

2000 Annual Report

RHODE ISLAND COMMITTEE for the HUMANITIES

YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Friends,
Once again, we look back on a year crowded with programs and activities that represent the best of what the world of the public humanities offers us: access to new ideas. As you see from this brief report of our activities in 2000, RICH has been busy, not only working with our expanding group of dedicated project directors and sponsoring organizations, but also creating new programs and bringing new breadth to our outreach efforts.

One of the many joys of being the director of RICH is the constant opportunity to learn. I am a deeply curious person, and this year was the perfect companion to my fundamental need to know things. Every job has its perks, and while mine may not be traditional or even widely desired, they are certainly unique. This year held its share of unique adventures. At the center of all of these are, of course, the people whose ideas find voice in our grants and programs. I remain humbled and inspired by the level of joy and commitment that Rhode Island's public humanists bring to this important work.

Rebirth of The Towers: 100 Years After the Fire

by Kate Vivian, Project Director

(This Public Project Grant was awarded by RICH during the fiscal year 1999-2000. It is a wonderful example of how a small grant can have a far reaching impact and allow Rhode Islanders to explore the humanities in their own cities and towns.)

The year 2000 was the 100th anniversary of Narragansett, Rhode Island's great fire of September 12, 1900 – "The darkest and saddest day the Pier ever experienced". With support from the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, Rhode Island 2000, and the Town of Narragansett, The Narragansett Towers celebrated the remarkable restoration of the town's most famous and beloved building as well as the area's history at the turn of the century. The public's response to this series was thrilling and beyond our expectations. The Towers building was designed by the famous New York architects, McKim Mead & White and the original grounds were designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted. For our project, it was natural to focus on these two subjects.

Fredrick Law Olmsted: Turn-of-the-Century Estates and Pleasure Grounds was presented by Martha Werenfels, a practicing architect in Providence who has designed reconstruction and repairs for McKim, Mead & White such buildings in the state as the State House and the Tennis Hall of Fame. Ms. Werenfels did her Master's Thesis at Brown on Fredrick Law Olmsted and has been

Another joy of this job is working with a superior team. The successes found in this report are the results of a true partnership between our small staff and our volunteer board. All of us added to our responsibilities this year as we began a new structure that placed committees at the center of all decisions. These committees meet regularly now, keeping us in frequent contact and strengthening our understanding of our separate roles and responsibilities.

The RICH Board used the occasion of the millennium to combine reflection and action by committing to an aggressive plan to raise new revenue that will match our NEH allocation dollar for dollar by 2004. To that end, we closed our fiscal year with news of two major foundation awards. While these awards will be part of our activities in 2001 and 2002, this support allowed us to give full rein to our dreams. We entered our current fiscal year in November, fully prepared to take on a series of new challenges, including our move to a new home, a statewide Dialogues project and a series of new RICH-designed programs.

published in the Rhode Island Historical Society Journal. Along with her slide presentation, details of local work was enhanced by members of the audience who included landscape architects as well as native "old timers" from Narragansett who remembered gardens in the area.

Historic Trolley Tours of Narragansett presented the public with an opportunity to get a first hand overview of Narragansett as it was at the turn of the century as many of the streets, vistas and buildings remain the same. John Miller, and Charles Ted Wright, both born and raised in Narragansett, provided historical facts and local stories along the route. Hazard's Castle, Stone Lea (a McKim, Meade and White building), the Louis Sherry cottages and more were viewed from the ride.

Narragansett in its Heyday, an informal evening of story and song from Narragansett's Gilded Age had the largest audience of the series - 187 enthusiastic attendees. The production was written and performed by Maury Klein, professor of History at the University of Rhode Island; Judith Swift, a professor at the University of Rhode Island as well as director and producer of Off and Off-Off-Broadway, theatre festivals, and scripts for film and video; and Charles Cofone, a musical director/arranger/composer for theater for twenty-five years. The entertainment was developed from a variety of primary historical sources written in the his-

I know that you will be excited by our successes this year, and we thank each and every one of you for your continued support.

Drake Patten
Executive Director

Income Statement for the Year Ending October 31, 2000

NEH	\$ 432,675
State Grant	47,750
Contributions	6,910
Other	21,350
Total	\$ 508,685
Administration	\$ 131,426
Grants + Projects	
Development	290,593
RICH Programs	83,640
Total	\$ 505,659
Net	\$ 3,026

torical period rather than *about* it. The discussion at the end brought out some wonderful stories and remembrances from members of the audience.

On July 25 Ronald Onorato, architectural historian and professor of Art at the University of Rhode Island presented *Character, Beauty and Variety: McKim, Mead & White in Narragansett and Newport*. It was fascinating to see the similarities and differences in buildings throughout Rhode Island designed by McKim, Mead & White. Dr. Onorato's overview pointed out influences from other architects, the popular influences in style at that period in history and set The Towers design in an historical context. Over 100 people attended this lecture.

With additional funding from RI2000**, our project was able to continue on into the summer months and include a children's fair and finally a ball held on September 12, the 100th anniversary of the fire.

* attributed to W. H. Taylor

** Rhode Island 2000 was a partnership between the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts and First Night. Grants were given out over a two-year period 1999 - 2000.

Board Members 1999 - 2000



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Staff 1999 - 2000

M. Drake Patten, Executive Director

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Deborah Brennan, Special Projects Coordinator

Fran Clerx, Staff Assistant, Grants

Paula Ferrato, Public Affairs Officer

Kelly Hand, Program Officer

Michael Hayes, Fiscal Officer

Paulajo Mays, Education Coordinator

GRANTS AWARDED

PUBLIC PROJECT GRANTS

Image and Enterprise: The Photographs of Adolphe Braun
Museum of Art, RISD, Providence, \$6,600

Reflections on Race and Ethnicity: Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities
Center for Race and Ethnicity in America, Brown University, Providence, \$5,000

Eighth Annual Women's Playwriting Festival - Talk with Your Mouth Full
Perishable Theatre, Providence, \$7,243

Great Books on Film 2000
Little Compton Community Center, Little Compton, \$4,400

A Millennium Triptych - In School Workshops
Ocean State Chamber Orchestra, Providence, \$4,100

By Virtue of Excellence Exhibition 2000
The Rhode Island State Committee, East Providence, \$4,000

AS220/Action Speaks 2000
AS220, \$11,182

Transforming Providence: A Civic Discussion on Design
Providence Preservation Society, \$2,500

Rebirth of the Towers: 100 Years After the Fire, Town of Narragansett, \$2,842

2000 Classical Association of New England Summer Institute: Novus Ordo Saeculorum: the Refounding of Rome in the Age of Augustus. July 5th - July 13, 2000, The Classical Association of New England, \$1,400

Yoruba Culture Series: The Oba's Palace, Oasis International, \$6,809

Providence Stories: Southside Initiative
New Urban Arts, Providence, \$6,938

Humanities Rep Trinity Repertory Company, Providence, \$12,000

Connections
The Congdon Street Baptist Church, Providence, \$4,000

HUMANITIES RESOURCE GRANTS

BASE: Quonset Point/Davisville Documentation Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, Providence, \$3,875

From Bullrakes to Clamcakes: Folklife of the Narragansett Shellfishery,
Heritage Harbor Museum, Providence, \$7,987

Trinity Rep and a National Archive,
Trinity Repertory Company, Providence, \$4,840

Preservation and Digitizing of a Photograph Collection, Jamestown Museum, Jamestown, \$8,000

The Block Island Oral History Project
Block Island Historical Society, \$3,250

SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

A Fish Story, The Center for Independent Documentary, \$5,000

American Lynchings: Strange and Bitter Fruit The Urban League, \$5,000

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH GRANTS

These grants were each awarded \$2,000

Analyses of Providence's Urban Landscape, Matt Kuehl

Context of Four Early Republic Diaries, Jane Lancaster

Dr. Bates Sanitarium - Further Exploration, Sue Maden

RI Maritime History, Barry Marshall

Introduction of Contemporary Chinese Women Writers, Mary Ann O'Donnell

Synthesis of Architectural History of the Narragansett Basin, Myron Stachiw

EARLY RESPONSE GRANTS

Langston Hughes Community Poetry Reading The RISD Museum, \$1,000

A Visit With Barry Lopez
RISD - The Edna Lawrence Nature Lab, \$1,000

A Window Into The New Millennium
Davisville Middle School, \$1,000

Weathering Changes: The History of Climate and Storms in Newport and New England Newport Historical Society, \$1,000

Evenings of Robert Frost Poetry with Living Literature Newgate Theater, \$991.50

Outside the Box: In-school workshops
Island Moving Company, \$1,000

Breakfast and Books 2000 Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, \$1,000

Rhode Island Indian Council 2000 Annual Powwow Rhode Island Indian Council, \$1,000

COUNCIL CONDUCTED PROGRAMS

SPEAKER'S BUREAU

At the beginning of June 2000, RICH distributed a new resource guide to public speakers, *EnRICHment Opportunities for a New Century*. This vividly illustrated booklet contains descriptions of over seventy presentations by more than fifty speakers. The topics reflect a broad understanding of the humanities and the unique perspectives of their constituent disciplines. Our purpose in developing the EnRICHment Opportunities program was to bring scholars, artists, and other intriguing individuals into community settings throughout Rhode Island. The response from around the state was immediately enthusiastic. Clearly, the booklet is a valuable resource for event planners!

In our 2000 fiscal year, which ended on October 31, twenty-four EnRICHment Opportunities presentations took place and dozens of advance bookings were made for the new 2001 fiscal year. We sent speakers to many libraries, including those in Carolina, Jamestown, Matunuck, Middletown, Newport (the Redwood), Pascoag, and Providence (Rochambeau and the Athenaeum). They attracted multigenerational audiences with topics such as "Reading Rhode Island Girls' Diaries in 1799" (Jane Lancaster), "The Portuguese Discoveries" (Onésimo Almeida), "What's on Our Minds" (Governor Bruce Sundlun), and "A Little Touch of Shakespeare Now and Then" (Helen Whall).

The Shakespeare presentation prepared playgoers for RICH-funded performances of Trinity Repertory's *Taming of the Shrew*. Senior activity providers—including Blackstone Valley Tourism Council "Elderhostel," the

East Greenwich Leisure Learning Center, Hamilton House, the Jewish Community Center, and Laurelmead—were also frequent users of the EnRICHment Opportunities program. They hosted presentations such as "Making WAVES: Women in World War Two" (Evelyn Cherpak), "Rhode Island's Historic Landscapes" (Mack Woodward), "Photography and the Humanities" (Salvatore Mancini), and "The Magic of Gilbert and Sullivan" (Thomas Lawlor). While EnRICHment Opportunities was developed with special attention to the needs and interests of non-profit groups, it is also available to private groups. For example, an advertising agency invited Providence Journal editor-in-chief Edward Achorn to speak on "The Legacy of Corruption in the Ocean State." Other users of the program in its first several months were singles groups, a secondary school, and the Navy hospital.

RICH closed the 2000 fiscal year with great optimism about the future of the EnRICHment Opportunities program. It allows us to collaborate with community groups in our mission of encouraging life-long learning for individuals of all ages. Stimulating thought and discussion among Rhode Islanders, our presentations strengthen the bonds between host organizations and the people they serve, while also providing speakers with a chance to reach broader audiences for their work. For RICH staff and board members, who attend as many events as possible, it is a sheer pleasure to visit host venues—and to meet the folks whose passion for learning humanizes the humanities.

CENTRAL FALLS VISIONS AND VOICES

Under the leadership of Chairman William R. Ferris, the National Endowment for the Humanities has promoted a grassroots, populist approach to history. A particularly impressive and widely accessible example of this effort is the "My History is America's History" initiative, which uses a web site (www.myhistory.org) and a guidebook to help families and other folks preserve their heritage. In July and August 2000, RICH coordinated a project inspired by this initiative for kids in Progreso Latino's summer youth program in Central Falls. "Central Falls Visions and Voices" engaged a group of fifteen 11-16 year olds in a hands-on exploration of their vibrant and diverse community.

Led by photographer Denny Moers, a faculty member at Roger Williams University, the kids took pictures of people and places in the neighborhoods of Rhode Island's smallest, but most densely populated, city. Claudia Milian, a Ph.D. candidate at Brown University, helped them to gather oral histories and to write essays documenting and responding to their photographs. Computer inter Dan Owen taught kids how to scan photos and

collaborated with them on designing project web pages (see the home page of www.uri.edu/rich). An exhibit of the group's work appeared on August 17 at the Lysander Flagg Memorial Museum in Central Falls and from September 9-21 at Sol Gallery at City Arts! in Providence.

In telling their stories through words and pictures, the Progreso Latino youths touch upon some of the defining themes of American culture. In particular, their account of Central Falls demonstrates how this urban community, originally a center for the textile industry, has served as a point of entry for successive waves of immigrants from many parts of the world. While earlier generations of residents hailed from Ireland, French Canada, and Eastern Europe, many of the newcomers to the area are from Latin America. Through visits with local senior citizens and to the Central Falls-Pawtucket train station, the kids made meaningful connections between their own journeys to this country (or those of their family members) and journeys that took place long ago. RICH is proud to have provided a forum for the creativity of such a wonderful group of young people!