What can a history museum do for our country?

We hold the power of the real thing, and we can use that power to make a difference in the lives of millions of people who visit the National Museum of American History. Visitors come from around the globe to explore our exhibitions and take part in our programs. Millions more discover our resources online. Our audience is captivated by our treasures and moved by the stories we bring to life.

As the nation’s history museum, our responsibility is not just to the past but also to Americans today and generations to come. In fact, our mission is to contribute toward the shaping of a more humane future. We do that by using the lens of history to provide people with transformative experiences that result in enduring memories, a better appreciation of what it means to be American, broadened perspectives, and the motivation to learn more.

This Highlights report is an example of our commitment to both the past and the future. It examines the progress we made in 2013 and looks ahead to how we can have an even greater impact on those we serve. The year in review was one marked by innovation: using cutting-edge technology to hear some of the earliest sound recordings ever made, collecting objects that illustrate the beginning of the revolutionary biotechnology industry, and hosting a high-flying program that explored the innovative culture of skateboarding. It was also a year of extraordinary generosity by the many individuals, corporations and foundations noted within these pages. Much of their leadership and visionary philanthropy laid the groundwork for the 2015 opening of the west exhibition wing’s first floor, which will be dedicated to innovation, business and creativity.

In 2016 and 2017, we look forward to opening the second and third floors of the west wing with exhibitions that address the diversity of America, the complexity of our democracy, and the breadth of American culture. The $120 million renovation of the wing will allow for new exhibitions, active learning spaces, and educational programs that build a deeper understanding of the concepts and ideals that shape the American experience. We will be strategic and creative in our approach to share our nation’s history of challenges, triumphs and innovations, so that visitors see the connections to their own lives. It is this work to remake the Museum for the 21st century that offers an unprecedented opportunity to fulfill our role more effectively than ever before.

Our ambitions reflect America’s pioneering spirit, a willingness to take on new ventures to achieve a vision. With the opening of each new space, the Museum will be an even more powerful resource in helping us understand just what makes America... America.
“We’re being invited to share our love of skateboarding on such an amazing stage.”

“Skateboarders are similar to inventors in viewing the world from a unique perspective—what it has the potential to be,” said Jeffrey Brodie, deputy director of the Center. Innoskate, he explained, takes a “deep look into an American invention that has become a global phenomenon.”

The festival coincided with the 10th anniversary of Go Skateboarding Day and complemented a skateboarding and skate culture collecting initiative launched by the Center and Museum in 2011.

Panel discussions highlighted the contributions of skate innovators Tony Hawk, Rodney Mullen and Cindy Whitehead and addressed changes in the technology of the skate deck, the influence of skate fashion on mainstream culture, and the process of inventing new tricks. Hawk, arguably the most high-profile skateboarder, and Mullen are professional skaters respected as pioneers of the sport dating back to their childhoods in the 1970s. Whitehead is a female trailblazer who turned professional by age 17 in the ’70s and now works as a sports stylist. Also onsite was Patti McGee, the first woman to become a professional skateboarder in the 1960s. McGee joined other guests in donating objects relevant to their early days of skating and their careers.

“Innoskate opened with an evening screening of Bones Brigade: An Autobiography, which profiles the journey and cultural impact of a group of teens—including Hawk and Mullen—whose passion is skateboarding. Both men donated their prized skateboards to the Museum, most notably Hawk’s first board, given to him by his brother. The festival closed with a showing of Waiting for Lightning, the story of Danny Way, a skater and innovator who pushes boundaries and takes viewers with him as he jumps over the Great Wall of China.

“Immediately following the donation ceremony, I heard this strange whizzing and whirling noise, and I saw that Tony was taking his board for one last ride on the ramp,” Brodie recalled. “This was a total surprise to us and wasn’t planned. It was such a fabulous moment, and I was really proud to have been part of the team to help make that happen.”
A New Approach to Business

“The chief business of the American people is business.”

Nearly 90 years after President Calvin Coolidge uttered this phrase—a sentiment that still rings true today—the Smithsonian is mounting its first major exhibition highlighting the essential role of business and innovation in forming the American experience. American Enterprise is set to open in summer 2015 in the 8,000-square-foot Mars Hall of American Business and remain on view for at least 20 years. Located in the Museum’s renovated west wing, it will serve as the anchor exhibition of the first floor, which is dedicated to American experience. The exhibition will be organized chronologically around the themes of opportunity, innovation, competition and common good, with examples drawn from five areas: agriculture, consumer finance, information technology/communication, manufacturing and retail/service. American Enterprise highlights the essential role of business and innovation in forming the American experience.

Like other exhibitions of similar size and scope, American Enterprise requires significant resources and years of intensive work. For this project, 2013 was pivotal. Extraordinary financial commitments from a variety of sponsors, including the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation and SC Johnson, allowed the project to grow beyond its initial scope. Meanwhile, a talented team of staff and designers worked behind the scenes to conduct research, acquire objects and design an exhibition that will convey the drama, breadth and diversity of America’s business heritage.

Exhibitions are built through collaboration, but American Enterprise represents the first at the Museum to be shaped with significant public input. The exhibition team opened its work to the Web with blog posts on americanenterprise.si.edu that shared research and collecting stories, tested exhibit ideas, and provided educational content. Visitors to the site engaged with the curators and provided feedback and personal stories that enhanced the project.

One area of research in particular benefited the most from public input: modern agriculture. The subject matter had not been comprehensively represented among the Museum’s resources and presented curators with an opportunity to enrich the collections through crowdsourcing and social media—also a Museum first. The American Agriculture Innovation and Heritage Archive launched in 2013 and provided a portal for the public to upload stories and photographs about technologies and innovations that have changed their work lives in agriculture.

“American agriculture has gone through a tremendous transformation in the past seven decades, becoming a high-tech industry, deeply affecting not just farmers themselves but every American and the American experience in general,” said Peter Liebhold, curator and chair of the Division of Work and Industry. “Usually, curators identify specific individuals and work directly with them to collect artifacts and stories.”

The Web, Liebhold explained, has successfully provided a way to reach a larger number of individuals, making the process more public, which has resulted in greater diversity, accuracy and a more nuanced story of American agriculture.

Through open conversations with the public, as well as input from universities, industry associations and businesses, the team established new avenues of collaboration. This resulted in scholarship that will inform American Enterprise and inspire a greater understanding for the role of business in the making of America.
Alexander Graham Bell: “Hear My Voice”

The voices of renowned artists, such as Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley, are not simply left to memory. Their sounds live on beyond their deaths for others to hear through recordings. However, the voice of Alexander Graham Bell had long been thought lost to time, even though it was his experimentation with recorded sound for playback that contributed to the preservation of countless voices.

But sometimes recovering what is perceived to be lost just takes a spirit of innovation and nearly a century of persistence.

In the 1880s, inventors Bell and Thomas Edison found themselves in fierce competition. While Edison’s earlier phonographic tinfoil sheets captured sound, they were not created to withstand multiple playbacks, as were Bell’s discs, which often resembled records. Together with his Volta Laboratory associates — cousin Chichester Bell and Charles Sumner Tainter — Bell set out to improve on Edison’s breakthrough using cylinders and discs made of materials from metal and glass to paper and wax. For the National Museum of American History, accessing the contents of these items was a delicate task for which technology did not exist until a breakthrough collaboration with the Library of Congress and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory beginning in 2011.

A small sample from approximately 200 Volta recordings in the Museum’s collection was scanned using a new, noninvasive optical technique that captured voices counting and story-telling through static. Yet, the final step remained to distinguish Bell’s voice among those recorded. The critical clue surfaced when a paper transcript signed by Bell was found and connected to a wax covered disc made of binder board marked with the initials “AGB” and the date on the transcript — April 15, 1885. After a careful analysis of the disc donated by Bell in 1915, Carl Haber, a Berkeley Lab physicist and recipient of a 2013 MacArthur “genius grant,” confirmed the first identification of Bell’s voice, prompting the Museum to announce the historic finding — Bell set out to improve on Edison’s breakthrough using cylinders and discs made of materials from metal and glass to paper and wax. For the National Museum of American History, accessing the contents of these items was a delicate task for which technology did not exist until a breakthrough collaboration with the Library of Congress and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory beginning in 2011. A small sample from approximately 200 Volta recordings in the Museum’s collection was scanned using a new, noninvasive optical technique that captured voices counting and story-telling through static. Yet, the final step remained to distinguish Bell’s voice among those recorded. The critical clue surfaced when a paper transcript signed by Bell was found and connected to a wax covered disc made of binder board marked with the initials “AGB” and the date on the transcript — April 15, 1885. After a careful analysis of the disc donated by Bell in 1915, Carl Haber, a Berkeley Lab physicist and recipient of a 2013 MacArthur “genius grant,” confirmed the first identification of Bell’s voice, prompting the Museum to announce the historic finding — Bell set out to improve on Edison’s breakthrough using cylinders and discs made of materials from metal and glass to paper and wax. For the National Museum of American History, accessing the contents of these items was a delicate task for which technology did not exist until a breakthrough collaboration with the Library of Congress and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory beginning in 2011.

In the early 1970s, a research team led by Herbert Boyer of the University of California at San Francisco and Stanley Cohen of Stanford University successfully transferred a gene from one species into another. Known as recombinant DNA, this discovery gave scientists across the world a tool to study life and disease at the molecular level and has gone on to be a foundation of modern medicine. Boyer then teamed with venture capitalist Robert Swanson to form Genentech.

Through the generous support of Genentech, the Museum expanded and digitized its collections in the area of biotechnology and opened a new exhibit that chronicled the story of biotechnology and its impact on society. The Birth of Biotech display, located in a first floor History Highlights Case, explored the science and industry behind the first major product of the biotech boom — recombinant human insulin. Made by genetically modified bacteria, recombinant human insulin provided a steady source of a vital diabetes drug and replaced a less certain supply of animal-derived insulin. The display featured lab and factory equipment from Genentech initially used to produce recombinant human insulin, as well as historic objects used for managing and treating diabetes from the 1930s to the 1980s.

“The recombinant DNA technique allowed biotechnologists to transform the bacteria E. coli into tiny factories to produce insulin and other therapeutic proteins,” said Ann Seeger, former deputy chair of the Museum’s Division of Medicine and Science.

The history of biotechnology allowed visitors to see an important example of the relationship between science, industry and enterprise that has often fueled the country’s economic growth.
500 dedicated volunteers

152 new cubic feet of archival material added to the Archives Center

72,000 likes on Facebook

200,000 visitors engaged in History Alive! Theater Programs

546 objects loaned to 33 institutions

101 members of the Smithsonian Council for American History

12 new exhibitions and cases

3 million American treasures

728 Docent Highlights Tours

69,400 followers on Twitter

1 million children on school trips

5 million diverse visitors

14 million online visits

3,278 new objects added to the collection

152 new cubic feet of archival material added to the Archives Center
**Exhibition Openings**

- Little Golden Books
- Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios at the Smithsonian Castle
- The Birth of Biotech
- Invention and the Patent Model
- *I Want the Wide American Earth: An Asian Pacific American Story*
- National Woman Suffrage Parade, 1913
- Preview Case: American Enterprise
- Preview Case: American Democracy
- Preview Case: Many Voices, One Nation
- Puppetry in America
- 19th-Century Fire Pumper

**Collections & Acquisitions**

- *Jaws of Life* were collected
- Women’s history documents were acquired through Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Auxiliary
- Alexander Graham Bell’s voice was identified on early sound recordings in the Museum’s collection
- *Marl Remote Pickup Unit* for the Radio Collection was acquired
- American Agricultural and Heritage Archive was launched in partnership with American Farm Bureau to preserve agricultural heritage and document farm innovation
- Museum joined CUNY Dominican Studies Institute to collect Dominican music
- *Miss Piggy and Friends Reunite With Kermit the Frog*
  Thanks to the generosity of the Jim Henson family, the Museum welcomed more than 20 puppets to its collection from popular productions such as *The Muppet Show*, *Sesame Street* and *Fraggle Rock*. Miss Piggy finally joined Kermit the Frog, who had resided at the Museum for nearly 20 years. The Muppet diva was accompanied by various other beloved characters, including Fozzie Bear, the Swedish Chef and Elmo.
- *Mr. Peanut* arrived
- A wedding gown from *The Young and the Restless* was pledged by Melody Thomas Scott
- Highlights of daytime television were acquired, including artifacts from *Barney & Friends*, *All My Children* and *Jeopardy!*

**EveryBody: An Artifact History of Disability in America**

This first-of-its-kind online exhibition provided access to objects and stories related to the history of disability collected at the Museum for more than 50 years. The website everybody.si.edu was made possible through the generous support of the Nathan Cummings Foundation. It is designed to be accessible to all users, including those using specialized software for vision or hearing impairments.
Programs and Outreach

• Inauguration Weekend
  - Live panel discussion showcasing BackStory With the American History Guys
  - Opportunity to watch swearing-in ceremony from heart of Museum
• Musical performances by President Lincoln’s Own Band and the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra
• Let’s Do History Tour visited teachers in Hawaii, Oklahoma and Louisiana
• Innoskate
• (Re)Searching an American Slave Ship launched
• History Alive! Museum theater programs
• Second Annual Winemakers’ Dinner and oral history interviews

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

Food in the Garden Series
The Museum’s American Food History Project and Smithsonian Gardens brought together local growers, practitioners, educators, researchers and the public to explore where the country’s food comes from and how we grow it. With the support of DuPont Pioneer, the Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts, and Wegmans, the Museum hosted five sold-out events outside on the new American Agriculture Experience Trail.

• National Youth Summit: Abolition
• Taco Nation/Planet Taco panel discussion
• National History Day and National History Night
• Naturalization Ceremony
• Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra
  - D.C. and national touring season
  - Kenya tour with U.S. State Department
• Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra Season, featuring the music of Ravel, Copland and Shostakovich
• Jazz Appreciation Month: The Spirit & Rhythm of Jazz honored Lionel Hampton, Randy Weston and John Levy, with special guest Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez
• The Smithsonian’s History of America in 101 Objects
  - RICHARD KURIN
• Pictures From a Distant Country: Seeing America Through Old Paper Money
  - RICHARD DOTY
• Smithsonian Civil War: Inside the National Collection
  - SMITHSONIAN BOOKS
• Souvenir Nation: Relics, Keepsakes, and Curios from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History
  - WILLIAM L. BIRD

Publications and Media

Museum staff members are often sought for their wealth of knowledge in a variety of subjects. In 2013, they contributed to books and scholarly journals, published hardbound pieces on historical periods and objects, and created musical compilations. Curators and the Museum were also featured on the Smithsonian Channel, C-SPAN, CBS News Sunday Morning, TLC’s Who Do You Think You Are?, the Travel Channel’s Mysteries at the Smithsonian and Mysteries at the Museum. Museum discoveries and published books were highlighted by the Associated Press, Reuters, New York Times, Washington Post and Parade.

John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums
On the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the Museum held two screenings of John F. Kennedy: Years of Lightning, Day of Drums. Originally created as a United States Information Agency film for showing overseas, it was prohibited from domestic theaters until a special act of Congress made this possible. Narrated by actor Gregory Peck and produced by George Stevens Jr.—two Academy Award winning artists—the 90-minute film was described in 1966 by The New York Times as one that “forever honors the spirit and vigor” of the young president. The Royal Regiment of Scotland Bagpipers also commemorated the occasion outside of the Museum’s Constitution Avenue entrance.

Civil War 360
The Smithsonian commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Civil War with programming, exhibits, blog posts, television programs and a book showcasing the Museum’s most compelling objects related to the war. Civil War 360, a three-part series on the Smithsonian Channel, examined the Civil War from multiple perspectives and offered new stories, artifacts and vivid recreations. The series’ hosts, Ashley Judd, Trace Adkins and Dennis Haysbert, each had ties to the bloody war.

Film Festivals
• Bette Davis Film Festival, Matrix Movie Marathon, and V for Vendetta Film Festival
Smithsonian Council for American History

The National Museum of American History gratefully acknowledges members of the Smithsonian Council for American History for their enthusiastic commitment throughout the year. The Council is a membership group for individuals who make unrestricted contributions of $1,000 or more to support a variety of the Museum’s critical needs, from the preservation of national treasures to the presentation of world-class exhibitions and educational programs. Council members receive an array of exclusive opportunities in appreciation for their generosity.

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Looking Forward

The Museum’s west exhibition wing is undergoing a major transformation that will enhance the visitor experience beginning in summer 2015. These changes will bring new exhibition and educational spaces to three levels of the building to showcase objects and stories that capture the inspiring, diverse and sometimes complex American story.

First Floor

The first floor of the wing, scheduled to open in summer 2015, is quickly taking shape and will focus on innovation as an important element throughout American history. The floor’s spaces and exhibitions—such as the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation Object Project, SC Johnson Conference Center, the Wallace H. Coulter Performance Plaza and American Enterprise in the Mars Hall of American Business—present opportunities to reach a greater number of people, host public programs and celebrate the objects, people and ideas that have changed lives. Other new areas of the floor include:

Spark!Lab Children ages 6-12 will have the opportunity to become inventors themselves and better understand the central role that invention plays in American history. Activities will incorporate traditional science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) with art, music and creativity.

Places of Invention Located in the Museum’s Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, Places of Invention will explore what can happen when inventive people, untapped resources and inspiring surroundings come together.

Wonder Workshop The Wonder Workshop will be a gateway to American history for children ages 0-6. Objects from the Museum’s incredible collections will complement multisensory experiences—from climbing a fanciful clock tower to becoming the captain of a model ship—and will nurture creativity and critical thinking skills.

Gallery of Numismatics The Museum will create a new gallery to prominently showcase one of the finest and largest numismatic collections in the world. The gallery triples the floor space currently devoted to numismatics.

Inspiring the Youth of America

Instilling a sense of excitement about the nation’s history in school-aged Americans is not an easy task. When the Museum presented a plan to the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation to creatively connect youth to the past, it immediately stepped forward in support. The foundation made a commitment of $7.5 million in 2013 toward two key areas of the Museum’s new Education Center, which is set to open in 2015 as part of the west wing transformation. This extraordinary gift will help create and endow the Center’s Object Project and establish an endowment for K-12 learning. In appreciation, the Object Project and both endowments will bear the foundation’s name.

Support of K-12 learning will also maximize outreach and provide a link from the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation Object Project to classrooms across America. National collections, touchable teaching objects, games and other interactive activities will make learning about American history more fun and relevant to children in the new space.
Celebrating America With the National Museum of American History

This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the Museum’s opening and the 200th anniversary of the Star-Spangled Banner—the national anthem and the flag that inspired the song. To commemorate these occasions, the Museum will have special exhibitions and host several events throughout the summer and remainder of 2014. The following is a sample of those activities.

Making a Modern Museum: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the National Museum of American History

The anniversary exhibition focuses on the museum as originally conceived and takes a look at its evolution through the last five decades.

Display of National Anthem Original Manuscript

For the first time in history, the Star-Spangled Banner will be on exhibition together with Francis Scott Key’s original 1814 manuscript of the national anthem, courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society.

Raise It Up! Anthem for America

Raise It Up! Anthem for America will be a call to millions of Americans to simultaneously sing “The Star-Spangled Banner” with the U.S. Air Force Band, a 400-person choir, and guest musical artists on the National Mall.

Raise a Glass to History

The Raise a Glass to History cocktail program and website will ask the nation’s top mixologists, in 14 cities, to create new cocktails inspired by the Star-Spangled Banner and America’s spirited past.

Second Floor

The exhibitions and programs on the second floor will focus on the theme of The Nation We Build Together by exploring the nation’s shared belief in the sovereignty of the people and recognizing America’s rich cultural diversity. The floor is divided into four programmatic spaces:

American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith

From the Revolution to the present, American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith will detail the experiment to form a more perfect union based on the promise of democracy. The exhibition will examine our founding political principles, forms of popular political participation, and citizenship in a pluralistic society.

Many Voices, One Nation

Many Voices, One Nation will examine the people, objects and ideas from many waves of migration that contributed to the shaping of a distinctive American society. It will share the stories of struggle, courage and triumph that document the 500-year journey of the peopling of this country.

Liberty Square

This central plaza, with a stunning view of the Washington Monument, will provide multi-media capabilities and an active space for performances, presentations and lectures to engage visitors in the history of the American people and their civic life.

Third Floor

The third floor of the west wing showcases what makes American culture unique. The space will offer a look at the people, objects, movies and sounds that have captured the national audience.

On With the Show!

This exhibition will document the history of American music, sports and entertainment. Anticipated to be one of the Museum’s most popular exhibitions, it will surround visitors with authentic cultural treasures, such as Muhammad Ali’s boxing gloves, Jim Henson’s original Muppets, and Dizy Gillespie’s trumpet.

Hall of Music

The redesigned Hall of Music will become a state of the art performance center to celebrate all forms of music and to showcase objects and works from a collection of more than 5,000 musical treasures.

Changing Gallery

The addition of a changing exhibition gallery will allow the Museum to delve more deeply into specific cultural topics, such as rock ‘n’ roll and comedy.

Join the Museum as it unveils each renovated floor over the next three years in an effort to make a more dynamic space for visitors from across the globe to better understand and appreciate what it means to be an American.
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For more information about the National Museum of American History, please visit www.americanhistory.si.edu
Skateboard, Tony Hawk, 1986