encouraged; 8) a national program to increase public awareness of the value of museums should be developed and disseminated; and, to this end, 9) there should be a federal initiative promoting the contributions of museums to the public good.[343] The Pew Memorial Trust and the Philip Morris Corporation, as well as other institutions and organizations, funded the research for and publication of this report.

[342] Museums for a New Century (Washington, D.C.: AAM, 1984).
[343] Quoted in Ibid.

(It should be noted that Philip Morris was among the first major donors when the LESTM was in its planning stage.[344])

Museums for a New Century called attention to the fact that more public voices are involved in decision-making, that special interest groups must be heeded, and that their demands be given serious consideration. Furthermore, the proliferation of these special interest groups reflects America's robust pluralism, a fact of life that must be recognized and represented in American museums. Additionally, the report emphasized the importance of rigorous documentation of the often immense inventories of museums; given that a great proportion of the collections are archived and rarely (if ever) on public display. Lastly, given the power and sophistication of specialized computer programs, creation of a unified, national archive of American museum collections is feasible.

Seven years after it published *Museums for a New* Century, the AAM published *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums* the first major report on the educational role of US museums. The report reviewed the critical issues in museum education and recommended specific initiatives to strengthen and expand the museum's role as an educator.[345] With an increased emphasis on public service, the report proposed ten precepts guided by excellence and equity:

1. **Mission:** Assert that museums place education—in the broadest sense of the word—at the core of their public service role. Ensure that their commitment to serve the public is clearly stated in every mission and central to every activity.

2. **Audience:** Reflect the diversity of American society by establishing and maintaining the broadest possible public dimension.

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[344] Interview with Bill Kahl July 17, 2008.
[345] *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Museums Dimensions of Museums* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1991), p. 24.

3. **Learning:** Understand, develop, expand, and leverage opportunities for learning that speaks to a diverse public audience.

4. **Scholarship:** Enrich the public's knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of their collections and of the many cultures and points of view that are represented.

5. **Interpretation**: Ensure that the interpretative process is manifested by a variety of cultural and intellectual perspectives, and that the museum's role as interpreter reflects a genuine appreciation of diversity.

6. **Collaboration:** Engage in active, ongoing collaborative efforts with a wide spectrum of organizations and individuals who can, and will, contribute to the expansion of the museum's public dimension.

7. **Decision-Making**: Assess the internal decision-making process and develop new models that enable an expanded public dimension and a renewed commitment to excellence and equity.

8. **Board, Staff, and Volunteers**: Implement policies that achieve diversity among trustees, staff members, and volunteers to build and sustain a broader perspective.

9. **Professional Development**: Provide professional development and training for new and experienced professionals, trustees, and volunteers that meet their needs and that help them carry out their responsibilities.

10. **Leadership**: Commit leadership and financial resources to strengthen the museum's public dimension.[346]

In addition, the report raised three questions for museum leadership to consider as it plans and executes programs: 1) How can museums, which have so much to contribute to the collective human experience, welcome a broad spectrum of our society? 2) How can museums use the abundance of their collections and their scholarly resources to enrich and empower citizens from all backgrounds? 3) How can museum professionals and trustees bring about the significant and lasting changes needed to ensure the role of museums as integral to the fabric of society?

[346] Ibid.

Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums stressed "museums must be places that welcome a diverse audience, but first they should reflect our society's pluralism in every aspect of their operations and programs."[347] Echoing the demands made of public education in the United States, museums are asked to play a pivotal role as "multidimensional, socially responsible institutions with a tremendous capacity for bringing knowledge to the public and enriching all facets of the human experience to help nurture a humane citizenry equipped to make informed choices in a democracy and to address the challenges and opportunities of an increasingly global society."[348] The report also was highly critical of museums' failings and exhorted them to implement the changes that will enable them to meet the needs of the public in an increasingly diverse and global society. As the AAM sees it, museums in the United States have failed to live up to their potential, and therefore, they need to:

1. Make a strong commitment to an expanded public dimension that makes them true centers of learning for a diverse audience.
2. Ensure that the public feels welcome and that what they will see, and hear, and learn is relevant to their lives.
3. Recognize that virtually every decision regarding acquisition, exhibition, and interpretation shapes the public dimension.
4. Ensure that their staff, at every level, represents a pluralistic society.
5. Establish and follow a system of self-reflection and self-evaluation.
6. Create effective working relationships with both formal and informal educational institutions.[349]

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[347] Quoted in Ibid. p. 26
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid.

In essence, museums no longer can merely make claims. They must demonstrate that they are effectively reaching their audiences. Finally, their educational mission must not reflect a narrow concept of culture.

The following decade witnessed the transformation of the public dimension of American museums. The AAM revised its accreditation criteria and the Museums Assessment Program that evaluated the quality of an institution's interactions with its audiences. The grant applications of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) required that museums describe their educational services and processes for assessing learning.[350] In 2002, the AAM published *Excellence in Practice: Museum Education Principles and Standards*. This report incorporated key concepts of the 1991 report, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums* and elaborated on the strategies necessary for engaging diverse audiences in meaningful ways. As stewards of the American natural and cultural state, "museums are compelled to advance an understanding of all natural forms and of human experiences. It is incumbent on museums to be resources for humankind, and in all their activities to foster an informed appreciation of the rich and diverse world we have inherited." In 2005, the AAM published a revision of its 2002 report. The 2005 report defined three standards and principles: accessibility, accountability, and advocacy.[351] It also provided extended definitions of key terms, including "best practices, interpretation, standards, and community"—and it identified selected resources that museums could use to effectively carry out their respective missions. Museums now had a definitive guide to inform their policies and practices.

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[350] EdCom *Excellence in Practice: Museum Education Principles and* Standards (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2005).
[351] Ibid.

With the expansion of museum activities in the 1980s and 1990s, American museums appeared to be reaching their potential. Wilcomb E. Washburn, in "Education and the New Elite: American Museums in the 1980s and 1990s," commented on how museums had evolved from serving as storehouses of the culture of the elite to fulfilling a more expansive and democratic mission:

> It is often said that museums have moved from an elitist philosophy, reflected in the origin of many of our great museums, to a more democratic philosophy, reflected by the museums' doors being swung wide open to a mass audience. Indeed, with the emphasis on education, "outreach," traveling exhibits, and CD-ROMs, museums are increasingly carrying their messages directly to the people.[352]

Democratization allowed "outsiders" to become "curators" and to design exhibitions, but it is inaccurate to claim that elitism had been supplanted by a populist attitude.[353] Rather, a different type of elitism emerged, one that drew its strength from the academic world. The wealthy and the social elite were now perceived to be unsympathetic to the common man, while the oppressed and their advocates were elevated in status and empowerment. Like academe, museums began to focus on social history—with greater emphasis on "anonymous" people, on common folk and their activities.

Since their inception, museums always have claimed a social purpose. Throughout the years, they have sought to expand their audiences by becoming more representative of the interests of a pluralistic society. Museums are shaped by an evolving society, and in the last 30 years, they have come to reflect the value of such progress.

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[352] Wilcomb E. Washburn, "*Education and the New Elite: American Museums in the 1980s and 1990s," News*, March/April, (1996): p. 60.
[353] Ibid.

No longer are museums inflexible, monolithic entities; rather, they have become more representative of the concerns of the greater society and of those groups who have been marginalized. Finally, museums have become more self-aware and more inclusive, appreciating the diversity of the culture they serve, and comprehending the diversity of the learning and teaching process. Ivan Karp, in his introduction to *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, described museums as "political arenas in which definitions and culture are asserted and contested."[354] As repositories of knowledge, value, and taste, museums educate, refine, and produce a society, and it is important that museums present an accurate picture of the United States with regard to class and ethnicity.

The LESTM exemplifies the achievement of the AAM's goals. In the time span that saw the publication of *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums* (1984) and *Excellence in Practice: Museum Education Principles and Standards* (1991), the LESTM opened its doors with a social activist mission. The LESTM seeks to raise public awareness through historical interpretation of issues of class and ethnicity in the urban United States (1860 to 1935); raises public awareness through discussion of contemporary issues of class and ethnicity; and raises public awareness of the importance, and necessity, of ethnic and class tolerance. Almost 20 years after the controversial *Harlem on My Mind* exhibition (1969), the LESTM offers social history as an essential resource for understanding contemporary American life. According to Ruth Abram, in "History Is As History Does: The Evolution of a Mission-Driven Museum, "[I]

[354] Ivan Karp and Christine Mullen Kreamer ed. "Introduction*"* in *Museums and Communities The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), p.1.

wanted to examine ". . . what institutions do, rather than what they say, what they own."[355] Creating a welcoming space that engages all visitors and asks them to become active participants in a dialogue about America's immigrant past and its immigrant present has been the mission of the LESTM. Abram's activism, which led to her intense involvement with organizations that fought for the advancement of civil liberties and especially the rights of the marginalized ed her to raise an important question: "How will we create a truly equitable society, where we can stop using gender, race, and class, or other factors, as excuses to treat one group of people less well and to deny that group equal opportunity?"[356] Abrams used a pre-law tenement (97 Orchard Street) as an evocative stage to begin a thoughtful dialogue concerning the immigrant experience and how the struggles of the inhabitants of 97 Orchard Street continue to have relevance for all Americans who are alive today. The LESTM was the first American museum to preserve and interpret the lives of the impoverished urban working-class.

[355] Quoted in Ruth J. Abram "History is as History does: the Evolution of a Mission-Driven Museum" in *Looking Reality in the Eye Museums and Social* Responsibility (ed) Robert R. Janes, and Gerald T. Canaty (Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Press, 2005), p.19.
[356] Quoted in Ibid., p. 20.

Chapter 3: The First Decade of the LESTM: 1988-1997

Opening the restored front door of 97 Orchard Street, you enter the home of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM), the first US landmark building that preserves, interprets, and presents the "struggles, strategies, and triumphs" of the lives of immigrant, migrant, working class and poor people living in a big city, where you are transported back to a time when the tenement buildings of Manhattan first encountered housing regulations and codes.[357] This was a time when waves of Irish, Italian, German, and Chinese immigrants settled in the Lower East Side in search of cheap housing and a better life. While the world outside of 97 Orchard Street has been gentrified, 97 Orchard Street has remained the same as it was during the early and mid-nineteenth century. Andrew Dolkart, Professor of architecture at Columbia University, observed, "The fact that 97 Orchard Street retains much of its historic fabric provides a unique opportunity to document, analyze, and interpret housing conditions in which the urban poor lived from the mid-nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century."[358] Ninety-Seven Orchard Street a home to "an estimated 7,000 immigrants from more than 20 countries between the years 1863," when it opened, to 1935, when it closed was a hub for many immigrants landing at Ellis Island and settling in New York City.[359] Through the careful restoration of six apartments and the application of historical perspective, the LESTM is testimony to a few of the families who had occupied this building during these seven decades. To

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[357] AAM Report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).
[358] Quoted in Andrew Dolkart, *Biography of A Tenement House in New York City An Architectural History of 97 Orchard Street*. (Santa Fe, New Mexico: The Center for American Places, 2006), p. 3.
[359] Quoted from www.tenement.org. (accessed on June 2, 2008).

help visitors understand the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences in Manhattan's Lower East Side, the LESTM offers dramatic presentations, forums and special exhibitions, in addition to its permanent exhibit. Its educational goals are to: illuminate this population, bring the history of this neighborhood to life, and raise for discussion issues of class, race, and ethnicity, urban housing, and social reform. As if these were not sufficient, the LESTM provides walking tours that highlight significant changes in the cultural landscape of the Lower East Side.

The establishment and evolution of the LESTM is a fascinating story that occupies a unique position in the history of American museums. Following a tradition similar to the founding of many of the nation's first museums, the LESTM originated as a "vision of establishing a house museum that would examine the lives of the typical immigrant."[360] Ruth J. Abram, the LESTM's founder, describes her dream:

> I wanted a way to promote tolerance, to challenge stereotypes, to ask for a world where adults can protect children, where women's contributions are acknowledged, where differences are both acknowledged and appreciated, and certainly not used as the basis for exclusion. I wanted a way to provide role models for those who might not have had them in their homes or neighborhoods—at least not the ones they needed. I wanted a vehicle that would place history at the disposal of everyone in a respectful, non-rhetorical way that would encourage discussion and debate.[361]

A major difference in the thinking of the founders of US museums, such as the Charleston Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and that of the founders of the LESTM was focus. Although each institution considered the needs of the

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[360] Quoted in Dolkart, *Biography of A Tenement House*, p. viii.
[361] Quoted in Ruth Abram, "A Museum Grew in Me," (New York, NY: *Horizons of Culture and Life*, 1991), p.11.

general public in its mission statement, restrictive hours and high admissions fees associated with the former suggested that, in actuality, these museums had been created for an audience that comprised the middle, upper-middle, and upper classes. In contrast, the focus of the LESTM was on those segments of the population that were less likely to visit museums: the lower-middle class and the working class. It was to attract these audiences that the LESTM offered/offers walking tours every Sunday as well as provides various free programs throughout the year.[362] Current changes in museums' policies and practices, with a greater commitment to representing public interests, reflect advances with regard to civil liberties and inclusiveness. Distinct to the LESTM has been its consistent affirmation of the importance of the working class—both as a group whose accomplishments should be recognized and as an important segment of the museum audience, whose attendance should be encouraged.

In the period between the founding of Charleston Museum in the 1770s and the LESTM in the 1980s, American society had changed radically. So too, had the purpose of museums, the profile of museum visitors, and the accountability of both. Several important societal changes had an immense impact on American museums, in general, and on the LESTM, in particular:

1. Massive immigration from southern and eastern Europe and Asia in addition to new waves of immigration worldwide.

2. Two extraordinary human rights movements that would have far-reaching effects on US political, social, and economic history: Civil rights and women's rights.

[362] Fall/Winter-1990 Calendar of Events (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

3. The enactment of housing legislation, building codes, and fire regulations in New York City throughout the 20th century

4. The establishment of free public education through grade twelve.

5. The founding of the first national academic council governing the mission, philosophy, and operation of museums throughout the United State—the American Association of Museums (AAM).

6. The promulgation of "Equity and Excellence," AAM's report that exhorted all museums to consider the needs of the general public **a)** in developing their exhibits and special events and **b)** in aligning their policies and practices with the radically changed demographics of the US population.

An inexorable shift was occurring: dominance of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) was gradually giving way to a more pluralistic and diverse marketplace and political arena. In addition, American museums were becoming professionalized. Both trends have directly and indirectly influenced the practices of the LESTM.

Background

Ruth J. Abram, founder of the LESTM, was not a typical museum professional, whose sole interest was to found a prestigious public institution. Rather, she was a political activist who organized coalitions that confronted civil rights, discrimination, exploitation, and poverty. After many years as an organizer and fund-raiser for civil rights causes, Abram founded the LESTM in order to stimulate dialogue about issues of class, race, ethnicity, urban housing, immigration, and social reform. Abram felt that a tenement museum could serve as a powerful stimulus for such dialogues.[363] In an article for *Horizon,* Abram explained why she had picked the pre-law tenement of 97 Orchard Street as the locus for raising public awareness:

[363] Abram, "*Horizons of Culture and Life*," p.10.

> The tenement building represented the common ground of immigrants from everywhere. Through it, one could discuss the history of immigration and immigrant life, the role of reformers, of government, the history of housing, and our changing views as to what was an acceptable life style. But most of all, through a tenement museum, the general public, old and young alike, could be invited to consider the question: How will we be one nation, and at the same time enjoy, appreciate, and certainly not be afraid of, the profound differences we bring to the table based on background?[364]

The LESTM not only pioneered the preservation, interpretation, and presentation of the lives of urban, immigrant, migrant, working-class poor but also set a precedent for the use of history as a springboard for addressing issues of race, ethnicity, class, human rights, urban housing, and immigration reform. According to Abram, "History is a powerful tool for . . . developing a strategy for the present"[365] [and] the power of history transforms individuals and nations. It can offer comfort and role models."[366]

Abram and her colleague, Anita Jacobson, searched the Lower East Side for a space to house Abram's brainchild: an actual tenement that would be the stage for the "re-enactment" of the experiences of New York City's immigrants and migrants and would stimulate debate on social issues and the promotion of humanitarian and democratic values.[367] In January 1988, Jacobson came upon a vacant storefront sign [97 Orchard Street] and inquired about the building's availability. She met the landlady, Barbara Helpern, whose family had owned the building since 1918.[368] Helpern explained that the 20 apartments had remained unoccupied since 1935

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[364] Quoted in Ibid., p. 12.
[365] Quoted in Ibid., p. 11.
[366] Quoted from www.hps.gov (accessed on January 28, 2008).
[367] Lower East Side Tenement Museum, *A Tenement Story History of 97 Orchard Street and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum*, (New York, NY: Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 1999), p.12.
[368] Ibid.

because of building and fire codes that had been enacted during the Depression. Helpern's predecessors had evicted the building's tenants rather than spending the money to meet these building and fire codes.[369] Jacobson recalled finding 97 Orchard Street:

> One day, I was walking on Orchard Street, and saw a "For Rent" sign at 97 Orchard. I took down the number and the person to contact; her name was Helpern. I called her, and I asked, "How much are you asking?" She told me; and at the time, we had no money, and it was just way over anything we could possibly afford. She said, "Tell me a little bit about what you are doing in your project." She was an artist, and had some sensitivity to what we were doing; and she came from a family of real estate people. So, I told her about the project, and she said, "It sounds so interesting. Why don't you come over and have a look at the space." So, she took me inside and showed me the offices, which looked decrepit, but certainly adequate for our needs and better than what we had been in. She took me into the hallway, and I thought we had not only found our office space but had found our building. This is an amazing thing. It had been virtually untouched, and the bathrooms also had been untouched. She took me upstairs, and I was transported to another time. I went back and told Ruth: "This is amazing. We have to have this building. It's perfect for our needs." So, we scrambled to get money to pay the rent on these offices, and she [Helpern] reduced the rent slightly. She loved the project. And between the two of us, we managed, and moved into the first space. Nonetheless, she took me upstairs, and there were artifacts all over the place. It was as if somebody was telling us—you have to have this place! And, little by little, we eventually took over.[370]

For Abram and Jacobson, it was a dream come true. Jacobson remarked, "It was as though people had just picked up and left. . . . It was like a time capsule. It was incredibly evocative. It was perfect for our needs."[371] At that moment, Abram's vision of creating a museum to document the "urban pioneer" became a reality. Ninety-Seven Orchard Street was an ideal site for their tenement museum because it was one of the few extant pre-law tenements that was "old enough to reflect the

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[369] Ibid., p. 14.
[370] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 8, 2008.
[371] Quoted in Ibid.

community's multiethnic history of German, Irish, Italian, Eastern European, and Chinese immigrants, as well the African-Americans" and to present a vivid history of the effects of New York City's housing reforms.[372]

By August of that same year, Abram and Jacobson received their charter as a historical society from the New York State Board of Regents,[373] and the newly formed Board of Trustees drafted its mission statement: "To promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a gateway to America."[374]

Like the MET, which had grown rapidly, the LESTM in six years ". . . grew from a storefront operation with a full-time staff of two and a volunteer staff of two and an opening balance of $75,000 to an important New York cultural and educational institution with staff, consultants, and volunteers numbering more than 120, and an annual budget of more than $4.5 million."[375] By 1998, former President Clinton and Congress enacted "legislation authorizing affiliation with the National Park Service, linking the Tenement Museum with Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty."[376] In the introduction to this bill, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan asserted that the LESTM represented "an outstanding opportunity to preserve and present an important stage of immigrant experience and the move for social change in our cities."[377] Ten years from its inception, the LESTM began to win national and

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[372] Quoted in Lower East Side Tenement Museum, *A Tenement Story*, p. 12.
[373] *Application to NY State Board of Regents* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1987).
[374] Quoted in Abram, "*Horizons of Culture and Life*," p. 12.
[375] Quoted in Ruth J. Abram (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[376] Quoted in Ibid.
[377] Quoted in Ibid.

international recognition; it was listed on the United States National Register of Historic Places, joining a pantheon of notable homesteads such as James Madison's Montpelier, Woodrow Wilson House, and Frank Lloyd Wright's home and studio.[378] In its short history, another major achievement was recognition by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which featured LESTM as one of the top 20 properties that warranted visitation.[379]

For the first time in the history of US museums, there was a site where the public could learn about the struggles of urban, working-class immigrants and migrants who had aspired to the American dream. The scenario, however, was strikingly dissimilar from those of museums of a more conventional mold. For one thing, the founder was a Southern, Jewish, upper-class, professional woman whose vision was to draw attention to the diversity of the American immigrant experience and to initiate public discussion that would lead to economic and social reforms. The "home of working class and urban poor was of national significance."[380]

The LESTM is an historical marker and a living monument for those immigrant and migrant groups who came—voluntarily and involuntarily—from around the world to Manhattan's Lower East Side to fulfill their dreams of freedom, opportunity, and equality. The LESTM pays homage to the enormous nation-building contributions of these immigrants. Just as it is important to preserve the memory of our nation's "urban pioneers," it also is important to describe the development of the museum itself; it is a story of both consistency and change.

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[378] LESTM in Ibid.
[379] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 2, 2008).
[380] Quoted in Ibid.

Historically, museums and other cultural organization informed by their mission, their internal culture, and their pedagogic theories develop distinct approaches to educating the public. This "informal education" typically involves the collaboration of the museum's curatorial and education departments to design exhibits and displays and to strategize on how to best transform the artifacts of its collections into narratives that bring to life history, or science, or art, or culture, and excite the museum visitor to learn more. Another objective is to show the museum visitor a path to reflection and self-discovery.

Congruent with Cremin's exhortations to educators on the importance of investigating the external agencies that educate in addition to recording and reporting on "the scope and power of agencies," it is necessary to state what the LESTM hoped to accomplish and the means by which it would achieve its goals.[381] Since the LESTM considered itself one of the first interpretive, "living history" museums with a clear social mission, an analysis of its attributes and functions is in order.

The institutional history of the LESTM begins with an examination of the museum's archives. They are currently housed in one of the administrative buildings, the Research and Planning Center, at 91Orchard Street. Recently relocated from the basement to the fifth floor, the archives comprise six cubic feet of vital records that include: descriptions of its programs, minutes from Board of Trustees meetings, registrations, school reports, census rolls, business advertisements, and the recollections of more than 1,300 former residents of 97 Orchard Street.[382] In addition to

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[381] Quoted in Lawrence A. Cremin *Genius of American Education* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1965), p. 13.

[382] Museum Professional Membership Packet (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).

these documents, the LESTM possesses 2,500 objects and artifacts in its permanent collection, consisting of those that were discovered during its restoration in 1988, as well as tools, implements, and household items donated by former owners, residents, shopkeepers, and their descendents. Relocation of the archives meets the objectives of transparency and accessibility, as stated in the AAM's *Museums for a New Century*. To ensure public access, these archives are available to any member of the public who has requested a prearranged appointment.

The archives are essential for the researcher who is interested in understanding the museum's role as an educational institution because they house both primary and secondary sources. Examining the primary sources of the LESTM provides insight into the obstacles and challenges that confronted the founders as well as the development of their educational policies and practices. Examining the secondary sources illuminates the museum's mission, objectives, and methods. Just as important as the written documents is the oral history of the many contributors to LESTM as it evolved. This study blends the findings in the archives with the oral history to gain a deeper understanding of this unique institution, and to identify its place in the panoply of influential American museums.

Long before the LESTM found its home at 97 Orchard Street and received, in 1988, its charter as a historical society, Abram was "incubating" the core concept for the LESTM. In 1983, Abram had worked with Dr. Roberta Gratz, a public historian and activist, on the Eldridge Street Project (ESP), a venture intended to restore the

Eldridge Street Synagogue, which was in dire need of repair.[383] Abram described her role thusly:

> I offered to help the ESP while I worked on the development of the TM. I raised money for the ESP, wrote and organized a tour and play to bring the public in, and spoke on its behalf on numerous occasions. My association with ESP afforded me a "free office" on the Lower East Side. It was there that I met Anita Jacobson, who was volunteering, and who assisted me in founding the Tenement Museum. As soon as we found 97 Orchard Street, Anita and I ended our association with ESP, and moved into the building that would become the Tenement Museum.[384]

It was through the ESP that Jacobson and Abram met. Jacobson recalled, "At the time, Ruth was co-directing this project of the Eldridge Street Synagogue, and they were trying to capture the stories of the people who attended the Eldridge Street Synagogue, and the stories of Jewish people on the Lower East Side."[385] She continued:

> A friend of mine headed up the "All History Project" at the American Jewish Committee, and had heard that Ruth knew of my interests, and said, "You have to meet this woman. I think you'll be interested in what she's doing." That's how I met Ruth.[386]

It is important to understand that both Abram and Jacobson were active members of various progressive Jewish organizations that promoted a pluralistic vision for Jews worldwide. As Jacobson indicated, she was involved with the American Jewish Committee (AJC), whose mission was "to promote pluralistic and democratic societies where all minorities are protected."[387] Abram was involved with the New Israel Fund

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[383] Phone Interview with Dr. Roberta Gratz, July 10, 2008.
[384] Email from Ruth Abram, August 12, 2008.
[385] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 8, 2008.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Quoted in www.ajc.org (accessed on August 12, 2008).

(NIF) prior to her commitment to the ESP,[388] which was "the leading organization committed to democratic change within Israel. For 28 years, NIF has fought for social justice and equality for all Israelis. We believe that Israel can live up to its founders' vision of a state that ensures complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants, without regard to religion, race or gender."[389] During Abram's involvement with the NIF, she met Dr. Hillel Levine, who, in turn, introduced her to Dr. Richard Rabinowitz, a leading consultant for both the ESP and the LESTM, and a progenitor of the LESTM's conceptual framework and interpretive practices. Although no hard evidence could be found, it might be concluded that much of Abram's and Jacobson's social networking as members of the AJC, NIF, and ESP led them to formulate the concept of a tenement museum that would recount the stories of America's urban pioneers and that provided them with the initial funding. According to Dr. Rabinowitz, "Most of the money, most of the thinking, comes out of a culture of liberal-democratic, left-leaning Jewish politics, right from the culture. That's where she [Abram] comes from, which really is an interesting story."[390]

Underscoring the importance of these social networks, Dr. Gratz explained that Abram's work with the ESP "provided her with the critical beginnings of the Tenement Museum. It was where the primary research began. Basically, the Eldridge Street Project gave birth to the Tenement Museum."[391] Dr. Rabinowitz observed, "I can't stress enough the importance of the early years; like most organizations, they have control of what story they tell the public; they have developed a narrative for

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[388] Phone Interview with Dr. Hillel Levine, August 12, 2008.
[389] Quoted in www.nif.org/ (accessed on August 12, 2008).
[390] Interview with Dr. Rabinowitz, June 28, 2008.
[391] Phone Interview with Dr. Roberta Gratz, July 10, 2008

promotional, developmental purposes."[392] Rabinowitz's observations are critical to this study and to the conduct of historical investigation. His insights remind the researcher to be cognizant of the existence of both overt and covert messages, and proceed accordingly. Before there is an institution, there is the idea for that institution.[393]

During Abram's time with the ESP, she had developed programs that interpreted Jewish experiences on the Lower East Side; this was before she and Jacobson opened a not-for-profit organization, The Lower East Side Historic Conservancy (LESHC), founded in 1984.[394] According to Jacobson:

> Ruth's goal always was to start the Tenement Museum to tell the story of immigration through housing and tenements. And so, we started the Lower East Side Historic Conservancy, which broadened; it wasn't just the synagogue; we did tours of the Lower East Side, and we put on performances . . . We hired actors who would, in character, give tours; and when it rained, we did them in the basement of the synagogue, with slides and a script. I was hiring and auditioning actors I did not know . . . auditioning actors, wanting to be a tour guide, doing it in the first person. It was a lot of fun.[395]

Abram and Jacobson started to build friendships with people in the neighborhood, and established a community of like-minded individuals who were committed to social activism and to the inclusion of the highly diverse population of the Lower East Side in the greater society. The personal connections and fierce dedication of these two women to the preservation of the history and culture of the Lower East Side put the LESHC in an exceptional situation, and it accepted the offer of a free office and theatre space from the Eldridge Street Synagogue. Abram and Jacobson

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[392] Interview with Dr. Richard Rabinowitz, June 20, 2008.
[393] Ibid.
[394] Application to NY State Board of Regents. (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1987).
[395] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 8, 2008.

developed theatrical performances suitable for both parents and children; in addition, they provided free walking tours of the Lower East Side, which were led by costumed actors who told compelling stories of its former inhabitants.[396]

In addition to these public programs, the LESHC sponsored research projects, such as cataloging more than1,200 books and translating the minutes discovered in the basement of the Eldridge Street Synagogue, as well as investigating and reporting on the history of the various groups who had settled the Lower East Side in the years spanning 1840 to 1920.[397] Migrant and immigrant groups including freed slaves, and German, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Chinese immigrants were researched by 18 leading historians, a group that included James Oliver Horton, Stanley Nadel, and Richard Rabinowitz.[398] Their goal was to create "living history apartments, in which visitors meet and interact with immigrant forbears."[399] This research ultimately became the scholarly rationale for the restoration of the six apartments of 97 Orchard Street.[400] From the start, Abram and Jacobson had been involved in sponsoring and funding research projects to better understand the population of the Lower East Side. Today, the LESTM is considered a leader in the field, having ". . . assembled the nation's first archive and collection documenting the urban, immigrant/migrant, working-class poor, and tenement experience."[401]

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[396] Application to NY State Board of Regents (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1988).
[397] Ibid
[398] Ibid.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.
[401] www.tenement.org (accessed on November 13, 2006).

LESTM Operations

After Abram received the provisional charter for the LESTM, it became the first US museum dedicated to preserving the life of the urban working class and to using history as a bridge to public discussion of contemporary social issues. In its revised application of June 18, 1988, to the Board of Regents, the LESTM listed ten objectives:

1. To operate a museum on American immigrant life and culture.

2. To collect, preserve, and maintain artifacts, relics, books, papers, memoirs and other articles related to the history of immigration and migration, particularly to the Lower East Side of New York City and the culture of its inhabitants.

3. To exhibit such historical data to the public and make it accessible thereto, via living history.

4. To designate places of historic interest in the Lower East Side of New York City, with appropriate markers or monuments, and to seek an historic designation for the area.

5. To acquire historic sites in the Lower East Side of New York City for the purpose of preserving, restoring, and maintaining these sites and of fostering awareness of their historic and cultural significance.

6. To perpetuate the memory of the inhabitants of the Lower East Side of New York City, who have made substantial contributions to the city's history.

7. To sponsor performances that examine, and pay tribute to, immigrant contributions to American culture.

8. To analyze and document the history of the Lower East Side of New York City, and to preserve historically relevant cultural and community resources.

9. To support, and collaborate with, existing cultural and community resources in the Lower East Side of New York City.

10. To encourage ethnic interaction and cross-cultural communications and understanding among various religious, ethnic, and racial groups.

Since the inauguration of the LESTM as a historical society, the Board of Trustees, led by Abram, set lofty goals for the museum. For Abram, developing a museum to awaken public consciousness was of the utmost importance, and she was determined to accomplish her goals at all costs. Dr. Rabinowitz commented on her ambitions: "Ruth is a dynamic, exciting, and attractive person, and I don't think she had any idea how long, and how complicated, the task of creating an institution of this kind would be."[402]

Stories about life in a tenement opened a world of possibilities. Such narratives, properly communicated, could "broaden horizons, demonstrate similarities around and between people of different backgrounds, stimulate pride, and promote tolerance and understanding".[403] They could teach ". . . immigrant life and culture, history of housing and architecture, history of reform movements, history of women and childhood."[404] They could teach ". . . the process of 'doing history,' and in doing so, could convey the excitement of exploring history, introduce tools used to interpret history, and help students explore the various methods used to interpret history."[405] To make the LESTM a place of infinite possibility, and to meet the ten goals of the charter, Ruth sought the support of thoughtful scholars, creative board members, and progressive educators.

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[402] Interview with Dr. Richard Rabinowitz, June 20, 2008
[403] Summary of Discussion Education Consultation I. (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1996).
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.

First Board of Trustees . . . Growth Through 1997

Since its inception, the LESTM had had a legally constituted Board of Trustees (the Board). Through the personal connections of Abram, and much "prodding" on her part: "They were, for the most part, people I knew, and I begged them to be on the board."[406] Jacobson remembered conversations with Abram about the first Board: "I remember Ruth saying, 'I want to put together a board of people I really like. People that I know are competent, but I want to enjoy them, and I want them to enjoy what they are doing.' I remember that was one of her goals, and she did."[407]

The first Board consisted of four women and three men, ranging in professions from the President of Russell Sage College to a former IBM marketing management executive, to an attorney practicing in New York City, to the director of a not-for-profit child care resource organization.[408] Norm Kneller, the first treasurer, (the IBM executive) provided these observations on his involvement: "I thought the Tenement Museum sounded like a great program. Since I could lay spreadsheets, I was appointed treasurer. It was so small at that time, and did not have any intricate financial operations. I accepted. I also did staff training."[409]

Abram encouraged Board members to leverage their connections and to personally follow up on potentially helpful leads, as she stated in a memo of December 12, 1988: "Your help in following up these solicitations will be critical." One of the original Board members, Paul Crotty, former Commissioner of Housing Preservation for New York City, who now is a federal judge, explained his role: "I was helpful to her

[406] Phone Interview with Ruth Abram, June 11, 2008.
[407] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 9, 2008.
[408] Revised petition of Application to NY State Board of Regents. (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1988).
[409] Interview with Norm Kneller, July 1, 2008.

in securing various permits she needed for the building. I'd been active in local politics. That's what I brought."[410] Crotty, who at that time was in a private law practice, recalled Abram's perseverance and the early financial struggles:

> Getting the museum started and off the ground was pivotal, and every time Ruth got a grant, because we were just beginning. Almost everything at the beginning was pivotal, because we were always on the cusp of going under. We needed money. Anita's husband, who was active in the Stock Exchange, was pretty generous. Ruth always had a special savings account she could dip into, or various people would help out. It was not well funded; it was a start-up operation. We would not have succeeded without Ruth's persistence.[411]

Bill Kahl, the first Chairman of the Board, and a personal friend of Abram, described those first board meetings: "Most of our meetings were in the early evening; our discussions were not recorded; Ruth often served food from local restaurants."

The Board slowly increased in number: in 1989, there were nine (5 women and 4 men); in 1991, it comprised 14 (7 women and 7 men); in 1997, its membership had grown to 28 (7 women and 21 men).[412] As the Board expanded, it began to recruit more influential business men and women from the private sector. By 1997, the Board had a separate body of designated Honorary Trustees, among them: former NYC Mayor Rudolph Giuliani; US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan [deceased]; US Senator Alphonse D'Amato; NY State Senator Catherine Abate; NYC Council Speaker, Peter Vallone; and NYC Council Member Kathryn E. Freed. This august body signaled that the LESTM had achieved both dignity and gravitas.

Frank Macchiarola, former Chancellor of the New York City public schools (1978-1983), joined the Board in 1991 because he believed that the LESTM ". . .

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[410] Interview with Judge Paul Crotty, July 10, 2008.
[411] Ibid.
[412] List of Board of Trustees, past and present (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n/d).

affords a realistic understanding of the past."[413] Similarly, Peter Madoff, Senior Managing Director of Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities, joined the Board in 1997 ". . . because of the valuable educational experience of learning about immigration in the United States. It is an important story for people to hear. It represents the difficult challenges early immigrants were faced with and endured. It provides a benefit for present immigrants because it shows that people before them had similar struggles and have prospered."[414] It is interesting to note that many of these Trustees, besides providing the LESTM with invaluable social and cultural capital, were the descendents of the ethnic groups whose lives were being examined by the museum; they were the descendants of Irish, German, Jewish, and Italian immigrants.

Funding

Like many of the "mom and pop shops" of the Lower East Side, the LESTM began as a "storefront operation" with an initial budget of $75,000 and a staff of four—two full-time and two volunteers.[415] But the LESTM quickly grew from its grassroots origins to a professional museum with an annual budget of more than $4.5 million, and leader in the field of historic preservation and raising social consciousness.[416] The LESTM currently competes for funding with the MET and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), and it has purchased three additional buildings: 91, 97, and 103 Orchard Street, situated between Delancey Street and Broome Street. Like a

[413] Interview with Frank Macchiarola, July 15, 2008.
[414] Interview with Peter Madoff July 1, 2008.
[415] Ruth J. Abram (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[416] Ibid.

Horatio Alger's hero—impoverished immigrants who rose "from rags to riches," the success of the LESTM is remarkable.

In the earliest years, funding was difficult to obtain. Kahl remembered: "Often Anita and Ruth didn't take a salary."[417] According to Abram, the first operating budget ($75,000) was a grant from Philip Morris. (This grant had been endorsed to the LESHC.)[418] It is interesting to know that Abram's father, Morris Abram, Esquire, was an influential civil rights attorney who had held numerous prestigious positions. Morris Abram became founding Chairman of UN Watch immediately after his four-year term (1989-1993) as US Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva.[419] Kahl described him this way: "Morris Abram was a lawyer for the New York law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, whose client was Philip Morris." Abram had a different view: ". . . [I] had contacts at the corporation dating back to the 1970s, when I was working in the women's movement and got support from Philip Morris for women's projects."[420] Although there is no hard evidence to support either point of view, it would appear that nepotism had worked in Abram's favor.

According to the Board of Trustees minutes of September 8, 1988, the LESTM distributed weekly publicity posters and fliers to local merchants to attract visitors.[421] In addition to reaching out to local businesses to create "a buzz" about the new museum, the LESTM sent a mailing of 1,500 to all New York City public schools and to Catholic and Jewish day schools.[422] At the same meeting, the Board discussed the

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[417] Interview with Bill Kahl, July 17, 2008.
[418] Email from Ruth Abram, August 12, 2008
[419] http://www.unwatch.org (accessed on July 4, 2008).
[420] Email from Ruth Abram, August 12, 2008.
[421] Board of Trustees "Minutes of September 8, 1988" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[422] Ibid.

development of a $2,000,000–$3,000,000 capital campaign to finance the purchase and restoration of 97 Orchard Street. Each Board member was given a draft of the letter of solicitation. Kahl recommended that the LESTM raise 40% to 50% of the total dollar amount needed before going public.[423] The LESTM solicited corporate contributors such as Philip Morris and Helen Scheuer Foundation to fund the construction needed to launch its first Tenement Tour. It also submitted proposals to the New York Council on Humanities and to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to fund its Heritage Tours.[424]

As early as December 1987, the LESTM founders recognized the importance of hiring a professional to aid in recruiting financial support and to build a broad, diverse audience, but its budget disallowed this measure, forcing the Board to explore other approaches. One strategy was to find a retired publicist by tapping into New York City's Senior Volunteer Program.[425] In only three months, the LESTM had found a solution. Grey Advertising (a leading NYC-based advertising agency) was persuaded to prepare and disseminate press kits, so that the LESTM could compete with other not-for-profit organizations that were scrambling for grants from state and federal organizations, corporations, and financial institutions. Grey had agreed to provide its services *pro bono*.[426] When Abram was asked how she had managed this Grey Advertising contact, she responded, "I can't recall how I managed to

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[423] Ibid.
[424] Ibid.
[425] Board of Trustee Minutes December 18, 1987 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[426] Board of Trustees "Minutes of September March 25, 1988" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

engage Grey Advertising."[427] Kahl saw it differently: "Grey Advertising also was a client of Morris Abram's law firm."[428] Such inconsistencies in recollection and perception suggest that the researcher must weigh the relative validity of two informational sources and reach an independent decision.

One of the main concerns was to raise enough money to purchase 97 Orchard Street from the Helpern family. As early as March 1988, the Board began strategizing; they identified 25 philanthropic foundations and corporations that had potential to be funders.[429] Additionally, they capitalized on their personal connections.[430] They even approached the City of New York, suggesting that it donate a tenement building.[431] Crotty recalled his first meeting with Abram: "I first met Ruth in 1986 or 1987, when I was Commissioner of Housing Preservation and Development. She came to me with the idea for a museum on the Lower East Side. She wanted a building. Even if I had such a property, I wouldn't give it to a museum; my mission was to provide housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers."[432]

By October of that year, the LESTM had submitted 34 grant applications to corporations and foundations, including New York Trust, Grace Foundation, American Express Foundation, Citibank, Ford Foundation, The Federal Republic of Germany, Hasbro Foundation, IBM, JM Kaplan Fund, The Kresge Foundation, SH and Helen Scheuer Foundation and the UJA/ Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. At a Board meeting of October 6, 1988, the members targeted an additional 40 potential donors,

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[427] Email from Ruth Abram, August 12, 2008.
[428] Interview with Bill Kahl, July 17, 2008.
[429] Board of Trustees, "Minutes of December 18, 1987."
[430] Ibid.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Interview with Paul Crotty, July 10, 2008.

including AT&T, the John Getty Trust, the Forschheimer Foundation, the Lilly Foundation, the National Heritage Trust, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, to name a few. Crotty commented on those initial Board meetings:

> The first thing was to raise funds, and the last thing. All the time I was there, we spent our time raising funds. We reviewed the plans for the initial apartments, so that we could start building the general population's interest in the stories that Ruth wanted the museum to tell and in developing a mission statement . . . Our meetings were boring because we would review list after list that Ruth had gotten of various foundations, and boards, and donors. Who knows this person or that? Please call that person. You'd try to set up an appointment for Ruth to go and make her pitch.[433]

Since funding for nonprofit organizations was very competitive, the Board categorized its solicitation campaigns under two rubrics: TT represented donations to support the requisite research and development of Tenement Tours; BLD represented donations to support the purchase of 97 Orchard Street. To ensure their ultimate success, the Board set up a Business Advisory Council (BAC), which held its first meeting on September 20, 1988.[434] Attendees included representatives of Bank Leumi, Citibank, Con Edison, Manhattan Cable, Manufacturers Hanover Trust, New York Telephone, and Pfizer Inc. It was decided that the BAC would meet quarterly.[435]

To position LESTM among the major NYC museums, "Culture Capital of the United States" and to facilitate fund-raising, the Board determined that an effective strategy would be to request that all potential donors tour 97 Orchard Street. Much of the appeal of the LESTM is the authenticity of the tenement and its evocative

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[433] Ibid.
[434] Board of Trustees "Minutes of October 6, 1988" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[435] Ibid.

location: the heart of the Lower East Side. Dr. James Shenton, in making a presentation at a Board meeting on February 2, 1989, commented on the emotional impact of the visit. Dr. Shenton described the reactions of his students when he brought them to tour the tenement: "They were stupefied; their readings on the subject of the living conditions had not prepared them for what they saw."[436] Professor Shenton's students' reactions were exactly what Abram, Jacobson, and the Board members had hoped to elicit from visitors. They were convinced that a pre-law tenement building would serve as a powerful catalyst—one that would arouse public sentiment and, even more important at this critical juncture, motivate potential donors to become actual donors—and generous ones at that.

The strategy proved successful, as evidenced by monetary support in the amount of $25,000 from the JM Kaplan Fund to fuel the initial architectural and engineering plans. The New York State Council for the Arts (NYSCA) donated $10,000 for a "theater-in-education" program in collaboration with a local high school, Seward Park. Bank Leumi agreed to sponsor the opening exhibit of Arnold Eagle's *One-Third Nation* Even more important, Bank Leumi lent the LESTM some of its pundits to advise the Board on how to pursue "creative financing" that would position it to purchase 97 Orchard Street. By May 1989, the LESTM had initiated a vibrant membership campaign, which provided free entrance to the museum, a free subscription to its quarterly, *Tenement Times*, and seasonal brochures to all public-spirited individuals who donated $100.[437]

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[436] Quoted in Board of Trustees "Minutes of February 2, 1989" with a direct quotation from Professor Shenton (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

[437] Donors report September 8, 1989 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

The infant museum raised money by applying several ingenious strategies. It used its historical research to develop themes for various events and called upon its "new friends" in the neighborhood to host these events. Faithful to Abram's motto, "We'll try anything once," the LESTM tried various fund-raising approaches:

1. **Ellis Island Tours:** In addition to guided tours of the tenement, the LESTM sponsored tours that took visitors from the museum to Ellis Island, with Dr. Shenton serving as tour guide, and relating some of the more poignant Immigrant stories.

2. **"Matchmaker-Matchmaker" Benefit**: Held at the restored Asser Levy Bathhouse, the event targeted young adults interested in community service and encourage them to join an advisory committee.

3. **Space Rental:** Groups were solicited to rent LESTM gallery space to promote their own art, literary or otherwise. An initial event was mounted to promote *Unsung Heroes*, written by Franz Lidz.

4. **Heritage Dinners:** Board members hosted monthly dinners at well known venues, such as Lydia's and Café de Artistes, to attract well-heeled donors.[438]

Gradually, in addition to securing grants, the LESTM began to garner support from magnanimous individuals and corporate sponsors. In 1990, it received $150,516 in contributions from the general public; in 1992, it received $562,230, tripling it revenue stream in just two years.[439] Although the LESTM's coffers were filling, it still did not have the equity to purchase 97 Orchard Street, in light of a time-sensitive offer from the owners.[440] To ensure that it would indeed accrue the necessary amount, LESTM hired Janine M. Veto, Vice President of Goodale Associates, to conduct a campaign planning assessment in order to ascertain "whether the museum could successfully

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[438] Memo to Board March 12, 1991(New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[439] Memo to Board December 3, 1990 and May 6, 1992 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[440] *Pre-Campaign Study Summary* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, March 1991).

launch a $4.4 million capital campaign to purchase 97 Orchard Street as the museum's permanent home, renovate the building, create permanent exhibition space, offices, and auxiliary space, and increase annual funding for operations and program support."[441] According to Veto, the study concluded that the LESTM did have the potential to raise $4.4 million: "The solidarity and commitment of the Board to the mission of the institution is exceptional and bodes well for the continued development of the Museum." In a memo to the Board, Abram reported, "It is due to the diligence of the staff that, in spite of a severe lack of staff, most of the goals were met."[442]

In 1994, the LESTM launched a capital campaign, "Honoring Our Urban Pioneers" whose purpose was "to purchase, restore, and renovate the six-story tenement building at 97 Orchard Street."[443] The money came from numerous sources, including the State of New York, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), *The New York Times*, The Kresge Foundation, the Leo and Julia Forschheimer Foundation, the Tisch Foundation, and philanthropists including George and Susan Soros, Elihu and Susan Rose, Leon Levy, Shelby White, and Edith and Henry Everett.[444] Phyllis Tisch, of the Tisch Foundation, commented on the reasons her foundation chose to fund the LESTM: "On a request from Abram's husband, Herbert Teitelbaum, the foundation looked into their project. We gave because we believed in the project."[445] In 1996, the LESTM had raised the necessary funds to purchase 97

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[441] Quoted in Ibid.
[442] Quoted in *Memo to Board May 6, 1992* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[443] Quoted in *Progress and Plans Report* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1994).
[444] Frequently Asked Questions (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[445] Phone Interview with Phyllis Tisch, July 8, 2008.

Orchard Street. Interest generated through a series of articles in the *New York Times* not only secured the ability to purchase but also provided superb resources for generating press coverage. From 1988 to 2008, no fewer than 198 articles on the LESTM were featured in *The New York Times*.[446] This steady provision of information and publicity over the past decade from a source as prominent as *The New York Times* was significant.

From 1988 to 1995, the Board continued to leverage diverse fund-raising strategies to LESTM's advantage. In 1995, the LESTM was awarded a $50,000 grant from the NEH and a $250,000 grant from The Rockefeller Foundation, making it the first institution for the promotion of the humanities, other than universities, to receive such funding.[447] Although the minutes of the Board meetings describe these successful fund-raising efforts, it certainly had not always been easy. According to Abram, the museum was "rich in history yet poor in pocket."[448] For this reason, it had learned to implement innovative approaches to attract potential donors, especially in light of the intense, ongoing scramble for monetary support of other nonprofit organizations. Fund-raising had been especially challenging because, according to the "fund-raising world," the maverick museum did not fit the traditional mold. Abram, in her article, "Harnessing the Power of History," describes the frustrations inherent in asking for financial support:

> Foundations accustomed to funding traditional museums could not categorize the Tenement Museum. "Are you a settlement house?" asked one potential donor. While I was actually delighted that the Tenement Museum could be confused with a social service organization for the immigrant poor, I knew the question meant that the foundation would not

[446] Search of the articles on the LESTM in the New York Times Data base.
[447] Goals (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1995).
[448] *A Tenement Story*, 20.

> fund the Tenement Museum. Foundations that funded social services and/or advocacy routinely rejected our proposals, saying, 'We don't fund museums."[449]

Philosophy, Policy, and Practice

Since it opened its doors to the public in 1988, the LESTM has offered theatre pieces, exhibitions, forums, and walking tours to accomplish its mission: "To promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a gateway to America."[450] By encouraging open, public discussion of racial, ethnic, and class issues, and by promoting its position of inclusion and tolerance, the LESTM ranks among those public institutions with a clear commitment to strengthening the fabric of society. Its programs, permanent and transient, have been, and continue to be, designed to challenge its audience to consider and analyze long-held beliefs and stereotypes about various immigrant groups, past and present, and to take action on social issues that relate to class, ethnicity, gender, and social and economic inequities.

Within two years of the opening, LESTM had drafted its mission statement, secured a rental location, established a Board of Trustees, and gained revenues from both grants and its programs. The LESTM was the grateful recipient of *pro bono* legal support from the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, and Garrison; *pro bono* promotional support from Grey Advertising; and *pro bono* public relations support from Lane and Coady.[451] In 1990, the museum received a grant from the Philip Morris

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[449] Ruth J. Abram, "Harnessing the Power of history," in *Museums, Society, Inequality*, ed. Richard Sandell (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), pp.125-141.
[450] www.tenement.org (accessed on July 4, 2008).
[451] *Report to Donors* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives,1990).

Corporation to research and write historically accurate profiles of the six major immigrant groups that had settled in the Lower East Side during the years 1860 to 1935; these groups were the Chinese, Eastern European Jews, freed slaves, and the Germans, Irish, and Italians.[452] It published a quarterly newsletter, the *Tenement Times,*[453] and its Board members were hammering out a template designed to secure a steady stream of financial support.

At this point, the LESTM embarked on its next phase of development, a broad conceptual framework and long-term goals that honored its mission statement. To ensure commitment to its core philosophy, the LESTM employed the American History Workshop (AHW), "a consortium of historians, writers, designers, and film-makers who enliven public understanding of our people's history through interpretive exhibits and presentations."[454] The JM Kaplan and Andy Warhol Foundations subsidized this endeavor.[455] Dr. Rabinowitz (of the AHW) acted as facilitator of the group that would eventually fashion the framework for the museum's operations. Dr. Rabinowitz's stewardship was strategic because of his extensive scholarship on interpretive exhibitions and because his philosophy was congruent with that of Abram; both believed that historic sites should "assist the public in drawing connections between the history of our sites and its contemporary implications . . . [and in] stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values."[456] The AHW developed, in 1983, the interpretive, interactive exhibits that

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[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Quoted in www.americanhistoryworkshop.com (accessed on July 19, 2008).
[455] *Report to Donors* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1990).
[456] Quoted in www.nps.gov/nero/greatplaces/OpeningKeynote.htm (accessed on January 23, 2008).

distinguish the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.[457] In addition, Rabinowitz not only possessed the expertise to help fashion the LESTM's conceptual framework but also possessed the savvy to write grant proposals that succeeded in gaining substantial support from the NEH. Rabinowitz described his pivotal role: "I knew the lingo and the people because I used to work for them."[458] Sure enough, in 1989, the LESTM secured an NEH grant of $80,000.[459]

By February 1990, the AHW had written a Conceptual Plan. The introduction stated:

> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum will be a milestone in the history of both American housing and American museums . . . . Unlike many museums, this one affirms the worth of ordinary people. The diversity among ethnic groups will be reflected in their stories, their furnishings. . . . We will offer an array of lively and engaging interpretative experiences—recreated environments, participatory workshops, interactive exhibits and media programs. . . . We will encourage visitors to approach and empathize with the human possibility—the pain and the pleasure—of living in such a place.[460]

The stated goals of the report, which had been derived from existing written materials and from discussions with project participants, were threefold: The LESTM would:

- Rescue 97 Orchard Street from imminent ruin.
- Restore the building as a museum and interpretative center that would focus on the Lower East Side as a gateway to New York City, would provide narratives that illuminate the experiences of urban immigrants and migrants, and celebrate the ethnic diversity of the current neighborhood.

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[457] Interview with Dr. Richard Rabinowitz, June 20, 2008.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Report to Donors, (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1990).
[460] A Conceptual Plan (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1990), p.1.

- Create exhibits that "turn back the hands of time," by the painstaking restoration of six apartments to their original nineteenth century or early twentieth century condition to evoke visitors' memories and provoke their imaginations.[461]

Three "living history" apartments would be restored to represent both the authentic architecture and living conditions of three discrete periods of time.

These were:

1. Before 1867, when a law was enacted that mandated fire escapes and outdoor privies

2. After 1905, when another mandate required ventilating windows, hallways, air shafts, toilets, and cold water sinks

3. After 1929, when yet another law was passed that rendered it illegal to rent residential space in tenement buildings unless substantial renovation was undertaken

4. The interior and exterior of each apartment would accurately represent the abode of the immigrant tenants during the 72-year period encompassing 1863 through 1935—and the presentations would bring their lives to life

5. Through the restored apartments and the artifacts found in them, visitors would be able to relate to the experiences of the actual tenants, who had inhabited the building in one of the three time periods mentioned above
(i.e., before 1867; after 1905; and after 1929)[462]

Dr. Rabinowitz recollected some of the central questions that guided the development of the museum's conceptual framework:

> What you see here is the trying on my part to develop a narrative from the point of view of the visitor. I have always been focused on the public experience. So everything has to be sensory and distinctive. You want the public to come to a place that is well prepared with programming and rich drama. My job is to ask: How do you create openness? How do you keep this fresh? What can we learn about visitors' own sensitivities about

[461] Ibid., p. 3.
[462] Ibid., p. 6.

> contemporary immigration, about the opportunities for economic success, and the dangers of religious traditionalism and adaptation.[463]

A path had been cleared; a method had been applied; and the aims were solidified. To achieve these aims, the museum adopted an interpretive methodology and a constructivist approach. In doing so, it set a precedent for museum programming. This was programming intended to create an intense level of interaction between the exhibits and the visitors. Dr. Rabinowitz integrated interpretive history into all programs. The interpretive history model is based on the precepts of philosopher, Freeman Tilden, who wrote:

1. Interpretation that does not somehow relate to what is being displayed and described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor is sterile and will fail to achieve its aims.

2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information.

3. Interpretation is an art that combines many arts, regardless of whether the subject matter is art and architecture, the natural world, science (theoretical and applied), or history (political, economic, social).

4. The chief aim of interpretation is not merely to instruct but to provoke.

5. Interpretation should aim to present the whole experience rather than one aspect of the experience. Interpretation must address the whole person rather than limiting itself to one aspect of that person's nature.

6. Interpretation addressed to the young museum visitor should not be a dilution of what has been presented to the adult visitor, but should be guided by a fundamentally different approach.[464]

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[463] Interview with Dr. Richard Rabinowitz, June 20, 2008.

[464] www.tenement.org (accessed on January 28, 2007).

Programming at the LESTM

On November 17, 1988, the LESTM mounted its first public exhibition, *One-Third Nation*, of photographs depicting the urban poor by Hungarian immigrant, Arnold Eagle.[465] The exhibition reflected the museum's mission since Eagle's photographs constituted social documentary: "We were really recorders of history, and we were also trying to make people aware of the problems that existed."[466] The photographs, which had been donated by the artist, conveyed the grim conditions of urban poverty in the late 1930s.[467] The exhibit was deemed a success as evidenced by the sale of two photographs for $300 each. In addition, Abram believed that "We had earned good will—from supporters, press, and neighbors."[468]

From its inception, the LESTM was intent on building relationships and making "good friends" with people from all segments of society and (as has been previously stated) had persuaded some members of the power elite to provide the museum with vital services on a *pro bono* basis. The public was attracted to the LESTM because of its groundbreaking strategy of merging sound scholarship with interpretive and interactive programs. These programs were developed under the guidance of leading experts representing diverse disciplines—both academic and nonacademic. Among those who provided valuable contributions during its formative years (and beyond) were social activists and immigrant advocates, historians and other scholars, archeologists, performing artists, writers, poets, dramatists, painters,

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[465] A Tenement Story, p.14.
[466] http://www.thirteen.org/tenement/eaglebio.html (accessed on January 28, 2007).
[467] Phone Interview with Ruth Abram, June 11, 2008).
[468] Board of Trustees "Minutes of December 17, 1988" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

sculptors, and architects, educators, and museum professionals. These men and women helped conceive and execute interactive programming designed to compel the museum visitor "to step into the shoes of an immigrant, building empathy for the experience of their foreign-born peers"[469]

Concurrent with its initial exhibits and events (including walking tours), the LESTM staff and consultants conducted research to support the development of its permanent exhibit, namely, the restored apartments of 97 Orchard Street. All of the museum's permanent exhibits are evidence-based. The documentation comprises birth and death certificates, census data, court records, voter recorders, health records, and photographs of the former tenants.[470] From 1988 to the present, LESTM's historians (usually acting as consultants) have provided detailed descriptions of tenement life, some of them obtained from the families/descendents of the former occupants of 97 Orchard Street. The LESTM launched an "alumni search" to identify and locate descendants of these occupants, who had populated the building from 1863 to 1935. The alumni search, subsidized by the NEH, found solid links between the heads of several philanthropic groups—for example, the Rudin Foundation and the Herman Goldman Foundation—to tenants of 97 Orchard Street. Research unearthed the fact that Norman Mailer's parents (immigrants from Austria) had lived in the Lower East Side.[471] The alumni search identified more than 1,700 families who had populated the area, and the LESTM recreated the apartments of six families who had lived at 97 Orchard Street. They are: the Baldizzi's from Sicily; the Confino's from Greece, the

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[469] *A Tenement Story*, p.16.
[470] *A Tenement Story*, p. 14.
[471] Memo to Board of Trustees March 13, 1991 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).

Gumpertz's from Germany; the Levine's from Poland; the Rogashevsky's from Lithuania; and the Moore's from Ireland. In a Board meeting (February 2, 1989), Professor Shenton informed the Board that the research was ". . . groundbreaking because there has been no detailed history of New York. . . .The museum could serve as a model for Urban Studies."[472]

During their research, historians uncovered important facts about tenement life at 97 Orchard Street. For example, "In 1900, there were 113 reported living in the tenement, or 16 people in one room. Forty percent of the babies born here died. Mothers usually did not work outside the home, but had to manage accommodations for the boarders. . . . No inhabitants' names were repeated from census to census."[473] While historians were spending time in the archives of New York City's historical societies as well as the New York City Department of Records and Information Services, the County Clerk's Office, the State Supreme Court, the Division of Old Records Office, and the National Archives and Records Administration,[474] the museum's collections department purchased household objects and fixtures at antique shops and flea markets throughout the Northeast to furnish the apartments authentically. "Furnishings were chosen for accuracy of date, function, and appearance"[475] The search for authentic household articles took researchers from 229 Grand Street in the Lower East Side to upstate New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Indiana[476].

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[472] Board of Trustees "Minutes of February 2, 1989" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[473] Board of Trustees "Minutes of February 12, 1989" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[474] http://www.tenement.org/research_genealogy.html (accessed on June 15, 2008).
[475] Keech, *Levine Apartment*, p. 8.
[476] Ibid.

Ambitious archeological “digs” to better understand and recreate the tenement’s exterior supplemented the search for furnishings that would ensure the authenticity of the building’s interior. This extensive project was led by urban archaeologist, Joan Geismar, who reported: “Between November 1991 and August 1993, the backyard was tested and then excavated to recapture the building’s history preserved in an archeological sense.” Funded by the Polaroid Corporation, the excavation was undertaken to “uncover evidence of the toilet facilities used from 1863 . . . to 1905, the year an indoor toilet was installed in the hallway of each of its five floors.”[477] The excavation proved fruitful, as a “flush privy” was found. This was a monumental undertaking: In six years, the LESTM had conducted painstaking research on New York City tenement life spanning seven decades; had identified actual inhabitants and had learned as much about them as possible from their descendants; had gathered precious artifacts (including photographs) from all over the Northeast to restore and furnish six representative apartments; had conducted successful exploratory excavation of the building’s backyard in order to reconstruct the exterior as accurately as possible; and was preparing to bring together everything that had been found and learned to offer the public a “living history” that would be both moving and memorable.

Dr. Suzanne Wasserman, a consultant whose salary was paid by an NEH grant (and who had been one Abram’s classmates from New York University’s Public History Department (1983), recalled one of the planning sessions:

> Sitting around a big table in the basement, it was exciting, figuring out the narrative. What is the story and how are we going to communicate the larger ideas that we want to put forth in a compelling way? How do you get

[477] Ibid.

> people excited about history? The way to do it is to tell the story. Natalie Gumpertz, who was a widow. The Baldizzi family, who were evicted. There were no re-creations at that time, just a building that had been empty since 1936. So evocative! You felt the ghosts.[478]

In 1993, Dr. Wasserman was hired as full-time director of programming. She was an excellent candidate for the job because she had just completed her doctoral thesis on Jews living in the Lower East Side during the Great Depression of the 1930s. She had this to say about her contributions to the LESTM: "I helped develop the first two tours—the Gumpertz's and the Baldizzi's. In 1993, we started to take people into the building. I remember a rough outline of a tour because I was instrumental in helping to write the script for the first tours."[479] The exhibit, ***Meddling With Peddling****,* was based on her doctoral dissertation.[480] In the summer of 1992, Joyce Mendelson, a retired teacher, who had taught in Manhattan's Public School 188, was hired to write curricula for the walking tours. Her talents led to an invitation to join the museum staff as Director of Education (part-time). Mendelson's responsibilities included ensuring that each curriculum contained suitable pre-law and post-law materials.[481]

The museum's curatorial department used the photographs of Jacob Riis and Joseph Byron as principal historical sources on which to base its reconstruction of the past. It took six years before the first tenement tour was open to the public. October 3, 1994, was a milestone: the LESTM invited the public to tour the recreated apartments of the Baldizzi family and the Gumpertz family. Over the ensuing years, the museum restored four other apartments: the

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[478] Interview with Dr. Suzanne Wasserman July 9, 2008.
[479] Ibid.
[480] Ibid.
[481] Interview with Joyce Mendelsohn July 14, 2008.

Confino's apartment was completed in 1997; the Rogashevsky's apartment was finished in 1998; the Levine's apartment was open to the public in 2002;[482] and on June 17, 2008, the Moore's apartment could be visited.[483] Stories were selected to demonstrate the historical timeline of the tenement history, to underscore the ethnic and religious diversity of its tenants, to raise contemporary sociopolitical issues, and to reach visitors through their emotions.[484] To provide visitors with an optimal intellectual and emotional experience, they may tour the six apartments only if accompanied by a trained guide.[485]

According to the LESTM's archives, the first public performances were launched in September 1990 and the museum's most recent performances were staged in May 2005. From 1990 to 2005, the LESTM has dramatized the stories of NYC's urban poor for New Yorkers and for visitors from all over the United States and the world. On average, it has offered ten to 20 programs each year, with the exception of 1997, when it offered 40 programs.[486] To date, it has mounted a total of 283 programs[487] Although, unfortunately, the archives do not contain copies of its earliest brochures describing its programming, two early programs, ***Family Matters*** and ***The Peddlers***,[488] were described in LESTM's Charter; these descriptions are identical to those contained in a brochure written in 1990.[489]

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[482] AAM Self-Study (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, April 2002).
[483] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 15, 2008).
[484] Ruth Abram, "Using the Past to Shape the Future: New Concepts for a Historic Site," *Museum International*, Vol. 53, no.1 (2001), p.1.
[485] Brochures 1990-2005 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid.
[488] *Application to NY State Board of Regents*, 1988.
[489] *Brochure,* 1990.

Capitalizing on the extensive research of its scholars, the LESTM produced its first dramatic presentations, gallery exhibits, forums, and walking tours—all to relate the stories of the city's urban pioneers and to appeal to its visitors' minds and to their hearts. According to the earliest extant brochure (1990), every Sunday afternoon, the LESTM offered three walking tours ($12.00 for adults) from September through November 1990:

1. ***Peddler's Pack Walking Tour***, led by a costumed actor, enabled visitors to experience a typical day in the life of an immigrant Jewish family.

2. ***The Streets Where We*** Lived, a multiethnic tour led by James P. Shenton, focused on the history of the Lower East Side, Little Italy, and Chinatown and bridged to the contemporary character and personality of each neighborhood.

3. ***Renting, Ranting, and Reform***, a two-hour architectural tour led by Andrew Dolkart, that examined the interior and exterior features of tenements representing the styles of three periods: "pre-old-law, old-law, and new-law."

Three dramatizations were performed on Sunday afternoons ($10.00 for adults) from December 1990 to February 1991. They were:

1. ***It's Tough to Make a Nickel***, a musical by Nick Scarim, whose intent was to transport children and adolescents to "the turn-of-the century," so that they might imagine what it was like to be an immigrant child.

2. ***Family Matters: An Immigrant Memoir***, a one-hour dramatization of the struggles and achievements of the Scheinberg family, who had lived in the Lower East Side the early 1900s.

3. ***The Washingtons: Free African-Americans in Nineteenth-Century New* York**, written and directed by Elmo Terry Morgan, recounted the courageous decision of a free African-American family to shelter a fugitive slave. It was staged throughout February (Black History Month).

On Sundays from December 1990 to February 1991, three forums on immigrant and migrant history were offered.

1. ***Beads of Sweat*** compared and contrasted sweatshops, past and present, and graphically described the Triangle Factory fire of 1911.

2. ***Tenements in Focus*** enabled visitors to directly experience the living conditions that tenement dwellers of 1930s had to endure.

3. ***Pushcarts, Stoopstands, and Storefronts*** illuminated the history of commerce as it played out on the violent streets of New York, presenting profiles of peddlers and merchants and linking their experiences to Meddling ***With Peddling***.

The same year, the LESTM featured two gallery exhibits. September 1990 to January 1991: ***Out of Ashes: The Triangle Factory Fire, 1911*** was a multimedia event featuring photographs, news headlines, and interviews. The number of lives lost [the exit doors were locked] was staggering, and the enormity of the tragedy led to the enactment of safety codes for the workplace. January 1991 to February 1991: ***Meddling With Peddling: The Pushcart Wars, 1906-1941*** featured political cartoons, photographs, and news stories that described the causes and outcomes of the protracted and ferocious disputes between merchants/shop owners and street peddlers.

These examples are just a sampling of LESTM's early programming. Topics for its theatre pieces, gallery exhibits, forums, and walking tours were drawn from and based on actual events; they were, and continue to be, relevant and evocative. Due to such innovative programming, the LESTM has attracted a substantial audience and has gained a reputation as a center for serious scholarship and for social resonance. In 1990, the LESTM "received the Municipal Art Society's 1990

award for its contributions to New York City."[490] Not content to rest on its laurels, the LESTM continues to expand its programming and its audience appeal. Despite its admission fees, the museum attracts a broad audience to its Lower East Side venue. In the early days, certain performances, gallery exhibits, forums, and walking tours were free to the public, depending on the status of the museum's coffers However, today's guided, 90 minute Tenement Tours are relatively expensive; admission for adults is $17.00; for students: and seniors, it is $13.00.[491]

By 1994, the LESTM had secured its position as a respected member of New York City's museums. Because of its creative programming, the LESTM now had three spaces: 66 Allen Street (administrative offices); 90 Orchard Street (visitor center and gift shop); and, of course, 97 Orchard Street. Its staff had grown to nine full-time employees such as Kate Fermoile, Steve Long and Lynda Kennedy.[492] Fermoile, a graduate in Museum Studies from Syracuse University (1994) had moved to New York City and applied to the LESTM because "It was a quirky place—the Tenement Museum was doing more than just presenting history." She was hired as the manager of visitors, and within six months, advanced to Director of Education. In her new position, she started planning the educational programming for the Confino apartment. First, she examined how other historic homes were presenting stories of the past. She and Steve Long visited Old Sturbridge Village, Plymouth Plantation, and Lowell National Historical Park (all in Massachusetts). Fermoile pondered how to successfully communicate using first-person presentation and interpretation: "I found out what worked and didn't work for

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[490]. Pre-campaign Study (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, March 1991).
[491] www.tenement.org. (accessed on June 15, 2008).
[492] Interview with Kate Fermoile July 15, 2008.

kids."[493] Mimicking Abram's approach, she reached out to the community at large, putting together an advisory panel to develop an interpretative/interactive space for students. Her panel included NYC public school students, members of the Confino family, Jane Gerber, of City University of New York, an academic with expertise on Sephardic Jews, and set designer, Cindy Miller. The creation of an interpretative program communicated in the first person was exciting for Fermoile: "I was 25 years old. It was a dream come true!"[494]

Steve Long secured a position with the LESTM the same year that Fermoile did. Long was a completing his MA in public history at New York University and wanted to apply some of the theories he had learned to a real world venue whose goal was to transform history so that it would be meaningful and relevant to the public. After visiting the LESTM, Long's response was unequivocal: "Wow! How can I get connected to this place? . . . If I could get an internship at the Tenement Museum that would be fascinating."[495] Long started as an intern, advanced to tour guide, then to gallery coordinator, and finally to his present position as Director of Research.

In 1996, a Bank Street graduate, Lynda Kennedy joined LESTM, now in full swing, as its educational coordinator. The staff comprised 12 full-time employees; mornings were reserved for educational programs for students in kindergarten through grade twelve; afternoons were reserved for guided tours of 97 Orchard Street.[496] Kennedy recalled the frenetic schedule: "We would start our educational

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[493] Ibid.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Interview with Steve Long June 4, 2008.
[496] Interview with Lynda Kennedy August 12, 2008.

programs at 10:00 am and end at 1:00 pm. In the afternoon, we would give public tours, work on developing new programs, and send out invitations for upcoming events. Most days did not end at 5:30 pm."[497] Kennedy was particularly proud of her stewardship of the Net Worth Project.[498] Its aim was to examine students' perceptions of various economic classes and the extent to which their perceptions affected their behaviors and their lives.[499] Kennedy loved being a part of the LESTM because she believed that the opinions of staff members were listened to, taken seriously, and often incorporated into the programming.[500]

The younger staff members were eager to apply constructivist pedagogic theory to the educational programs for school children. According to Long:

> There weren't any open-ended questions in any of the tour training materials at the beginning. I always thought it was strange that in school groups, kids got to say what they thought, but adults were only asked if they had any questions; they were never asked what they thought. I felt that we should change that, so that if adults want to say, "Well, I thought blah blah blah." I mean they were doing that anyway, but we should be encouraging it, and using the dialogue principles that are so important to us in sort of like a larger level in thinking what a museum should be. And that it should be a forum, and people should be talking to one another, so we had to come up with different ways, not just after the tour, which is how Kitchen Conversations does it, but also during the tour, so people get to converse.

Key to the LESTM current educational programming is that it "emphasizes learners' unique ability to make their own meaning out of information" and provides visitors with opportunities to make connections between the information presented

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[497] Ibid.
[498] Ibid.
[499] Lynda Kennedy "Education for Social Change: The Net Worth Project" *Current Trends in Audience Research and Evaluation* (Washington DC: AAM Committee of Audience Research and Evaluation, May 2000).
[500] Interview with Lynda Kennedy August 12, 2008.

and their life experiences.[501] The core of the museum's philosophy of teaching/learning is to actively engage visitors, challenging them to think about, and discuss, the multiple perspectives of historical and contemporary issues. To support this mission, the LESTM formulated five educational goals that it expects its programs to achieve:

1. To lay the historical groundwork from which to address contemporary issues—viewing these issues through multiple lenses.

2. To help visitors make personal connections between themselves and the individuals who had once inhabited 97 Orchard Street; additionally, to make personal connections with today's immigrants, and the many challenges they face, wherever they live.

3. To help visitors make connections, and see relationships, between the issues immigrants of the past faced and the issues that today's immigrants face—while encouraging dialogue, mutual respect, and tolerance

4. To engage visitors in discussing the issues they have identified, and to do so candidly and respectfully.

5. To help visitors identify the responsibilities that they should shoulder in order to address inequities, and to work collaboratively to bring about positive changes in today's society, on the local, state, or national level.[502]

The fact that so many youthful, talented, and energetic individuals are eager to work for the LESTM suggests that Abram has been an effective leader. She, in collaboration with many other dedicated individuals, has created a progressive environment that has been, and continues to be, receptive to new ideas. Steve Long remarks on Abram:

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[501] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 15, 2008).
[501] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 15, 2008).
[502] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 15, 2008).

> Ruth is such an inspiring person to work for. Her level of intellectual curiosity always helped us advance the mission: "Why do we do what we do?" and "How can we re-imagine what we do to better serve our communities?" When I look back on it, I wonder how could she do all this?[503]

Kennedy adds, "Ruth was always receptive to new ideas as long as they advanced the mission."[504]

One of the many innovative projects of the LESTM, supported by a $35,000 grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, was assembling the first comprehensive US collection of artifacts and literature that are related to the experiences of immigrant, migrant, working-class poor in New York City. Marion Meyers, a professional librarian, volunteered her services in order to amass and catalog more than 400 books.[505] In a relatively short time, LESTM's archives "acquired an impressive number of books, scholarly articles, legal documents, artifacts, photographs, and prints. This collection includes, but is not limited to, immigration documents, birth certificates, medical records, licenses, and correspondence from more than 144 former owners, residents, and shopkeepers who had bee connected with 97 Orchard Street."[506] Additionally, there are "artifacts—household implements, tools, and furniture—discovered on the tenement's floors and in the courtyard that document the culture and everyday life of immigrants."[507] In 1992, the LESTM won the Archivist Roundtable Award for "Creative Use of Archives."[508] And, in 1994, the museum completed cataloguing its collection, adopted a collections policy,

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[503] Interview with Steve Long June 4, 2008.
[504] Interview with Lynda Kennedy August 12, 2008.
[505] Quoted in Tenement Museum Report (New York, New York, June 30, 1993).
[506] Report of Goals (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1994).
[507] Ibid.
[508] Progress and Plans Report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1994).

established a secure storage facility, and instituted a plan for national access to its archives.[509] Currently, the LESTM is computerizing its archives so that the rich store of information will be readily available to scholars, students, and the public at large.

In its first decade, the LESTM developed its mission and educational philosophy. It conducted extensive research on the occupants of 97 Orchard Street and used their stories as a springboard for discussions of the immigrant experience—past and present. Its educational programming reflected its mission and its philosophy. It raised the money that enabled it to purchase 97 Orchard Street, transforming the tenement into a space that pays homage to "living history." And, by effectively communicating the immigrant and migrant experience, the LESTM secured a secure position on the landscape of American museums. In its 1996–1997 fourth quarter report, Abram stated that major construction would begin in January (1997), and that the museum would be closed until April (1997).[510] The construction included:

1. Installation of air conditioning on the ground floor and the first floor for the comfort of museum visitors.
2. Addition of a full kitchen to host catered parties and ***Kitchen Conversations***.
3. Installation of steel rods to ensure visitors' safety.
4. Addition of two modern restrooms, which provide a striking contrast to the water closets in the tenement's hallways.
5. Reopening of the newly restored Baldizzi and Rogashevsky apartments.

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[509] Report of Goals, 1994.
[510] Fourth Quarter Report1996-1997 to the Board of Trustees (New York, NY: Lower East Side Tenement Museum).

6. Introduction of the newest apartment; the Confino family will move into the third-floor apartment, where their forebears had lived.

7. Repainting of the exterior masonry and installation of a fire escape.

At the beginning of its second decade of existence, the LESTM temporarily closed 97 Orchard Street to the public for several months in order to effect these improvements, meet the public's demands for greater safety and comfort, and recreate and refurbish the Confino and Rogarshevsky apartments.

Chapter 4: The Second Decade: 1998-2008

As the LESTM entered its second decade, it was becoming a professionalized institution—like the other museums that line the Upper East Side of Manhattan's Fifth Avenue—but in its own unique way. After six years of operation, it had been accredited by the Association of American Museums (AAM). A senior official the Smithsonian had assessed the LESTM at the behest of the AAM and filed this report:

> The Tenement Museum represents an extraordinary achievement. It has the potential to be not just another museum but to be part of a watershed moment in the history of museums. In pursuing its vision, the Tenement Museum is going to find itself right in the middle of some of the hardest and most controversial issues of American culture. This is a great place to be, and an unusual place to be for an American museum. The Tenement Museum is virtually alone among American museums in its focus on housing and the lives of urban, working people. It stands alone as a museum of tenement life.[511]

In its evaluation of the LESTM, which was submitted to Congress in the National Park Service (NPS) stated:

> The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is unusual on two fronts. First, located in the first tenement to be preserved in America, its themes of immigration and the struggles inherent to immigrant life illuminate important aspects of this nation's urban heritage—never before subjects for comprehensive museum interpretation. Second, the interpretive format take by the museum represents an innovative approach to such complex material, and offers an unusual mode of operation. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum represents an outstanding example of a surviving tenement associated with immigration and immigrant ways of life . . . It has exceptional value . . . and it meets the criteria of national significance, suitability, and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.[512]

[511] Progress and Plans (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2004).
[512] Ibid.

From 1998 to the present, the LESTM had been busy. To advance its mission, it recreated four additional apartments for tenants who had lived at 97 Orchard Street at some point in the spectrum of years that spanned 1863 to 1935: the families Confino, Rogarshevsky, Levine, and Moore. The museum became a national historic site and an affiliated site of the NPS. Abram founded the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience. And, in 2002, the LESTM received its AAM accreditation. The Board increased its membership. The staff more than doubled. The museum added a commitment to civic engagement through three new programs, ***Shared Journeys***, ***Kitchen Conversations***, and ***Digital Artist-in-Residence Program (DARP)***. An advisory committee was created to formulate policies and practices for people with disabilities and to ensure that its programming met the needs of this under-represented group. And, it acquired two more buildings on Orchard Street 91 and 103. The decade was marked prodigious growth, but two events, eminent domain and unionization of its part-time workers, blemished its reputation and raised questions as to whether the LESTM's business practices were congruent with its noble mission statement. Despite this "tarnishing its polished record," the museum prospered, and was perceived by its peers and most of the public as an institution that upheld the values of egalitarianism and civic duty. Looking back at the early days, Abram had this to say:

> This was such a struggling organization. Our growth is not particularly related to the museum world, as much as some of the best practices of organizational life, which is what you want to achieve if you can. At first, we were just so scrappy, so "catch as catch can," and then, as we were able to stand on our feet, we began to look around and see how things were done in a better way.[513]

[513] Phone Interview with Ruth Abram, June10, 2008.

The LESTM was filling a vital role in the museum world of the United States; and it was recognized as a public institution committed to engaging the public on immigration issues, past and present. David Favaloro, its current Research Manager, observed how he became aware of the LESTM: "I first learned of the LESTM on an overnight field trip for a class on public history, with Dr. Marla Miller of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst. We took a weekend trip to New York City to examine historic houses. The LESTM served as a model for best practices."[514] Favarolo's perceptions suggest that the LESTM already had gained a reputation for the quality of its research, its methods, and its focus on educating the public through interactive programs and direct engagement. As its reputation continued to spread, scholars, curators, and other representatives of the museum world from all over the country visited the LESTM to observe its operation.

1998—A Pivotal Year

After completing initial renovations in 1997, the LESTM experienced an exhilarating year. Encouraged by its affiliation with the NPS and its status as a national historic site, the LESTM launched its first Web site; co hosted a Centennial Event in celebration of Orchard Street; opened the third apartment (Confino family); launched *Kitchen Conversations* and provided its public spaces for private parties. Again, Abram: "It has been a year of substantial growth and development in every aspect of the organization. I am grateful to the members of the Board of Trustees, staff,

[514] Interview with David Favaloro July 29, 2008.

volunteers, consultants, and donors. Together, we are building an institution of which we can all be proud."[515]

In 1988, the LESTM continued to expand its programs, special events, and scholarship to meet the demands of its audience. ***Urban Log Cabin*****,** LESTM's first Web site, was launched in collaboration with PBS.[516] This interactive Web site—which still can be accessed at www.thirteen.org/tenement—provided a history of the Lower East Side; profiled the tenants of 97 Orchard Street; and reviewed changes in NYC housing regulations and the effects of these codes on building owners. Site content was, of course, based on the extensive research that had been done in the previous decade.[517] Naturally, the LESTM was eager to demonstrate that it intended to remain "cutting edge," and that it would utilize the latest information technology to communicate its messages to an ever-widening audience.

The LESTM was also interested in gaining the loyalty of New York City's residents. To this end, it hosted a Centennial Weekend Event to celebrate the placement of a plaque on the intersection of Delancey Street and Orchard Street. The plaque honored the site as being part of New York City's Heritage Trail. "Orchard Street, between Broome and Ludlow, [was] named the city's one and only Centennial Block."[518] In collaboration with local organizations, from Friday, June 19 through Sunday, June 21, storefronts displayed artifacts and photographs that showed what life in New York City had been like 100 years ago. To facilitate

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[515] President's report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 1999).
[516] 1998 Brochure (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.

pedestrian traffic, the block was closed to cars and buses on Sunday.[519] The event was sponsored by American Express. Each shop window had a theme; in essence, the LESTM had created a free outdoor museum for all.[520] Kahl, Chairman of the first Board remembered: "This event had Ruth's signature all over it. Mayor Koch rode in on a horse. He got measured for a suit. He spoke about his family's immigrating to New York. It was a highly attended event. It gave the public an awareness of what the museum was doing."[521]

To demonstrate the solid scholarship that underlay all of the museum's activities, the staff increased the number of presentations made in public forums, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the National Council for History Education (NCHE), the Association of American Museums (AAM) annual conference. The LESTM collaborated with City College of New York (CCNY) to launch the nation's first Urban Museum Studies Program (UMSP).[522] In recognition of her pioneering achievements, Abram was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Public Service from Russell Sage College.[523] All of these advances—occurring in one year—suggests that public and peer recognition was spurring the museum on, and that the LESTM was posed for its next step—to advance from a small museum whose visitors tended to be "local" to a larger institution, whose ambition was to reach a broader, more diverse audience through expanding its programming.

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[519] Ibid.
[520] Ibid.
[521] Interview with Bill Kahl July 17, 2008.
[522] Ibid.
[523] Ibid.

The Board of Trustees Evolves

In 2004, the LESTM was finally able to keep its head above water and professionalize its internal organization. At this time, the Board of Trustees changed radically. Now, all of its members were listed on LESTM letterhead; the list included name, title/s, and corporate or institutional affiliation/s. It was obvious that the LESTM was "name dropping"—an understandable tactic if it desired to show the world that it could attract "the best of the best." The Board quadrupled in number—from seven to 28. The status of its members was more "elevated." Among them were President and CEO of Greystone Capital Partners and Senior Managing Director of Bear Stearns. In the President's Report of March 18, 2004, Abram addressed these changes: "Our goal is up to seven new members, who together will strengthen the Museum's fund-raising ability and its ties to corporate and leadership circles. The Nominating Committee has established new guidelines"[524] The addition of several "heavy hitters" from NYC's private financial sector demonstrated LESTM's growing status. It is remarkable that a small museum that lacked the prestige of a Fifth Avenue address (or at the very least, a mid-town address) was attracting men and women who were willing to give LESTM the benefit of their business acumen, their stellar connections, and their money.

Board members were appointed by a Nominating Committee and served three year terms.[525] The prestige of the LESTM allowed it the privilege of choosing who was invited; in fact, potential Board members were selected with an

[524] *President's report*. (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2004).
[525] Application to NY State Board of Regents, 1988.

eye to the services they were able to provide.[526] The Board met quarterly: March, June, September, and December. Its membership was now 30 (14 women and 16 men) including seven Honorary Trustees, such as US Senators, Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer. Current membership if one were one impressed by titles was notable, including Vice President, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; Managing Director, D. E. Shaw & Company; Executive Vice-President, International Card Product Marketing, American Express; Partner, Cravath, Swaine & Moore, LLP; Professor of Architecture, Columbia University.[527] In a self-study report to the AAM in 2002, Steve Long, Vice President of Collections and Education, revealed that the LESTM "recruits trustees who reflect a diversity of ethnic backgrounds."[528] In 20 years, the Board of Trustees has developed from a small, eclectic group into a gathering of influential women and men, many of whom represented America's diverse ethnic composition.

Funding: 1998 to the Present

Finding financial support had been a challenge in the early years because the LESTM could not be neatly labeled; it did not fit into only one funding category. To rectify this situation, Abram decided to do what she did best: organize. She gathered leaders from like-minded museums to form a coalition, thereby establishing a presence in the museum community and signaling a greater degree of social activism. In December 1999, the directors of ten historic sites around the world gathered at the Conference Center of the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy, for

[526] Phone Interview with Ruth Abram June 11, 2008.
[527] www.tenement.org (accessed on June 2, 2008).
[528] Quoted in American Association of Museum Accreditation Application (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).

a week-long conference. Joining the LESTM were: Workhouse (England), Gulag Museum (Russia), Slave House (Senegal), District Six Museum (South Africa), Project to Remember (Argentina), Liberation War Museum (Bangladesh), Terezin (The Czech Republic), Japanese Internment Camp (Japan), and Women's Rights National Historic Park (United States). At week's end, the group had established the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, whose charge was threefold: "To interpret history through a historic site; to engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues and that promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function; and to share opportunities for public involvement in issues raised at its site."[529] Again, quite remarkable: the LESTM had taken the initiative; it had sponsored an international conference; it had made museum history. Further, it had become clear that this leader in the field deserved the financial support needed to more it forward.

In 1998, American Express (AMEX) supported various LESTM projects with contributions ranging from $5,000 to $100,000.[530] Some of the projects that had received its support over the years were: Heritage House Slide Show, Urban Log House, Centennial Block Celebration, Updating the Tenement Story, American Heritage Trail, gala dinners, and most recently, a re-branding initiative.[531] As a corporate member of the LESTM, AMEX employees may visit the museum gratis. Cheryl Green Rosario, Director of Philanthropy, American Express, explained why AMEX supported the LESTM: "The tenement museum's focus on preservation helps

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[529] Quoted in http://www.sitesofconscience.org/index.php/about-us/en/#section2 (accessed on May 1, 2008)
[530] Interview with Cheryl Green Rosario on July 22, 2008.
[531] Ibid.

us advance one of our goals of preserving and enriching American's diverse cultural heritage. It is a unique institution that tells an important story, and it presents something new and different."[532]

In 2004, the LESTM revamped its fund-raising strategy, which combined annual and capital drives as well as Trustee solicitation. Abram: "To reach our goal, we ask that each trustee purchase or assemble a $10,000 table."[533] Clearly, the LESTM was becoming more "corporate" in its funding methods and its outreach strategies. Today, funds for the LESTM depend on five sources: corporate contributions, grants, public donations, ticket sales, and merchandise sales. The money pays its staff and consultants (numbering more than 100, if one includes unpaid volunteers) and represents the economic fuel for all of its programs. The museum's current annual budget exceeds $4.5 million.[534]

Vision for Future Growth

As the LESTM became more grounded, and succeeded in meeting the ten objectives stated its original charter, it developed new objectives. In the President's Report of 2002, Abram described her vision for future growth:

> Establishing and promoting a new model for the museum and preservation professions, the Tenement Museum will serve as a center for encounter and dialogue among immigrants and their descendants, as well as among scholars, policy makers, and practitioners working on historical and contemporary immigration-related issues. Emphasizing immigration and migration as a shared American heritage, these programs will interpret the full diversity and depth of immigrant/migrant experiences on the Lower East Side, with special emphasis on contemporary Lower East Side communities whose histories have been under-represented, including Asian, Latino, Arab, and African American.[535]

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[532] Quoted in Ibid.
[533] *President's Report* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2004).
[534] *Ruth J. Abram* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[535] Quoted in President's Report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).

To achieve its new vision, the LESTM formulated ten new objectives. Six of the ten are encapsulated below:

1. Expand physically—adding an accessible and environmentally sound visitor's center and tenement buildings that will accommodate a full-size theater, community meeting spaces, conference rooms, exhibit galleries, classrooms, archive and library, and recreated tenement apartments that would include: an Irish family, a sweat shop, contemporary immigrant/migrant families, and a "hands-on apartment.

2. Continue to diversity the Board, staff, consultants, and volunteers in terms of specific skills, languages (spoken and read), and racial and ethnic background.

3. Develop multilingual programming and materials; hire multilingual tour guides.

4. Capitalize on both old and new communications technologies and media to create imaginative, engaging programs

5. Raise quotas for annual, capital, and endowment fund-raising; increase income.

6. Institute an on-going, rigorous self-evaluation program.[536]

To ensure that the LESTM met its new objectives, the LESTM enhanced its educational agenda to include civic engagement. According to the LESTM's on-line manual for educators, museums should be educational institutions that encourage civic engagement. Civic engagement was defined as "a dialogue in which people discuss civic issues, policies, or decisions of consequence to their lives, communities, and society. It [civic engagement] engages multiple perspectives on an issue, including potentially conflicted and unpopular ones, rather than promoting a single

[536] *President's Report* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).

point of view."[537] By combining an interpretive and a constructivist approach with civic engagement, the LESTM established a new model for museum and preservation professionals, which is conveyed in these four precepts:

1. All visitors are learners. All visitors are capable of learning and, as a corollary; all persons who lead tours are educators.

2. All learners should be respected. All educators should be respectful of individual differences in learning styles, learning levels, and learners' backgrounds.

3. All learning is centered on the learner. All learning is based on the constructivist learning approach. Constructivism is an educational theory that emphasizes the learner's ability to derive his or her own meaning from the information imparted.

4. All learning supports the mission of the museum. Visitors should be given the opportunity to hear multiple perspectives on historical and contemporary issues as well as the opportunity to voice multiple perspectives and to have these perspectives listened to respectfully by the educator and the other visitors.[538]

It is necessary, at this point, to examine how the LESTM transforms the theoretical to the practical. Drawing inspiration and energy from its successful international collaboration that established, in 1999, the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, the LESTM continued to assume a leadership role by working to use historic sites as venues for civic engagement. Four current projects that represent its commitment to civic engagement and its role in creating public forums, where citizens can critically examine specific issues and can help shape civic policies, are: ***Kitchen Conversations***, ***Shared Journeys***, ***DARP***, and on-line programming.

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[537] Quoted in www.tenement.org (accessed on July 1, 2008).
[538] Ibid.

In November 1997, the LESTM featured its first public "conversation." It was called *Around the Kitchen Table: Immigration and American Identities*. The LESTM invited visitors to view their film, *Immigration and American Identities*, which compared and contrasted the experiences of contemporary immigrants with those of their predecessors. After the screening, visitors engaged in a discussion focusing on what had changed and what remained the same; the participants then were asked to express their feelings about what it meant to be an "American." For the next five years (1998–2002), the LESTM would build on this initial concept; in 2002, it became a "staple" at the LESTM.[539] The Dialogue Program:

> was conducted for groups after their Tenement Tour. Led by a trained facilitator, group tours are given the opportunity: a) to share responses to the tenement families and how their experiences relate to their own family histories; and b) to consider some of the issues confronting today's immigrants. Such dialogues also enable visitors to address a specific issue they might be grappling with—for example, cultural identity, discrimination, social welfare, family function. They also serve to enrich the tour experience by encouraging visitors to connect with each other in a meaningful exchange of thoughts and feelings.[540]

In 2005, the Dialogue Program was renamed ***Kitchen Conversations*** and its frequency increased from two times a week to 12 times a week.[541] Since 2005, more than 300 visitors have participated.[542] Maggie Russell-Ciardi, former Director of Education of the LESTM, commented on the effectiveness of ***Kitchen Conversations***:

> Most visitors, while initially skeptical about engaging in dialogue about contemporary immigration issues at a historic site, soon grasped what

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[539] *President's Report First Quarter* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2003).
[540] Ibid.
[541] *President's Report* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2005).
[542] Ibid.

> the museum was trying to do. They demonstrated a willingness to join the museum in its effort to make connections between past and present, to honor the knowledge that visitors brought with them to the museum, and to have visitors think critically about how the museum experience challenged what they knew. The program soon became a regular feature of the museum. An average of 80 percent of the visitors now stay after their tour to participate in these spirited ***Kitchen Conversations***.[543]

Russell-Ciardi's observations underscored the challenges such a program poses for the public and the public institution. It was difficult to engage in candid public expression of one's feelings about complex, emotionally charged issues. Nevertheless, the LESTM was committed to promoting this kind of ongoing public dialogue.

In 2002, the LESTM developed ***Shared Journeys: Learning English and Civics Through the Stories of Immigrants Past (Shared Journeys)***—a program designed for adults who were interested in learning English and civics.[544] Educational materials included visits to 97 Orchard Street, a workbook written in English, and the ***Immigrant Guide to New York City*** (published by the LESTM, *The New York Times*, and St. Martin's Press). Students explored some of the challenges, including making a living, making a home, and staying healthy in a strange, new country while improving their ability to read and speak English. Classes were subsidized by grants the LESTM acquired. Adult students were drawn from various collaborations with The International Center, Educational Alliance, Catholic Charities, and Hamilton Fish Library.[545] Six two-hour workshops required students to visit the tenement to learn about their immigrant

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[543] Maggie Russell-Ciardi "The Museum as a Democracy Building Institution: Reflection on the Shared Journeys at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, *The Public Historian,* Vol. 30, February (2008): pp.39-52.
[544] *President's report* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2003).
[545] Ibid.

predecessors; then, in small groups, they discussed how their story compared and contrasted with those of the occupants of 97 Orchard Street, and they were expect to improve their English by studying vocabulary lists provided at the workshops. [546] Currently, ***Shared Journeys*** has been expanded to include workshops for high school students, targeted to those in transitional bilingual programs, dual language programs, or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. The curriculum for high school students is similar to the one for adults. The LESTM offers four workshops high school students taking ESOL classes:

1. ***Our Immigrant Histories: Telling Our Stories*** Assuming the role of a newly arrived immigrant family in 1916, students interact with former resident, Victoria Confino (14 years), played by a costumed actor. Issues such as adjusting to a new culture, retaining one's cultural identify, and making friends in a new country are addressed. After interacting with Victoria, students break into small groups to discuss the connections between the immigrant experience in 1916 and their own experiences.

2. ***Learning About Discrimination*** Students visit the apartment of the Baldizzi family, who immigrated to the United States in the 1920s, when there was flagrant discrimination against Italians. Students discuss he causes of anti-immigrant sentiment and discrimination, then and now.

3. ***Housing Conditions—Then and Now*** **Students** become "housing inspectors" in 1906 and assess 97 Orchard Street for violations of the building codes. During their inspection, they interact with two costumed actors, one, a Tenement House Inspector, and the other, a landlord. After the role-playing, students receive information about current housing regulations/laws and learn what actions they can take, individually and collectively, to bring about improvements in their community.

4. ***Making a Difference: Immigrants and Social Change*** Students visit the restored apartment of a family that had worked in the garment industry at the beginning of the twentieth century [1900-

[546] Russell-Ciardi, "The Museum as a Democracy", p. 49

> 1920] to learn about the efforts of social reformers and workers to improve working conditions in the garment factories. Students also learn about organizations that are working to improve the lives of today's immigrant workers, both factory workers and farm workers. Finally, they learn what they can do to "make a difference."[547]

The adult workshops are:

1. ***Coming to the United States*** Students visit the 1935 apartment of Rosaria and Adolpho Baldizzi, Italian immigrants who came to NYC in the 1920s. Participants compare and contrast their experience with that of the Baldizzi's, and discuss the question: "Who should be able to immigrate to the United States?" and "What does it mean to be American?"

2. ***Immigrants and Social Welfare*** Students visit the apartment of Natalie Gumpertz, a single parent who raised their children during the depression of the 1870s. Students learn about her options (if any), and contrast them with the various forms of public assistance available to today's immigrants.

3. ***Our Immigration Histories: Telling Our Stories*** Students go back in time to 1916 to meet 14-year old Victoria Confino. Played by a costumed actor, Victoria invites visitors into her apartment, describes her culture and what it was like to be young and poor in 1916. Afterwards, participants break into small groups to prepare and present talks about their culture and their experiences.

4. ***Making a Living Students*** visit the 1897 apartment of the Levine's, who ran a tiny garment factory in their home. (Commonplace at the turn of the century, their operation is one of the first "sweatshops.") Conditions in these tenement factories sparked national debate about what constituted acceptable working conditions—a debate that continues today. Students discuss the challenges of making a living, learn how immigrants organized for better working conditions, and about the prevalence of sweatshops in other parts of the world today, and what is being done to address this problem.

5. ***Housing Conditions—Then and Now*** Students address the question, "What are acceptable housing conditions?" They learn how immigrants helped shape minimal standards for safe housing (from 1863 to1935), and about the steps they can take to improve their housing conditions. They assume the role of "housing inspectors" in the early 1900s and, applying the ordinances of the Tenement House Act (1901), they assess 97 Orchard Street. They are given information about current housing laws

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[547] www.tenement.org (accessed on May 25, 2008).

and are asked to consider whether their own homes meet current standards.

6. ***Health Issues in Our Communities*** Students visit the 1918 apartment of the Rogarshevsky family, whose members are in mourning because the patriarch, Abraham, has died of tuberculosis (TB). A highly contagious disease, TB often was contracted by people living in over-crowded tenements, and the condition was exacerbated by overwork, poor nutrition, and inadequate medical care. The Rogarshevsky tragedy is the basis of a discussion of immigrant health and the barriers today's immigrants face in accessing health care.[548]

Shared Journeys provides an interactive environment for learning English; stimulates consideration of the student's experience as an immigrant within the broader historical context, and promotes critical engagement with civic issues.

In addition to providing educational programming for newcomers to the United States, including a forum for discussion of issues relevant to immigrants, past and present, the LESTM created a public venue for immigrant artists, emerging and established, through its window installations and its ***Digital Artists in Residency Program*** (DARP). Under the leadership of Director of Web/IT, Jeff Tencil, the LESTM launched the first installation in December 2001.[549] The program solicits Web-based artworks that explore and comment on the experiences of immigrants today. The first resident artist was Claudia Chow; her installation, ***Banana***, looked at a fictional Chinese-American family to understand how their children and adolescents were bridging the gap between Chinese values and traditions and contemporary American culture.[550] Tencil's observed: "Just when people were trying to figure out use of the Web for museums, and the Tenement Museum needed something as an extension of

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[548] Ibid.
[549] *President's Report* Second Quarter (New York, New York, LESTM, 2001).
[550] Ibid.

its work, I wanted to create something that was new, and DARP was evocative of its [LESTM's] mission."[551]

In 2000, to meet the new federal law, American Disabilities Act (ADA), the LESTM initiated a program to provide services and amenities for the people with disabilities. To meet the needs of people with different types of disabilities, the LESTM provided those requiring one or more of these services with: sign language interpreters/ "speakers," Touch Tours, enlarged-print materials, assisted-listening equipment, and customized walking tours for people in wheelchairs. In 2001, the LESTM hired Miguel Sabat as American Disabilities Act (ADA) Associate to help the Education Department become more responsive to the needs of the disabled. One of Sabat's first tasks was the creation of an Access Advisory Board, so that the museum's educational programs would become more inclusive and welcoming to this segment of the population. On October 29, 2001, the ADA Board participated in a Touch Tour and visited the "sweatshop" apartment. The reviewers "were generally impressed with the ADA programming developed at the museum."[552] In November 2001, the Education Department launched its Special Education Teacher-Training Program, which discussed methods that special education teachers should use in relation to history studies and encouraged the integration of LESTM learning programs into their curricula.[553] Rebecca Hinde, Visitors' Services Coordinator, commented on LESTM's efforts to include people with disabilities in their programming:

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[551] Interview with Jeff Tencil July 29, 2008.
[552] *President's Report* Second Quarter (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives 2001).
[553] Ibid.

> The Museum has reached out to the many disability communities to help achieve its access goals. The Tenement Museum's Access Advisory Board includes leaders in the field of disability. Visitors also have helped. Recently, more than 20 members of the Manhattan chapter of Self-Help for Hard-of- Hearing People (SHHH) toured the Museum, using its assisted listening equipment. "I really enjoyed today," said one member after the visit. "For me to go on a tour and hear every word is a major quality-of-life improvement." Visitors like this are a reminder of why access to cultural institutions such as the Tenement Museum is so important. The Museum hopes not just to ensure access for its visitors but also to be a model for other cultural institutions in the service of larger goals of civil rights and social inclusion.[554]

The programs designed for newcomers to this country, children and adults alike, bear witness to the fact that LESTM had responded to the AAM's charge—stated in *Excellence and Equity*—"How can museums use the abundance of their collections and their scholarly resources to enrich and empower citizens of all backgrounds? The museum's interactive programs helped students recognize that they are respected members of their adopted country, helped them improve their English language skills, and taught them that they are not powerless—that they can be proactive improving their living and working conditions. The various aids that the museum has made available to individuals with disabilities makes it more welcoming and inclusive for those who would otherwise not be able to benefit from its programs.

Expanded Programming

Dedicated to the promotion of tolerance, the LESTM has increased the number and frequency of its programs. It also has reached out to the under-represented in order to broaden the diversity of its audience, as previously discussed, chapter 3 described the use of the museum's landmark building (97 Orchard Street) to tell the stories of the immigrants who had lived on Manhattan's

[554] http://www.sath.org/index.php?sec=1171 (accessed on August 12, 2008).

Lower East Side. To tell the stories of today's immigrants and to create increased opportunities for dialogue, the museum used its front windows, its theatre, its classrooms, and its Web site. From 1990 to1995, the subject matter encompassed: the long-standing "war" between pushcart peddlers and merchants; housing and labor issues; activism and reform; and always were heard the voices of the freed slaves and of the impoverished newcomers from Germany, Italy, Ireland, Eastern Europe, and China. Nor were the women and children ignored; their poignant stories were told as well. These early programs were based on the actual people who had, from 1863 to 1935, inhabited 97 Orchard Street. By 1995, the programming had expanded to include the stories—and the voices—of the more recent immigrants notably Latinos (hailing from Central America and South America) and Muslims (from the Middle East). Current programming is cognizant that changing demographics require the voices to represent NYC's Puerto Rican population, various Arab nations, and those of East Asia (China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh). Based on two hand tallies, the LESTM currently offers 47 topics.[555] In the five-year span, (1990–1995), issues for discussion included (but were not limited to) architecture, transportation, ethnicity, gender, ageism, health, housing, labor, and cultural and religious values.

After the LESTM had secured its initial footing, and felt confident that its interactive approach was working, the museum staff directed its energies to creating programs that focused on the experiences of the more recently arrived immigrants and that reflected the concerns of a new demographic profile. One of the early tactics that

[555] Brochures from 1990-2005 (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives 1990-2005).

reflected this demographic shift occurred in 1991. LESTM staged an open microphone evening, called ***In My Day***, in which participants shared memories of the old home, adventures and misadventures in the new home, family histories, and descriptions (serious or comedic) of a family member or friend.[556] A year later, the LESTM offered oral history services to the public; visitors recorded their own stories. In 1993, the LESTM presented ***Hopes and Dreams***, an exhibit of artworks by immigrant artists representing 20 countries. ***Tales From Many Lands*** was a series of dramatizations of the experiences of people living virtually anywhere on the planet.[557] In 1994, the LESTM posted a memory board, inviting visitors to leave notes, captioned photographs, or journal entries that communicated a remembrance related to living in the Lower East Side.

To demonstrate the LESTM's commitment to diversity, Abram issued this announcement: "Not only does the museum's community continue to grow, as evidenced by the increase in numbers and ticket sales, but it also is increasingly diversified. This is no accident. Programs such as ***From Bomba to Hip Hop*** and ***My Komunidad*** reached out to both Spanish-speaking visitors and museum professionals, respectively."[558] Selected walking tours now were bilingual—English and Cantonese, or Mandarin, or French, or German, or Russian, or Spanish.[559]

The LESTM's dual commitment to diversification in programming and to being a good neighbor was demonstrated in a collaboration, in 2002, with Saint Augustine's Church in the LES to create an interpretive program on its slave gallery. Museum staff,

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[556] 1991 Brochure (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[557] 1993 Brochure (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives).
[558] President's Report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2000).
[559] Ibid.

congregants of Saint Augustine, and community leaders used the slave gallery as springboard to discussion of sensitive issues."[560] The success of this tripartite collaboration impressed The Ford Foundation, which singled it out as a model for other arts and humanities programs intended to promote civic dialogue.[561]

The LESTM Web Site

In addition to the tours of 97 Orchard Street, dramatizations, gallery exhibitions, forums and walking tours, the lives of the pioneers of the Lower East Side were presented on www.tenement.org, LESTM's Web site. In addition to providing museum location, hours, admission fees, and descriptions of its various offerings and special events, the Web site allows access to a broad range of historical information topics, every immigrant and migrant group who had lived, or continues to live, in the LES is profiled. Additional topics include: healthcare; economic depression; labor movements; the evolution of the LES; parks and playgrounds, activism, settlement houses, social welfare; sweat shops, and nativism.[562] Web site visitors can take virtual tours of the apartments at 97 Orchard Street, and learn how historical "detective work" enabled the LESTM to restore the building and achieve total authenticity. If one has been unable to attend an event, he can download a pod cast of the event. Aided by the vision, vigor, and commitment of its staff and supporters, the LESTM has expanded the nature and the number of its programs, and special events, has preserved 97 Orchard Street, and has provided many opportunities for public exchange of ideas and promotion of mutual respect and tolerance.[563] On the horizon: LESTM will soon introduce a more user-

[560] President's Report (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, 2002).
[561] Ibid.
[562] www.tenement.org (accessed on November 13, 2006).
[563] *Pre-campaign Study* (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, March 1991).

friendly Web site, targeted to the general public as well as to educators and students of every age.[564] According to Tencil, "The new Web site will have more robust areas and will be quite playful."[565]

Eminent Domain: 97 Orchard Versus 99 Orchard

In 2001, the LESTM sought to increase its ownership of LES properties. It wanted to buy 99 Orchard Street in order to "expand the number of people coming to visit the Museum, from 90,000 to well over 200,000."[566] In 2001, it offered to purchase the "twin" of 97 Orchard, namely 99 Orchard, for $1.35 million.[567] Louis and Mimi Holtzman, owners of 99 Orchard, declined the offer. At this point, Abram sought to have the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) condemn the property "for the good of the public" exercising the law of eminent domain.[568] Real estate disputes are commonplace events in NYC, but this particular dispute was described ". . . like an onion—peel one layer of argument, and what you will find is another layer."[569] The conflict between Abram (Museum) and Holtzman (Private Citizen) galvanized the contenders and the public. The struggle was perceived as Immigrant Museum versus Immigrant Family (Holtzman's antecedents were Eastern European Jews, and his partner, Peter Liang, was born in Hong King).[570] Each had a lot at stake, and reacted with animosity; in addition, the disputants actively sought, and secured, high-powered supporters for their respective

[564] Interview with Jeff Tencil July 29, 2008.
[565] Ibid.
[566] Quoted in http://www.tenement.org/statement.html (accessed on July 8, 2008).
[567] Brain Kates "Immigrants Museum vs. Local Immigrants Lower East Side Divided" *Daily News* (New York, NY April 28, 2002).
[568] Clyde Haberman "NYC; Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Building?" *New York Times* (New York, NY February 13, 2002).
[569] Quoted in Ibid.
[570] Kates, "Immigrants Museum vs. Local Immigrants"

positions. Thus, there were two fierce factions: the proponents of the museum and the proponents of the property-owners (Holtzman). The LESTM claimed:

1. The gut renovations of 99 Orchard Street caused a great deal of damage to the fabric of our landmark tenement building—the first homestead of urban, working class, and poor immigrants to be preserved in the United States. The owners of 99 Orchard failed to adhere to any of the regulations regarding building next to an historic site; and they also filed false work plans and were issued numerous violations. Between November 2000 and May 2001, the Department of Buildings (DOB) issued at least three stop-work orders, which 99 Orchard ignored repeatedly. In addition, the plans filed with the DOB declared

2. 99 Orchard Street's intention to build office and residential space. However, its real plan, as is now clear, was to extend a restaurant into the commercial space (which requires stricter safety regulations than the offices they originally claimed to be building).[571]

On his Web site, which featured photographs of his ancestors, who had purchased 99 Orchard Street circa1910 and which also attacked Abram, Holtzman rebutted each of her claims:

1. They should be ashamed saying my construction ruined their rear wall. Let's go down my "historic" memory lane. Review the picture of our buildings in 1983—years before the museum. Look at the condition of the lower rear wall and the joining wall of the two buildings. Look at the drainpipe and the incredible sagging. Don't let Ruth Abram pass her dilapidated building, with its inherent pre-museum condition, off on me. I renovated mine, and I am proud of it.

2. 99's real plan, as is now clear, was to do whatever we wanted to in our building. Which is what we do in America! It is in our Constitution. Ruth, we are free to amend building plans. You have nothing to do with us. She is disgusting. So many sleepless nights due to this creature. Not once have construction/damage problems ever been mentioned in the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) report on the eminent domain seizure

[571] Quoted in www.tenementnauseum.com (accessed on July 8, 2008).

of 99 Orchard Street.[572]

Holtzman also plastered signs that read, “The Museum will not take my home” and “Eminent Domain Abuse” on his front stoop and the windows of his apartment.[573] Each side had vociferous advocates. The LESTM submitted letters written by 95 individuals who supported the acquisition of 99 Orchard Street. Included in this number were historian Kenneth Jackson; Michael Adlerstein, of the National Park Service, Cultural Resources Center; Susan Chin, of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and numerous local educators and residents.[574] Reverend Edgar Hopper of Saint Augustine's Episcopal Church wrote: "The owners of 99 Orchard St. are bringing in wealthy people from outside the neighborhood to pay astronomical rents. They further marginalize this neighborhood's immigrant residents, creating another facility that most of us can not own or operate."[575]

Supporting Holtzman’s side were neighborhood business associations and Community Board 3, which opposed leveraging the alleged property condemnation to expand the museum’s holdings, insisting that this was a matter that should be resolved in the courts. On behalf of Holtzman, Senator Thomas Duane wrote to the ESDC: "I strongly insist that we do not remove from the market needed housing units, even for the most worthy of causes."[576] It is interesting to note that Senator Duane became an Honorary Trustee of the LESTM in 2004. While he condemned the museum’s decision to cite eminent domain in defense of the acquisition of 99 Orchard

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[572] Ibid.
[573] Quoted in Kates, “Immigrants Museum vs. Local Immigrants.”
[574] Ibid.
[575] Quoted in Kates, “Immigrants Museum vs. Local Immigrants.”
[576] Quotedin Sheldon Silver Letter to Empire State Development Corporation, February 12, 2002.

Street, Duane reiterated his support of the valuable contributions of the LESTM to the LES. Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver also wrote to the ESDC on behalf of Holtzman: "As important as the museum's contribution is to our neighborhood, so too, is it imperative that we protect the rights of tenants and landowners when they are threatened."[577] New Yorkers appeared to be evenly split. Many of the museum's local supporters stressed its ongoing contributions to the cultural development of the area. Others were motivated by the rapid gentrification of the lower East Side, a trend they considered detrimental.[578]

In a *New York Times* article (February 12, 2002) Abrams was quoted as having said: “Eminent domain scares people. It brings up images of the big guy versus the small . . . Nonetheless, we do need this building."[579] The controversy for and against eminent domain indicates the overall discomfort of those who perceive it to be misused by bureaucrats to usurp the rights of the individual. Given that perception, one might wonder why the LESTM would use this strategy to obtain 99 Orchard Street. Fermoile, Director of Education at the time, worried about giving tours while the acrimonious debate raged on. She also was concerned about the effect of Holtzman’s signs on museum visitors: “This was a very difficult time, and it caused me to question my continuation of working at the tenement museum. I loved working there—the staff was amazing—and I understood why Ruth decided to use eminent domain. Ruth is a very compelling lady.”[580] Tencil, who had been with the LESTM since 1999, also commented: “It was awful—brutal—at that time, the

[577] Quoted in Thomas Duane Letter to Empire State Development Corporation, February 7, 2002.
[578] Kates, “Immigrants Museum vs. Local Immigrants.”
[579] Haberman “NYC; Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Building?”
[580] Interview with Kate Fermoile July 15, 2008.

museum was golden—everyone loved it. It was reminiscent of the Kool-Aid ads of the '80s. The museum had its blinders on as it turned on us." Jacobson also commented on the 99 Orchard Street debacle: "Yes, there was an issue there, where we wanted to buy the building, and it got a little dicey, and we backed off, and of course, they wouldn't sell. I'm glad that that it didn't work out. It's unfortunate. It was bad publicity for the museum too. It's just as well that it didn't work out."[581]

The central irony, which appears obvious in retrospect: "To show how people used to live in the Lower East Side, should the Museum be able to evict people who actually live in the building?"[582] The conflict between Abram and Holtzman raised knotty questions. For example, on its tour of 97 Orchard, how did the tour guide approach the fact that the Baldizzi family was evicted from 97 Orchard when, at that time, the museum was trying to evict the Holtzman's from 99 Orchard [after they had refused to sell]. The pro-Museum and pro-Holtzman arguments can be accessed on-line. LESTM: http://www.tenement.org/statement.html. Holtzman: http://www.tenementnauseum.com/.htm.

Current Programming

The museum can be accessed only by guided tour. The permanent exhibitions of six restored apartments that recapture the lives of immigrant families who had occupied 97 Orchard Street between 1863, when it was built, and 1935, when it was closed to residents, are the core of the Tenement Tours.

[581] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 8, 2008.
[582] Haberman, "NYC; Your Tired, Your Poor, Your Building?"

To see, and feel, what life was like for these urban working class poor, the

LESTM offers four guided tours:[583]

1. ***Confino Family.*** Visitors are transported to 1918 to converse with Victoria, a fourteen-year-old (portrayed by an actor in costume) to learn about life on the Lower East Side and to discuss issues of "assimilation, cultural identity, and the role of community."[584]

2. ***Getting By*.** Visitors are welcomed into two homes: the Gumpertz's, a German-Jewish family (1870) and the Baldizzi's a Sicilian-Catholic family (1930) They learn how each family lived (in their respective time periods) and about the support networks (or lack thereof) that were available to them.

3. ***Piecing It Together*.** Visitors enter the homes of two families: the Levine's, who had immigrated from Poland to the United States in 1897 (and set up a shop in their apartment), and Rogarshevsky's, who had immigrated from Russia to the United States (and whose father had died of tuberculosis, so a Shiva [condolence] call is in order).

4. ***The Moores: An Irish Family in America.*** Visitors "meet" this family and learn how it coped with communicable, sometimes deadly, diseases that were prevalent in the early 1900s. (This tour opened June 17, 2008.)

Walking Tours. The walking tours describe a neighborhood's past history and present circumstances.

***Kitchen Conversations*.** (See page 143.)

Off-site Tours. An actor in costume portraying fourteen-year-old Victoria Confino (who had occupied 97 Orchard in 1916) visits your facility. Participants travel back in time, pretending to be newly-arrived immigrants, and talk to Victoria. Handling some of the artifacts of that period enrich the experience.

Slide Show. An educator visits your facility to present either ***Getting By*** or ***Piecing It Together***. Participants share their impressions of the immigrant experience and address current issues. A question-and-answer session and a hands-on segment prompt further interaction and discussion.

Visitors' Center. The facility has a 25-seat theatre that screens a 25-minute video (produced by the History Channel) about immigration to the Lower East Side from the 1800's to the present. There is no admission fee.

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[583] Quoted in www.tenement.org (accessed on July 1, 2008).
[584] www.tenement.org (accessed on July 1, 2008).

Events at the Museum Shop The Visitors' Center hosts "Events at the Museum Shop." These are open to the public and free (unless noted otherwise). Events, which usually occur monthly, include book readings, publisher's parties, and discussion groups.

Shared Journeys (See page 147.)

Teacher Training

1. To further LESTM's mission of promoting tolerance, the Workshops address pressing issues and promote standards-based instruction.

2. Five interactive Workshops demonstrate approaches for integrating artifacts, primary source documents, personal narratives and other literature, art, architecture, mathematics, science, and issues of race and class into the social studies curriculum. Participants assess the Museum's use of history to stimulate thoughtful discussion of contemporary issues. Teachers are provided with tools for integrating what they have learned into their teaching.

3. These Workshops were designed to be in compliance with the balanced goals of the NYC Board of Education's Social Studies Syllabi for the study of US history and culture.

Unionization of Part-Time Employees

Seven years after the LESTM had infamously battled with the Holtzman family, it has "butted heads" with its part-time employees and *per diem* workers over the issue of unionization. The situation (it is unresolved) is inherently ironic: the immigrant families of 97 Orchard Street had struggled with oppressive bosses and had banded together to fight for employee protections, rights, and benefits. Now, the LESTM's senior management is resistant to the prospect of unionization of its part-time employees and its *per diem* workers. Lethia Nall, a "costumed interpreter" (actor), was responsible for organizing the movement to unionize.[585] Lynda Kennedy and Suzanne Wasserman, former employees of the LESTM, noted that this is not the first

[585] Interview with Lethia Nall July 10, 2008.

attempt to unionize; previous attempts had been quickly squelched.[586] Costumed interpreters (actors), and tour guides—the individuals who interact with the public, "the museum's face"—have expressed their grievances and are seeking health coverage, regular work schedules, and higher wages[587] More than a majority of the 40 workers signed up for membership in Local 2110 UAW with the hope of joining the union. According to the part-timers, the LESTM has taken measures to prevent this from occurring.

To make their voices heard, the part-timers employed three strategies: handing out fliers, picketing, and creating a Web site. On March 4, 2008, the evening of the LESTM's Annual Fund-Raising Gala at Chelsea Piers, 25 of the *per diem* workers handed out fliers that enumerated their grievances to the 450 attendees of the Gala who, it should be noted, had paid $850 per ticket.[588] Like the infuriated Holtzman, the workers created a Web site http://www.2110uaw.org/tenement_museum.htm to ensure that the public can read about their position and their complaints. Visitors to the Web site can participate in the debate as there is a special feature for adding comments. The workers also picketed on Orchard Street between Broome and Delancey in early May 2008. It should be noted that State Senator Duane joined the part-timers' picket and subsequently resigned from his position as an Honorary Trustee of the LESTM. An inveterate supporter of workers' rights Duane made this public statement: "I am most disturbed by the museum's continued obstruction of the union organizing drive."[589]

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[586] Interview with Suzanne Wasserman on July 9, 2008 and Interview with Lynda Kennedy on August 12, 2008.
[587] Interview with Lethia Nall July 10, 2008.
[588] Sewell Chen "At Tenement Museum, A Fight for Unionization" New York Times March 4, 2008.
[589] Caroline Jackson "Worked up over museum dispute, Duane quits Board" The Villager (New York, NY volume 77/ Number 49 May 7-13 2008.

David Eng, Vice President, Public Affairs, iterates the official position of the LESTM: "We're committed to recognizing any union that is the choice of the majority of all staff. That's what our stance has always been."[590] When this researcher interviewed the current education staff, all of whom are full-time employees, she probed to understand their position. All of them indicated that they were not allowed to discuss the issue, that they were sympathetic to the part-timers, and that they did not have any work-related problems similar to those of the part-timers. Once again, the LESTM is at the center of a debate. The fledgling museum was eager to commemorate the courage of the urban pioneers. Will the established museum—now in its "adolescence"— be willing to provide its part-time employees with a better benefit package, increased remuneration, and stability? The story is not over.

Current Facts and Figures:

More than 130,000 people, from all over the United States, and more than 31,000 students (kindergarten through grade twelve) have visited the LESTM. More than 300,000 have visited its Web site.[591] After 17 years with the LESTM, Steve Long recalled: "When I started here, we did three tours on a weekday; and 8 tours on Sundays—we did 20 tours a week. Today, we do 20 tours on a Sunday, and 24 public tours."[592] The LESTM has 44 full-time employees,50 part-time workers, and 15 unpaid volunteers. The Board has 20 Trustees with voting rights. The museum is open to the public six hours a day, 6 days a week.[593] Its annual budget comprises: $5,541,575 (support and revenue); $5,536,575 (operating expenses).[594] It conducts

[590] Ibid.
[591] Press Kit, "Museum Facts" (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[592] Interview with Steve Long June 4, 2008.
[593] Email from Liz Moran August 12, 2008.
[594] Ibid.

internal evaluations. Its tour guide training materials are standardized, and the tour guides are tested to confirm their mastery of content. The LESTM can claim, with assurance, that it is a professionalized public institution.

Conclusion

After twenty years of visionary leadership, Ruth J. Abram, founder, retired in May 2008. After her departure, the LESTM was awarded the Preserve America Presidential Award on May 17, 2008. The highest award for achievement in historic preservation, it recognizes the LESTM's contribution to preserving the American immigrant experience.[595] Abram's successor, Morris Vogel, has been designated to lead the LESTM into the next decade and beyond.[596]

Tenement Museum: the oxymoronic pairing of these two words has a peculiar resonance. "Tenement" elicits images of blighted buildings, squalor, and human misery. "Museum" evokes images of clean, bright, quiet spaces frequented by people eager to see something new, perhaps to learn something as well.[597] In 1988, observers might have asked how these two incongruent images—one of desperation, the other of refinement and reflection—could be coupled? Yet, two decades later, their marriage seems to be working. The LESTM has successfully preserved, presented, and interpreted the lives of several generations of immigrants, migrants, the working class poor, who had lived and worked in one cramped section of a major metropolis over a period of 70 years. It has created standards that have relevance for other museums. It has created a unique space that commemorates the struggles and

[595] http://historicsites.wordpress.com (accessed on August 12, 2008).
[596] www.pilly.com (accessed on May 29, 2008).
[597] LESTM Internal Document. Memo to Board (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, January 19, 1990).

contributions of NYC's "urban pioneers." And it is committed to social activism, inclusiveness, public dialogue, and tolerance.

It should be remembered that when the these tenements were being built in York City, magnificent edifices, such the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Museum of Natural History, also were being constructed. Such striking contradictions led those with a special vision to make the conscious decision not to focus on the differences that keep human beings apart but rather to celebrate the shared humanity that—if recognized and appreciated—can bring human beings together in constructive endeavors. The immigrant experience, past and present, has much to teach all of us—regardless of our walk of life, our age, our aspirations. This has been, and continues to be, the vision, and the mission, of the LESTM. Perhaps Ruth Abram had heard, or read, and been inspired by the words of Franklin Roosevelt: "Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists."[598]

[598] John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. (New York, New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. 3.

Chapter 5: Lessons Learned

Twenty years later, the founders of the Museum of the Lower East Side reflect on their mission:

Anita Jacobson, First Board Member of the LESTM

> I think it's gone beyond its mission. I think that in so many different ways, it's meant so much to so many people. I think it's a phenomenal place, unlike any museum that's ever existed. It's not just a place to go and look at something, but you actually experience it. It continues to serve the immigrant community in different ways. There are programs to teach English, and using people who learned English to do the tours. It's a giving and give-back museum; it's very involving. I think it will continue with that because it is so unique, and it's defining. . One particular story that stands out for me was the students from a very elite private school from somewhere on the East Side, came down, and the kids were given a sheet of paper to determine what their feelings were about poor people, and lots of them were very negative. They had not been to the museum yet, and they came to the museum, and then they were given a sheet of paper again, afterwards they had a completely the different understanding of what it meant to be poor and to struggle[599]

Ruth Abram, Founder of LESTM

> Well, it has done as best as it can, and we've done it through gathering information about specific families who lived in our building. I'm proud that there is a museum that interprets the urban working class and poor immigrant experience. That it invites visitors to make a connection between past and present. And that it has challenged the museum community to do the same; and that its philosophy in understanding history as a useful tool for social change has been internationalized through the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums. We are joined with many community groups and other organizations to try and achieve landmark status for a portion of the Lower East Side; and I think, if we are able to achieve that, it will be a pivotal moment, because it will prevent the desecration of the landscape that millions of immigrants knew as their first place of residence in America.[600]

[599] Interview with Anita Jacobson, July 8, 2008.
[600] Interview with Ruth Abram, June 10, 2008.

This historical study has examined the changes in the Manhattan's Lower East Side to provide an understanding of one of America's most significant immigrant enclaves; to serve as a "backdrop" to the development of the LESTM; to examine the evolution of museums in the United States in order to determine whether these institutions have become more representative of American pluralism; and to examine the history and development of the LESTM in the decades spanning 1988 to 2008. This examination of the LESTM within the context of the museum community and the neighborhood in which it is located leads to a deeper understanding of its educational role and addresses Cremin's exhortation to study the educational mission of the American museum and its relationship to the greater society; as education writ large.

To briefly recapitulate the transformation of LESTM—in 20 years, it evolved from a store-front operation, with a budget of $75,000 and staff of four (two full-time and two part-time)[601] to a fully professional public institution with a budget exceeding $5,000,000; a staff of 139 (which includes both full-time and part-time, salaried employees, volunteers, and Board members).[602] The progression of the LESTM can be likened to the rapid growth of a newborn to the vibrancy and purpose of a young adult. The LESTM is a highly specialized museum, grounded in rigorous scholarship, that provides an appropriate forum for serious discussion of timely issues, including, but not limited to, our nation's immigrants, past and present, and their contributions to the greater society; legislation (e.g., housing and labor) that affects the welfare of the

[601] Frequently Questioned (New York: Lower East Side Tenement Museum Archives, n.d.).
[602] Email from Liz Moran, August 12, 2008.

working poor; and the relevance of social and economic history to considerations of current social activism.

Like most American museums, the LESTM began as an idea—to commemorate an actual tenement to those newly arrived immigrants, who would join the urban labor force, living and working under the most difficult conditions—in short, the working class and poor. The LESTM would preserve and interpret an important era in American history, while also serving as a venue for ongoing examination of current social and economic issues. To better appreciate the strides the LESTM has made in its short lifetime, it is helpful to compare its evolution to the movement to standardize United States museums during the 1980s and 1990s. Four years before it was founded, the Commission on Museums for a New Century published *Museums for a New Century*, which earmarked the new features of the American museum. The authors comment: ". . . the diversity of the community has never adequately described or aggressively promoted the significant contributions museums make to the quality of the human experience, and the diversity of the community is not fully representative of the diversity of the society it seeks to serve."[603] This diversity is central to a museum's mission and to its hiring practices. Although many LESTM scholars, board members, curators, and educators were, and continue to be, forward thinkers, their ethos was not necessarily shared by others in the museum community. Thus, the LESTM has, over the years, distinguished itself as a role model, both nationally and internationally.

[603] Museums for a New Century (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Museums for a New Century, 1984), p. 29.

Reflecting on the LESTM's accomplishments, Abram had this to say: "I thought we would be different and that difference struck a chord. I'd say we created something new, and as it turned out, I think our popularity, and our call to social consciousness, has been met with enthusiasm. Museum people from all over the world come to see what we are doing and how we do it."[604]

During its adolescence, the LESTM experienced its first major altercation with the community when it attempted to purchase the "sister building" to 97 Orchard Street—namely, 99 Orchard Street—through the exercise of "eminent domain." This action raised questions regarding the museum's fiscal practices. More recently, part-time and per diem workers formed a union in response to unmet demands with regard to their working conditions. Since the LESTM is viewed as "cutting edge"—as a public institution that has accomplished goals that most other museums have not—both its employees and the members of the community in which it "lives" expect it to meet its responsibilities—not only to its visitors but also to its employees. These are reasonable expectations.

Despite these failings, there is no doubt that the LESTM has made positive contributions to society. Roberta Gratz, had this to say: "The tenement museum became a very important institution for New York and the nation."[605] Richard Rabinowitz seconds the motion: "The genius of the museum was finding the building and leaving it as a ruin . . . It's a brilliantly successful organization living up to its mission. Its mission has been unusual for these kinds of organizations. It's got a clear mission, but that is not to say it couldn't have gone further. Could it have done more and

[604] Phone interview with Ruth Abram, June 10, 2008.
[605] Phone Interview with Robert Gratz, July 10, 2008.

explored more? Yes, it could have. But the reason it hasn't is that it is a victim of its success."[606]

Pivotal moments for the LESTM have been:

1. Purchasing 97, 91, and 103 Orchard Street; respectively, thereby laying the groundwork for the creation of an historic landmark, and a venue to record and communicate the stories of those who had lived and worked there from 1863 to 1935. For creating archives and providing middle-income habitation in its upper floors. For expanding its programs to include today's immigrants t from Asia, Latin America, and Africa; and for increasing its educational reach, and enlarging its auditorium.

2. Gaining national and international recognition for its efforts to promote the pluralism and diversity of the American experience.

3. Focusing on the struggles and triumphs of urban pioneers, thereby putting these people "on the landscape" of other American museums and—through historical research—filling in important historical gaps.

4. Applying an historical perspective to better understand the social and economic issues surrounding immigration, past and present; linking the experiences of the families who lived at 97 Orchard Street to the experiences of the museum visitors; and raising awareness about contemporary urban problems in the areas of housing, sanitation, labor laws, and social justice.

5. Creating a forum for dialogue about immigration, past and present.

6. Establishing, in 1999, the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience.

7. Initiating free classes in English for adults.

8. Providing a welcoming environment for its visitors.

9. Helping St. Augustine's Episcopal Church preserve and interpret its slave

10. Publishing the *Immigrant Resource Guide* in several languages

11. Publishing *The Tenement Times*

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[606] Interview with Richard Rabinowitz June 28, 2008.

Abram's administrative style was an amalgam of the authoritarian and the democratic. Social networking played (and continues to play) an important role as well. It is necessary to establish Ms Abram in some sort of historical timeline. Three American historians, Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig share Abram's view of the uses of history: "History can empower people. . . . History can be used to teach people that the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions that delimit contemporary life are not timeless, but rather are the products of historical choices."[607] Abram appears to have been led to her position on historical awareness by a conversation she had with Gerda Lerner, then Chair of the Women's Studies Department at Sarah Lawrence, and founder of the modern women's history movement. Here is Abram again:

> Every successful national effort organized by women had been organized from the grass roots up. And from that encounter, [the conversation with Lerner] I was able to see what I had been doing wrong—organizing from the top down. I restructured. Since then, history has also afforded me comfort, inspiration, and role models. I view history as a powerful tool for the living.[608]

This change in Abram's administrative practices demonstrates her "hybrid approach" to leadership.

Abram has been described as charismatic, driven, persistent, and focused—and more recently—as democratic. She is a contemporary of numerous turn-of-the-century female educators and union organizers who represented progressive thinking. Semel and Sadovnik, researchers on progressive urban education, have commented on the fact that many early-twentieth-century female educators and administrators did

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[607] Benson, Susan Porter, Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, Roy (ed) *In Presenting the Past Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), p. xxiii.
[608] Ruth Abram "*Using the Past to Shape the Future: New Concepts for a Historic Site*" in *Museums International* vol.53, no. 209 (2001), p.4.

not fit the feminist mold, as postulated by Carol Gilligan in the 1970s.[609] For Gilligan, the female world view was different from that of men; they interpreted it through their experiences; therefore, the administrative practices of women were quite distinct from those of their male counterparts. According to Gilligan, "Women . . . define themselves in a context of human relationships [and possess] sensitivity to the needs of others . . . [which leads] women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view."[610] Yet, female administrators of the early twentieth century often were similar to their male counterparts in their workplace attitudes and behaviors—goal-oriented, autocratic, and authoritarian—rather than possessing the "softer" attributes described by Gilligan: ". . . more humane, less authoritarian, more democratic and more concerned with caring and relationships than abstract goals."[611] Abram's administrative practices represented a blend of both. Anita Jacobson described Abram's management style in this way: "Ruth ran a very democratic organization, and always has. If anybody had something to say, she listened; she may not have agreed, but she listened."

Unfortunately, there are limited articles and evaluations on the museum's activities and development by staff members and outsiders from the archives of the LESTM. This is an immense loss. However, we have insights on an important Abram strategy. Rabinowitz comments on the importance of Abram's social connections: "Ruth, of course, knew a lot of people because of her father's connections; that fundamental skill that she could bring was that she had assets that she could bring to

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[609] Alan Sadovnik and Susan F. Semel *Founding Mothers and Others Women Educational Leaders During the Progressive Era.* (New York, NY, Palgrave, 2002), pp. 2-3.
[610] Carol Gillian *In A Different Voice Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 17.
[611] Sadovnik and Semel, *Founding Mothers and Others Women*, p. 2.

this endeavor."[612] Rabinowitz's insight reminds us of the importance of social and cultural capital when launching a new enterprise. French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, wrote about the concept of cultural capital, defining it "as the possession of prestigious cultural resources, which serve to influence and impress others; which provide the owner of cultural capital with palpable social advantages; and which expedite his or her inclusion in positions of high status."[613] According to this view, the cultural resources of Abram and her Board members were access to powerful social networks, the ability to raise substantial funds, secure building permits, and expedite legislation that would secure for the LESTM the protection of a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

This researcher learned about tapping into social networks from an examination of Abram's strategic use of social networking to gain a position of advantage. During the interview process required for this study, I struggled to obtain the necessary personal contact information of various significant LESTM stakeholders. Although the museum staff was helpful in sending e-mails to these stakeholders on my behalf, many did not respond, presuming that there was no need to provide "proprietary information" to a Graduate Center doctoral candidate. Taking a cue from what I had learned about Abram's canny application of social networking to forward her professional goals, I reached out to my social network, which included family members, former school mates, and friends. I had attended Newark Academy (NA), a prestigious college preparatory high school in Livingston, New Jersey, so I sent e-mail to individuals who had been NA classmates. Within hours I had received personal contact data, including e-mail

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[612] Interview with Richard Rabinowitz, June 28, 2008.
[613] Quoted in Pierre Bourdieu *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* (trans.) Nice R. (London, England: Cambridge University Press), p. 184.

addresses, for several prominent LESTM stakeholders. This modest exercise in social networking brought home the immense value of social networking as a means of accessing persons in positions of influence.

Given the increasingly sophisticated applications of information technology, communication has grown increasingly impersonal. In response, many individuals are searching for some sort of connection with the past, and many are yearning for an understanding of what it was like to be a human being living in very different circumstances. A well-conceived, well administered museum speaks to these human needs. From the establishment of the first museum in Charleston, South Carolina in 1773 to the existence of more than 5,000 American museums today, these institutions have been described as citadels of American society. Given their educational and cultural importance, it is the responsibility of researchers to continue to investigate the relationship of museums to the greater society, in particular, their commitment to public education. Because they have a mission to add to the body of historical knowledge, stimulate human curiosity, and raise awareness of issues that require public scrutiny and action, American museums must continue to:

1. Secure their role in American society by investigating the evolution of museums and by evaluating how they fulfill, of fail to fulfill, their collective mission.

2. Conduct qualitative research on the educational effects of learning museums, in particular, on their relationships with the social studies programs of secondary schools.

3. Conduct research through many lenses, especially those of the social sciences: anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, and economics.

4. Publish and disseminate the findings of this research and base the development of future programs on this research.

5. Develop and publicize interactive programs and exhibits designed to reach, stimulate, and motivate all segments of the increasingly diverse American population.

Commitment to social activism provides opportunities for museums to create and mount exhibits that focus on the ongoing struggles of various races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. The key is not to establish more museums but rather to re-examine the organization and mission of existing institutions in order to determine the direction they should take in order to remain truly representative of America's commitment to succeeding as a diverse and pluralistic democracy. Today's museums are the continually evolving creations of both men and women from many walks of life; they are not divine, eternal, or ideal. They are human creations that collect and preserve those objects and artifacts that our culture considers important and valuable. Finally, museums should fashion—out of a cacophony of myriad voices—a symphony that edifies the mind and nourishes the soul.

Appendix A: Time-Line for the development of the American Museum

Time-Line of events in Museum History:

Date	Event
1773	• First Museum in the US, the Charleston Museum
1786	• Charles Willson Peale opened his own museum which housed his portrait Gallery of Revolutionary heroes
1791	• MA Historical Society founded
1804	• NY Historical Society founded
1805	• PA Academy of Fine Arts founded
1832	• Opening of Trumball Gallery at Yale University
1864	• James Jackson Jarves published his manifesto celebrated the art museum as an instrument of education and moral nourishment and urged the founding of museums modeled after the Lourve- free for the public • Two types of museums flourished ○ Dime and Public Gallery
1866	• At the Centennial society meeting • Thoughts of opening a National Institution and Gallery of Art
1870	• MET Charter approved
1876	• Founding of BMFA
1879	• Founding of Chicago's Academy of Art and Design
1906	• Founding of American Association of Museums (AAM) • First meeting they affirmed the educational function of museums by urging an alliance with the National Education Association and considered a publication of an official journal. This alliance never came about.
1909	• Payne-Aldrich Tariff of 1909 ○ Added to the duty-free list the importation of original works of art more than 20 years old
1917	• AAM's first bi-weekly publication, The Museum News Letter
1918	• Benjamin Ives Gilman-Museum Ideals of Purposes and Method A comprehensive study of the museum in the US Three volumes: State of museums, history of museum and types of museums found in the US
1920	• John Dana Cotton and New Museum • What museums should be
1923	• AAM establishes national headquarters at the Smithsonian with Support of Laura Spelman Rockefeller • Katherine Gibson conducts the first scientific evaluation of educational work of museums
1924	• AAM's The Museum News was first published
1925	• AAM issues first Code of Ethics which was the precursor of the 1978 report to the Committee on Ethics

1926
- John D. Rockefeller restores and reconstructs Colonial Williamsburg, a model for open air museums
- Founding of the Museum Of Modern Art in NY

1930
- Founding of Whitney Museum of American Art in NY

1933
- Civil Works Administration allocates federal funds for museums for exhibition planning and cataloging and preservation of collections
- AAM President Laurence Vail Coleman, Published Historic Houses

1935
- FDR Signs the Historic Sites Act which gives authority to the National Park Service for the study, ownership, and management of historic sites, buildings and objects of national significance

1936
- Writers Project of the WPA announces plans for The American Guide a regional survey that will include descriptions of art, history and science museums

1937
- Founding of Guggenheim in NYC

1939
- American Anthropological Association adopts resolution denouncing racial discrimination
- AAM publishes The Museum in America: A Critical study by Laurence Vail Coleman a survey of all phases of museum work
- Francis Taylor Museums in Changing world
    - Critical time to examine museums and reconsider their purposes and meet the needs of the public
- **Quotation from Jay B. Nash, a professor of education At NYU Page 47**

Our public museums have been too austere to attract the masses. They have erred on another point of the compass. They have said,' Here we are; come and get interested in us,' with the result of the painful look upon the faces of the people when you suggest, 'Let's go to the museum.' Museums have not systematically pointed out the challenges and in but few instances have they assisted large numbers of people to reach a point where they enjoy pursuing a challenge. I dare say that only a small percent of people ever go to a museum and that a large percent of those who go once never go twice

- **Quotation from Morse A. Cartwright, director of American Association of for Adult Education**

If museums do not choose in advance to assume their proper and rightful educational role in the developing of culture of democracy, they will find themselves prey under a centralized dictatorship to the inglorious sentence of serving in perpetuity as propaganda arms of the government in power

1940
- The Keppel Report points to educational developments of American Museums. In the 1938 annual report, Frederick Keppel, the President of the Carnegie Corp for NY points out

that American museums shifted its emphasis from a custodial function to educational and other services

- **Quotation from William E. Kearns, National Parks Fellow**

Peabody Museum at Yale University serves a dual public; first the professional student or scholar who comes to see and to study the splendid collections available; and second, the general public coming to the museum. . For the most part, on Sunday Afternoons. This latter group comprises an almost ideal cross-section of the city's population; nearly every age and most walks of life are represented. The museum becomes on Sunday afternoon, a university for the people; for many they aren't mere lookers, they are seekers of knowledge

1941
- The MET abolishes it two entry-free days and opens to the free to the public

1942
- Theodore Low-Museums for a Changing world
  - At a critical time to reconsider the purpose of the museum
  - Museums need to meet the new needs of society

1943
- New design for Guggenheim museum

1945
- Francis Henry Taylor Babel's tower
  - What will the future of museums be?
- Thedore Low, The Museum as a Social Instrument

1948
- Muriel Christison-Some practical considerations of museums
  - Review the role of educating the public

1949
- The National Trust for historic preservation is created. Signed by Harry Truman

1964
- AAM urges Congress to amend the IRS definition of "educational organization" to include museums, historical agencies and libraries so donations would qualify as tax-deductible charitable contributions

1965
- National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment of Humanities are established
- Herbert and Marjorie Katz, Museums, USA A History and Guide
  - Chronicles the history of museums and ties the social history

1968
- President of AAM, Charles Parkhurst appointed an accreditation committee, chaired by Charles Buckley to develop a prospectus for museum accreditation and define museums.

1969
- Belmont Report is submitted to President Lyndon B. Johnson.
  - The report reveals a financial crisis in America's cultural institutions and makes the case for increased federal funds

1970
- The first institutions were accredited by AAM
- 30 members disrupt AAM's Annual meeting.
  - The protesters proclaim that museums are under control of the few, wealthy and the Establishment and are not doing enough about the nation's social problems
- Centennial of MET and BFA; the triumph and scandal

- Thomas Hoving and Harlem on My Mind Exhibition

1971
- *Museum for the Peoples* a book that documents the anger and frustration of minority groups and the "white" museum
  - Brought about concerns minority groups have

1977
- Nathanial Burt *Palaces for the People*

1979
- President Carter signs legislation declaring May 18 as National Museum Day
- Karl Meyer- *The Art Museum Power, Money and Ethics*

1980
- AAM establishes the Museum Assessment Program with funding from Institute of Museum Services

1984
- Museums for A New Century
  - A report of the commission of museums
  - Where museums need to go to meet the changes in society

1988
- Founding of Lower East Side Tenement Museum

1990
- AAM Committee on Education (EdCom) published a statement on professional standards

1991
- AAM Board of Directors adopts Excellence and Equity: Education and the public Dimensions of Museums
  - Urges museums to make education a central part of their public service mission and their programming

1992
- Eilean Hooper-Greenhill Museums and Shaping of knowledge

1999
- AAM first issues its Accreditation Commission

2000
- AAM's Code of Ethics is updated
- Lonnie G. Bunch Museums, Diversity and the Will to Change
  - Need for the inclusion of diversity in the museum profession

2002
- AAM EdCom published Excellence in Practice
  - Museum standards and principles

2003
- Outcome based Evaluation of the Museum

2005
- AAM Accreditation is updated

Appendix B: Interviews conducted

Interviews are listed according to the date of the interview.

Interviews:

Person Interviewed	**Service to LESTM and Current Job**	**Date of Interview**	**Location of Interview**
Steve Long	VP of Collection and Education, LESTM	June 4, 2008 9:15	LESTM conference room (91 Orchard Street)
Derya Golpinar	LESTM Collections Manager	June 4, 2008 11:00	LESTM Archives 5th Floor
Ruth Abram	President and Founder of LESTM	June 10, 2008 11:00	Phone interview
Richard Rabinowitz	Museum Planner and Historian Consultant Founder American History Project	June 20, 2008 11:00	American History Workshop 588 Seventh Street Brooklyn, NY
Norman Kneller	Treasurer of the First Board Retired	July 1,2008 10:00	393 Bleeker Street
Peter Madoff	Board Member Senior Managing Director and Head of trading Bernard Madoff L. Madoff Investment Securities	July 1, 2008 4:30	885 3rd avenue @ 53rd
Phyllis Tisch	Donor	July 8, 2008 10:00 am	Phone Interview
Anita Jacobson	Board Member Emeritus Found Building	July 8, 2008 3:00	91 Central Park West, Apt. 4b @ 69th
Suzzane Wasserman	First Director of Programming Director of Gotham Center @GC	July 9, 2008 4:00	Gotham Center Graduate Center of CUNY
Joyce Mendelson	First Director of	July 14, 2008	Graduate Center

	Education Consultant	4:00	of CUNY
Judge Crotty	Original Board Member NYC District Judge	July 10, 2008 11:00	US district Courts
Martin Dinowitz Manager Second Hand Rose	Donated wall paper for apartments	July 10, 2008 12:30	138 Duane Street
Roberta Gratz	Director Eldridge Street Synagogue Project	July 10, 2008 2:00	Phone interview
Lethia Nall	Costumed interpreter	July 10, 2008 5:00 pm	Ciao for Now coffee shop 12th street between Ave A and B
Kate Fermoile	Head of LESTM education Department VP exhibits and Education Brooklyn Historical Society	July 11, 2008 2:30	Brooklyn Historical Society, Local Diner, Brooklyn, NY
Frank Macciarola	Board Member President St. Francis College	July 15, 2008 4:30	St. Francis College, Brooklyn, NY
William Kahl	Chairman of first Board Retired	July 17, 2008 12:30 train to Albany	21 Dalton Court Delmar, NJ 12054
Cheryl Rosario	Director Philanthropy American Express	July 22, 2008	3 World Financial Center
Larry Zuckerman	Current Board Member Senior Managing Director Grubb-Ellis	July 23, 2008	1177 Avenue of Americas-4th floor @44 and 45
David Favaloro	Current Research Manager @ LESTM	July 29, 2008 11:00	LESTM
Danielle Linzer	Current Education	July 29, 2008	LESTM

	Coordinator @ LESTM	12:00	
Sarah Blannett Pharon	Current Director of Education @ LESTM	July 29, 2008 1:00	LESTM
Pedro Garcia	Current Lead Educator @ LESTM	July 29, 2008 2:00	LESTM
Lokki Chan	Current Education Assistant @ LESTM	July 29, 2008 2:00	LESTM
Jeff Tancil	Current web Designer	July 29, 2008 10:00	LESTM
Lynda Kennedy	Former Education Assistant	August 12, 2009	Phone interview
Hillel Levine	Professor at Boston University	August 12, 2009	Phone interview

Appendix C: Interview protocol

1. Have interviewee sign consent form
2. Bring Tape recorder and camera

Contact Information:	
Name of Interviewee:	I
Title:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Address:	

Interview questions:	
1. What brought you to the LESTM?	
2. When did you start working for the LESTM?	
3. What was if like working at the LESTM? What did your typical day look like?	
4. Do you think the LESTM has lived up to its mission? If so, how? Provide examples If not, how?	
5. What suggestions do you have the LESTM to improve?	

Appendix D: Time-line for events at the Lower East Side Tenement

Time-Line of events at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum:

Date	Event

1988	• Ruth Abram and Anita Jacobson found the Lower East Side Tenement Museum (LESTM)
	  ○ The founders viewed the tenement as the ideal place to encourage discussion of issues key to our democracy and national identity
	• Ruth Abrams applied to the Board of Regents for a provisional charter for the LESTM
	  ○ In her application she presents 10 purposes for the museum

1990	• February 1990: A Conceptual Plan for the LESTM
	  ○ Prepared by American History Workshops
	  ○ Richard Rabinowitz
	  ○ Amy Waterman
	  ○ Daresha Kyi
	  ○ Steve Brosnahan
	• September 10, 1990: Ruth Abrams issues Museum's seven-year plan to the Board of Trustees

1991	• Conduct Privy Dig ○ Archeologist Joan Geismar conducts an investigation of the tenement's backyard

1992	• 97 Orchard Street is listed on the National Register of Historic places
	  ○ Making it the only tenement to achieve this distinction
	• 1992-1993 Report
	  ○ Grants totaling $528,000 from Booth Ferris, The NY State Council on the Arts, Urban Development Corporation, Environmental Quality Bond Act, Greenwall Foundation, Starr Foundation, Cowles Charitable Trust, the Andy Warhol Foundation and the Forchheimer Foundation supported the museum's effort to bring the first 3 floors into compliance with the NY City building codes and to initiate the restoration
	  ○ Preservation Architects Roz Li and Judith Saltzman selected the contractor and Brad Brockman of Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton and Garrison drafted and negotiated the related agreements

1993	• December 10, 1993 memo to Board ○ Restoration of 3 floors up to code
1994	• LESTM opens its first permanent exhibit ○ The Gumpertz (Prussian Jewish family) and Baldizzi (Sicilian Family)

- LESTM Progress and Plans- Administration paper 1993-1994
  Senior official of Smithsonian who reviewed the LESTM for AAM said, “The Tenement Museum represents an extraordinary achievement. It has the potential to be not just another museum but to be part of a watershed moment in the history of museums. In pursuing its vision, the Tenement Museum is going to be find itself right in the middle of some of the hardest and most controversial issues of American culture. This is a great place to be and an unusual place for an American Museum. The Tenement Museum is virtually alone among American museums in its focus on housing and lives of urban, working people. It is alone as a museum of tenement life.”
    - In a draft report to Congress the National Park Service states the following, “ The Lower East Side Tenement Museum is unusual on two fronts. First, located in the first tenement to be preserved in America, its themes of immigration and the struggles inherent in immigrant life illuminate important aspects of this nation’s urban heritage—never before subjects for comprehensive museum interpretation. Second, the interpretive format taken by the museum represents an innovative approach to such complex material, and offers an unusual model of operation. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum represents an outstanding example of a surviving tenement associated with immigration and immigrant ways of life . . . It has exceptional value . . . and meets the criteria of national significance, suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.”

1996
- LESTM purchases 97 Orchard Street
- Administration papers 1996-1997
    - LESTM seeks to “promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of . . . immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, a gateway to America.”
    - **Change in the mission**

1997
- Tenement family apartment opens to the public
    - Confino family apartment

1998
- LESTM is an affiliated site of the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation

1999
- LESTM founds the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience- a network of museums addressing social issues

2002
- Purchases a second tenement at 91 Orchard Street
    - Installs offices and manages income producing, rent stabilized apartments above street level

2005	• Strategic plan for 2006-2010 ○ 5 apartments have been restored

1991-2005	• See booklet from dissertation proposal which documents the programs at the LESTM
	  ○ Lists all the programs offered at the LESTM
	  ○ Lists the number of programs offered at LESTM from 1991-2005
	  ○ Codes the programs according to class, gender, ethnicity, and religion
	  ○ THE LESTM educates four ways: walking tours, exhibitions, public forums, and drama performances

2008	• LESTM opens its sixth apartment, The Moores • Ruth Abram Retires • Morris J. Vogel becomes the President of the LESTM

Appendix E: List of Programming at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum

Lower East Side Tenement Museum Types of Programs and Years

Year — **Programs**

1991
- Total programs: 19
  - Walking tours: 8
  - Exhibition: 2
  - Forums: 6
  - Drama: 3

1992
- Total: 22
  - Walking tours: Total: 12
    - Old: 7
    - New: 5
  - Exhibition: Total: 3
    - Old: 2
    - New: 1
  - Forums: 5
    - Old: 1
    - New: 4
  - Drama: 2
    - Old: 1
    - New: 1

1993
- Total: 19
  - Walking tours: Total: 11
    - Old: 8
    - New: 3
  - Exhibition: Total: 2
    - Old: 1
    - New: 1
  - Forums: 2
    - Old: 2
    - New: 0
  - Drama: 2
    - Old: 0
  - New: 22

1994
- Total: 14
- Walking tours: Total: 5
  - Old: 2
  - New: 3
- Exhibition: Total: 8
  - Old: 4
  - New: 4
- Forums: Total: 1

- Old: 0
- New:1

- Drama: Total: 0
  - Old: 0
  - New: 0

1995

- Total: 13
- Walking tours: Total: 5
  - Old: 4
  - New: 1
- Exhibition: Total: 5
  - Old: 5
  - New: 0
- Forums: Total: 2
  - Old: 0
  - New: 2
- Drama: Total: 1
  - Old :0
  - New: 1

1996

- Total: 23
- Walking tours: Total: 4
  - Old: 4
  - New: 0
- Exhibition: 8
  - Old: 5
  - New: 3
- Forums: 6
  - Old: 0
  - New: 6
- Drama: 5
  - Old: 0
  - New: 5

1997

- Total: 40
- Walking tours: 5
  - Old: 2
  - New: 3
- Exhibition: 9
  - Old: 4
  - New: 5
- Forums: 18
  - Old: 0
  - New: 18
- Drama: 8
  - Old: 1
  - New: 7

1998

- Total: 27
- Walking tours: 6
  - Old: 3
  - New: 2
- Exhibition: 7
  - Old: 0
  - New: 7
- Forums: 8
  - Old: 0
  - New: 8
- Drama: 6
  - Old: 1
  - New: 5

1999

- Total: 22
- Walking tours: 4
  - Old: 3
  - New: 1
- Exhibition: 3
  - Old: 1
  - New: 2
- Forums: 12
  - Old: 0
  - New: 12
- Drama: 3
  - Old: 0
  - New: 3

2000

- Total: 21
- Walking tours: 4
  - Old: 3
  - New: 1
- Exhibition: 2
  - Old: 1
  - New: 1
- Forums: 9
  - Old: 1
  - New: 8
- Drama: 7
  - Old: 0
  - New: 7

2001

- Total: 11
- Walking tours: 2
  - Old: 1
  - New: 1

- Exhibition: 3
  - Old: 0
  - New: 3
- Forums: 4
  - Old: 0
  - New: 4
- Drama: 3
  - Old: 0
  - New: 3

2002

- Total: 20
- Walking tours: 4
  - Old: 2
  - New: 2
- Exhibition: 4
  - Old: 1
  - New: 3
- Forums: 5
  - Old: 0
  - New: 5
- Drama: 7
  - Old: 0
  - New: 7

2003

- Total: 13
- Walking tours: 4
  - Old: 4
  - New: 0
- Exhibition: 3
  - Old: 0
  - New: 3
- Forums: 0
  - Old: 0
  - New: 0
- Drama: 6
  - Old: 0
  - New: 6

2004

- Total: 12
- Walking tours: 4
  - Old: 4
  - New: 0
- Exhibition: 2
  - Old: 0
  - New: 2
- Forums: 2

2005

- Old: 0
- New: 2
- Drama: 4
- Old: 0
- New: 4
- Total: 7
- Walking tours: 4
- Old: 3
- New: 1
- Exhibition: 1
- Old: 0
- New: 1
- Forums: 1
- Old: 0
- New: 1
- Drama: 1
- Old: 0
- New: 1

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