

# **Philadelphia: A History**

*By Walter Licht*

## ***Preface***

Native American encounters with European settlers, slavery and abolitionism, the crafting of a democratic republic, industrialization, ongoing waves of immigration, ethnic and racial tensions, political corruption and reform, the impact of wars, urban disorder and renewal, suburbanization and population decline, and deindustrialization: the city of Philadelphia provides the means to study fruitfully all the great issues of American history. This TIP workshop was devoted to the study of the history of Philadelphia with a special emphasis on race and ethnicity. Members of the workshop learned of new interpretations of Philadelphia's history, new methods of studying the past and the availability of primary source materials in local archives: all to facilitate the creation of curriculum units.

Four teachers in the workshop developed curriculum units that entail neighborhood history projects. Ellen Clay, a seventh grade math teacher, created a unit that utilizes manuscript population census records from 1880-1930; students will learn how to code variables and create Excel databases and analyze the shifting socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of an urban community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Patricia Blackeney-Whack, a middle school environmental studies teacher, will have her students study the natural and built environment of a local parkland to understand ecological, economic and social changes and crises in the neighborhood surrounding her school. Rita Sorrentino, an elementary school computer skills instructor, teaches in a school that will mark its hundredth anniversary; she has created a unit involving historical map and census work and architectural study that will have her students create a school and neighborhood history website and historical walking-tour podcasts. Myrtle Bastien, a high school teacher of African American history, will have her students learn about a historical African American community that was leveled to make way for the construction of her high school in a fractious urban redevelopment initiative of the 1960s; her students will especially grapple with the difficult issue of eminent domain.

Three teachers developed units in African American history. Keith Mitchell, a high school health educator, will have his students study the health problems and medical care of slaves in Philadelphia during the colonial era; his unit makes use of remarkable ledger books archived in Pennsylvania Hospital, the oldest hospital in the U.S., that contain lists of slaves brought in for medical treatment and information about their maladies and owners; folk medical practices of the slaves will also be studied. Stephanie Wick's curriculum unit entails lessons about both enslaved and free African Americans in antebellum Philadelphia. The unit, which will enhance her general teaching of African American history, concentrates on evolving legal statutes affecting the lives and gradual manumission of slaves, but has a personal side in spotlighting the life of Jane Johnson, a

fugitive slave; through both primary documents and recent fictional representations, Jane Johnson's world both before and after her coming and living in Philadelphia will be comprehended. Florence Oliver, a twelfth grade social studies teacher, will supplement standard instruction on the role of the media by having her students study The Philadelphia Tribune, one of the nation's oldest and most widely read newspapers of the African American community. They will read microfilm editions of the Tribune at various points in time over the last 120 years and answer questions about the changing politics and social lives of African Americans as represented in the paper; comparisons with the white mainstream press will also allow for discussions of journalistic and editorial slants.

Two other curriculum units deal with other aspects of Philadelphia's history. Nancy Baulis, an elementary school health educator, will have her students learn about Native Americans in Philadelphia, from pre-European settlement to present times. The Lenape will provide the focus and students will particularly learn about Lenape foodways by growing corn and squash and preparing meals with Lenape recipes. Finally, Timothy Woods, a high school social studies teacher, will supplement his instructions on the U.S. judicial system by having his students study the history of the police, courts and prisons in Philadelphia. The role of police in neighborhoods, both past and present, will be of particular concern.

The curriculum units that appear below contain historical narrative sections. Collectively, the sections constitute for readers of this website an excellent history of Philadelphia, both micro and macroscopic. The lessons plans presented in the curriculum units also provide examples of innovative uses of primary source materials and hands-on, pertinent history projects that will engage students. Moreover, the curriculum units show that history study can enhance learning in seeming far-a-field disciplines as science, math and computers.

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