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INTERPRETING BLACK HISTORY
IN NEW ENGLAND:
A PLANNING STUDY



Museum of Afro American History African Meeting House

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Byron Rushing, President

INTERPRETING BLACK HISTORY IN NEW ENGLAND: A PLANNING STUDY

Project Summary

The Museum of Afro American History was incorporated in 1967. Until 1973 it conducted educational programs on African-American history on a part-time basis with a largely volunteer staff. In 1972 the Museum purchased the African Meeting House and in 1973 the Board adopted a program statement which set forth a full-time program with a paid staff. Over the past six years the Museum, with limited resources and with a staff with no previous museum experience, engaged in an ambitious and varied program. If the Museum is to become a permanent professional historical research facility, repository, and interpretive center, a comprehensive planning study is necessary. We--the staff and the board--must take another hard look at our own history and develop a comprehensive, concise and stated plan for our next ten years.

Although we are looking for more focus than we have had in the past, we do not mean to become a museum with a single specific purpose to the exclusion of all others. Although we are committed to increasing the professional quality of our work, we mean to continue to respond to the day to day requests and felt needs of our immediate constituency. We see our functions as multiple, ranging from the archaeological and social historical research required to determine the actual Black history of New England, to the interpretive exhibits and education and publishing programs needed to provide that information to the public.

The planning study will examine nine areas of programming in three categories: Information Gathering (Community Input; Collection Strategy). Information Dissemination (Education Programs; Interpretive Trails; Museum Shop Study; Publishing Study; Plans for the Handicapped). Central Facility/Transportation (Central Facility; Transportation Feasibility.)

The planning process will take ten months. The product will be an overall plan for the Museum and a series of detailed proposals in each area including job descriptions, budgets and time lines. Dr. James Horton, an historian with special interest in 18th and 19th century black Boston will advise on the content of the collecting, interpretive trails and education plans. Dr. Vivian Johnson, an experienced curriculum developer, will advise on the education plans. Byron Rushing and Michael Seif, a museum consultant, will perform the programmatic and administrative oversight of the planning process. Anne Farnum, Curator, Essex Institute, will advise on collection and storage plans; Ed Krent will advise on exhibit design and construction plans. The Board will be involved in the entire process with four members taking special responsibilities in the areas of education, and facility design. Consultants in public opinion surveys, museum shop philosophy, and in specific areas of educational programming will be hired. An architectural firm will consult on the facility plans.

INTRODUCTION

The Museum of Afro American History was incorporated in 1967. Until 1973 it conducted educational programs on Afro-American history on a part-time basis in rented quarters with a mostly volunteer staff. In 1972, the Board hired the Museum's first full-time employee -- the present director -- and purchased the African Meeting House. This turning point in the Museum's history culminated with the adoption of a program statement by the Board in 1973. (Statement included.)

Over these past six years the Museum has produced and sponsored a wide variety of programs, projects, exhibits and activities about Afro-American history in New England. At the same time, its staff has responded to demands and requests coming from our perceived constituency.

The Museum's programs were conducted with limited resources -- no endowment, no large donated collection. With few exceptions its staff has had no previous museum working experience. Nevertheless, the Museum has developed into the major Afro-American historical organization in the State and perhaps in New England.

Both the staff and Board members believe we are at another turning point. If we are to become a permanent, professional Afro-American historical research facility, repository, and interpretive center, we must take another hard look at our own history and develop a comprehensive, concise and stated plan for our next ten years.

Through a pre-planning grant from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, we have been given the opportunity to begin to look at ourselves. We have looked at where we are and how we got here, and we have looked at where we want to be. We brought in John Kinard of the Anacostia Museum and Michael Seif, a museum consultant, to facilitate this process. A report on these consultations was circulated to the Board and a few Afro American Museum professionals. Some of their comments are included. The purpose of the planning study described in this proposal -- a result of those consultations -- will be to define, in precise terms, how to get where we want to be in the future. We realize that each segment of this planning study could be a study in itself. We are combining them, however, to achieve the focus we seek.

Although we are looking for more focus than we had in the past, this does not mean that we are aiming to become a museum with a single specific purpose to the exclusion of all others. We see our functions as multiple, ranging from the archaeological and social historical research required to determine the actual black history of New England, to the interpretive exhibits, publishing, and education programs needed to provide that information to the public.

The very diversity of the work we are contemplating makes this a more complex and comprehensive planning study than most. Over the twelve years the Museum has been in existence, we have had to make numerous decisions about the Museum and the directions we would like it to take. In the pre-planning process we have just completed, we have selected nine different areas of planning that we believe are necessary to be examined as a unit, to move the Museum in the direction our staff and Board want to see it go.

The Museum's History

The Museum of Afro American History is a non-profit corporation, organized in 1967 by Howard Thurman, the first black Dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel, his wife Sue Bailey Thurman, and several other concerned Bostonians. The Museum's original purposes were to compile collections reflecting New England's major role during the Abolitionist Era and to develop a Black Heritage Trail. Until 1971, the Museum was housed in a small gallery in the Charles Street Meeting House, which was once the home of the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation in Boston.

By 1970, the Board of Directors realized that the increased demands for research, exhibition, and educational programs being made on the Museum could not be met by a part-time and volunteer staff with no permanent headquarters and storage space. The Board voted to temporarily cease our programming, place our material in storage, and begin the planning process for a full-time, professional program to meet the needs of a more aware public.

In 1971, the Board decided to locate a permanent headquarters for the Museum and begin a full-time program. At the same time, the African Meeting House, the oldest extant black church building in the country, came onto the market. Built in 1806, the building had been purchased by an Orthodox Jewish Congregation at the beginning of this century when the black community began to move off Beacon Hill.

Byron Rushing was hired as a consultant to help raise the \$40,000 purchase price. The Museum purchased the building in 1972 (half of the funds came from a National Historic Preservation Grant). In September of 1972, Mr. Rushing joined the Museum staff as Executive Director -- the Museum's first full-time staff member.

Three months after the Meeting House was purchased, a fire was accidentally started while the building was being repaired. The major damage was confined to the roof. Since the fire, a reconstructed roof and the exterior restoration have been completed. The complete interior restoration and installation of mechanical systems will cost about \$400,000. However, the building is open to Black Heritage Trail tour groups.

Fire has plagued the Museum on more than one occasion. The Dillaway-Thomas House is an 18th century structure located in Roxbury, the neighborhood to which black people moved in the 20th Century. That structure was saved from being torn down in the 1930s when it was taken over by the Roxbury Historical Society. The building, which is still owned by the City of Boston, was to be refurbished in 1976 as the Roxbury headquarters for the Museum of Afro American History. By the spring of 1977, 80% of the work had been accomplished. At that time the building was vandalized and set on fire. As of August, 1979, the insurance has been collected on the building and a contract has been awarded for the design of its rehabilitation.

Today, in addition to the African Meeting House, the Museum is located in rented and donated spaces in and around the Dudley Station area of

Roxbury. Those spaces house the offices, archeology laboratory, and storage facilities. The Museum maintains additional gallery space in donated space in Boston's South End.

Museum Programs and Activities

Since its inception, the Museum of Afro American History has pursued diverse areas of activity. That activity has taken place in the same two geographic locations that have been the focus of the Museum's physical structures: 1) the historic, 19th century black neighborhood on Beacon Hill; and 2) the 20th century black neighborhood of Roxbury.

The Museum's programs fall into ten areas (here they are not listed in priority order).

1. Tours - Black Heritage Trail. Since 1967, the staff of the Museum has conducted walking tours of 18th and 19th century sites on Beacon Hill and downtown Boston on what has come to be called the Black Heritage Trail. This Trail can be toured with a guide provided by the Museum staff, or as a self-guided tour with a printed brochure describing the sites along the Trail.

Including the African Meeting House, there are, at present, eight sites on the Heritage Trail on Beacon Hill directly related to the 19th century black community: The Smith School (the first black school in Boston), the Smith Court residences, the Middleton House (built by a black veteran of the American Revolution), the Lewis Hayden House (Hayden was one of the leading black abolitionists in the country), Charles Street Meeting House (the home of Boston's first African Methodist Episcopal congregation), the George Grant House (Grant, a dentist, invented the golf tee), the John J. Smith House (Smith, a barber, was one of the first black State legislators in Massachusetts). In addition, there are another seven sites in downtown Boston and the North End.

Tour participants learn about the lives of individuals who lived during the 18th and 19th centuries, some of whom made significant contributions to our heritage, others simply lived out their lives. The buildings themselves stand as monuments to participation by blacks in the American Revolution, the black struggles for integrated schools, abolition of slavery, and the Civil War, and the day-to-day lives of blacks over more than a century and a quarter. In 1978 alone, the Museum conducted 108 paid tours of the Black Heritage Trail with 1500 people participating.

Roxbury Tours. The Museum has conducted, on a regular basis, tours of the Roxbury area. These were designed initially for Roxbury residents. However, as part of the integration of schools in Boston, students find themselves in neighborhoods about which they know nothing. The Museum has been conducting tours specifically to introduce the students to Roxbury by taking the students on walking tours, to street markets, and to meals in restaurants. These tours are supplemented by in-class talks and discussions.

2. Community Action - The Museum has been actively involved in the identification and preservation of historic structures and landmarks in Boston's black communities. For example, in 1976, the Museum led a community drive to save the Roxbury Standpipe -- a 133 foot-high gothic revival water tower at the top of Fort Hill. After a successful campaign to save the standpipe, it was restored with \$120,000 in Federal and City funds.

3. Collections - As the Museum of Afro American History in the Boston area, the Museum is the recipient of artifacts, photographs, archival materials, and art that has historical significance. This material has been brought to the Museum in the past without the Museum specifically requesting such historical material. In fact, the storage space required for such materials has continued to be a problem for the Museum.

The Museum does not collect imaginative art; we do collect actual portraits and streetscapes. The collection of black art in New England is a function of the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Inc., which is also located in Roxbury. Our Museum has cooperated with the Museum of the National Center in two exhibits and most recently in jointly sponsoring a festival of films by black filmmakers.

4. Exhibits - From its inception, the Museum has held exhibits at the Charles Street Meeting House gallery and at institutions throughout the Boston area. Our consulting curator, J. Marcus Mitchell, organized a Junior Curator Program with students from the Lewis Middle School in Roxbury which enabled students to receive instruction and experience in research, photography, leading tours, and mounting exhibits.

The Museum's exhibits in Roxbury began in 1974. They have been housed in rented and donated spaces in and around Dudley Station in Roxbury. Although Afro-American history is emphasized in these exhibits and

programs, their primary purpose is to demonstrate the value of the study of history, per se, to Afro-American audiences. Beginning with an exhibit on Roxbury Puddingstone, from which the name Roxbury is derived, this series has extended into exhibits and activities around several Roxbury neighborhoods. The exhibits not only explore the recent Afro-American history of these neighborhoods, but also their 18th and 19th century development (when they were white neighborhoods).

The exhibits on particular neighborhoods have included photo and historically related art exhibits, period rooms, and architectural models of the way neighborhood development is expected to proceed in the future.

Since 1973, the Museum has produced eleven shows, six posters, in relation to those shows, and two traveling exhibits:

The Hill: The Middle Classes Come to Roxbury: 1870 -(on Yankee, Jewish and Afro-American immigration to Roxbury; poster and catalogue)

What Time is this Station? (on the Dudley Station area in Roxbury; poster; led to nomination of area to National Register and establishment of City study group for a landmark district)

Roxbury on Dorchester Bay (post card poster)

Meeting House Hill, Roxbury (led to commitment by City to restore Dillaway-Thomas House; poster)

Fort Hill, Roxbury (Save-the-Standpipe poster and campaign)

Roxbury Puddingstone (started as permanent, then made traveling exhibit; poster)

What We Collect (a new acquisitions show made into traveling exhibit)

Integration! 1855 (on black education in Boston in the 19th century; poster)

Bobo and Other Black Dolls (poster)

The World of Hamilton Smith (exhibit of turn-of-the-century photographs of black middle class life)

Roxbury Yesteryears (combined art and history exhibit, with the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, Inc.; poster, catalog)

5. African Meeting House - The Meeting House has been of central concern to the Museum. The plans are ultimately to restore and refurbish the Meeting House for use as an auditorium with a small exhibit space in the lower level. The Meeting House is the only non-profit building in downtown Boston owned and operated by black people. It stands today as a unique and recognized landmark to the role of Afro-Americans in the development of this country, this State, and the City of Boston.

Plans for the Meeting House call for a major, national fundraising drive to refurbish the building and provide an endowment for its care and maintenance. That drive is to begin before the end of 1979.

6. Providing Information - As an Afro-American history institution, we have been concerned with interpretation of the past from the point of view of the Afro-Americans who lived through it. In this we have been committed to being accurate -- interpreting the facts, yes; distorting the facts, no. For this reason, the Museum has become accepted

as a reputable source of factual information. Staff members are in demand by radio and television programs for interviews, and to review radio and television scripts for accuracy. Additional calls come in from the general public for information, often about particular homes or buildings.

We feel this is a valuable service we provide the public and wish to expand upon it. In the future we want, at least, to have an architectural preservation specialist and a conservator available to act as consultants to the public wishing to preserve buildings or artifacts.

7. Film Programs - The Museum has about 50 films available for rental by schools and other groups. The fees charged for the rental support the film program. We have prepared an annotated list of films for school teachers which is now out-of-print; an updated list will be published this fall. In 1978, the Museum provided 384 film rentals, and loaned additional films to Museum members at no charge.

8. Afro-American Literature Collection - Since 1972, the Museum of Afro American History and Suffolk University (a private university located close to the African Meeting House) have been developing, jointly, a collection of Afro-American literature. The books, now about 2400 volumes, are housed in the library at Suffolk University. The collection, which is continuously growing, aims to include poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction prose of all important black American writers from the eighteenth century to the present with an emphasis on black writers related to New England. It contains related historical, literary-historical, critical, biographical, and bibliographical

works by writers of all races, as well as periodicals. To make black writing more visible, especially that of New England authors and poets, Afro-American authors are invited twice a year to read and discuss their work. These sessions take place at the Museum or at Suffolk University and are open to the public..

9. Archaeology - Archaeology is playing an increasing role in the Museum's activities. Digs are being conducted in Roxbury and on Beacon Hill, especially surrounding the African Meeting House. Much artifactual material has been obtained in these digs, including ceramic, glass, metal, and leather fragments and animal bones. Analysis of this material will give us new insights to the social and domestic history of the majority of black Americans in a 19th century urban community. The Museum's staff archaeologist has supervised the recovery of about 40,000 shards. The Museum is a major specialist in historic archaeology. Only Harvard and the University of Massachusetts sponsor more archaeological excavations in this State.

10. Research - In 1977, along with its archaeological research, the Museum shifted its documentary research emphasis away from biographical and intellectual history to social and demographic history. Museum-sponsored research is beginning to add a new dimension to the black history of Boston. Facts have been uncovered about housing patterns, labor and occupations, property ownership, and self-help activities inside 19th century black Boston. The research we are conducting is concerned primarily with the lives of typical black

individuals and families, not necessarily historic personalities. Much of our research is conducted into deeds, census records, and probate records.

What the Planning Grant Will Cover

The two major purposes of the Museum of Afro American History are:

1) to gather factual information, including artifactual and archival material about black history, and 2) to disseminate that information to the Museum's public -- people of African descent and others interested in participating in our programs.

The importance of this planning study is to be able to carefully investigate a number of methods for gathering information and disseminating it to the public. Our own Board members will oversee the planning studies, providing assistance in their own areas of expertise.

Humanist consultants will be brought in to assist us in particular areas. Michael Seif, museum planning consultant, will oversee and coordinate the entire planning study. One of the very first parts of the planning study will be to send out questionnaires to Museum members and other members of the community interested in the Museum to determine what they want from the Museum.

The Museum is already conducting research and ongoing archaeological digs. An additional aspect of our information gathering function will be to engage in an active collection campaign.

Our methods of disseminating information are diverse and will include interpretive trails and exhibits, publishing of information, educational programs, and the sale of books and historically-relevant materials through the Museum shop.

Our planning also calls for examining the best means of unifying what is a geographically separated Museum. As mentioned previously, the Museum is located in a number of buildings, in downtown Boston as well as in Roxbury. A central facility must be planned for the Museum to work most effectively in gathering and disseminating information. In addition, a means must be found of providing transportation links among the various parts of the Museum -- downtown Boston, Roxbury, South End, and other locations where exhibits or programs may be taking place in the future.

The following descriptions of the planning studies to be done by the Museum of Afro American History are grouped according to the three previously described categories:

Information Gathering

Community Input

Collection Strategy

Information Dissemination

Education Programs

Interpretive Trails

Museum Shop Study

Publishing Study

Plans for the Handicapped

Central Facility/Transportation

Central Facility

Transportation Feasibility

Information Gathering

Community Input

The first steps in this planning study will be to establish overall interpretive and program goals and objectives as expressed by those most closely associated with the Museum. As part of the development of this proposal, we interviewed all members of the Museum Board, as well as others concerned about the Museum. We will continue this process of finding out what people want by polling the 350 members of the Museum. Additional communication through informal discussions and meetings with the potential Museum communities will also result in the gathering of information about where the Museum should be going and what it should be doing in the future.

In addition to the initial gathering of information, a system will be planned to obtain continuing input from the Museum community. We will hire a consultant familiar with survey and public opinion work to provide insight into the methods and means of gathering the information on an ongoing basis. This information will be gathered through community surveys, surveys at each exhibit, telephone interviews, and other means still to be determined. The consultant will help develop questionnaires, survey forms, and additional material to be used in the community. This ongoing information input will allow us to make decisions about the programming directions the Museum will be taking in the future.

Collection Strategy

We plan to actively pursue a diverse collection program that will ultimately allow us to provide historical information to the public,

in programs, exhibits, and as it is requested. Plans are to provide a diversity of collecting, including films and video tapes as well as artifactual, archival, and photographic material.

We are interested in developing plans to collect materials related to current black events that will doubtlessly become of historical importance. There has not been, to our knowledge, for example, an ongoing collection program of materials, brochures, literature, photographs, films, tapes, and other information concerning the school busing in Boston. An ongoing program of this kind of contemporary collecting will preserve much valuable material of historical interest that would otherwise be lost or become too scarce to provide material for the future.

The general philosophy for a collection strategy for the Museum was outlined in the paper, "Afro-Americana: Defining It, Locating It, Collecting It," presented by Byron Rushing at a conference at the Louisiana State Museum. An acquisitions policy will be presented to the Board for its adoption.

Our plan will include methods of organizing the community members interested in collecting for the Museum. We will also develop plans for the storage space necessary for the diversity of materials we expect to be collecting including archaeological artifacts, and for an efficient file and record management system.

Part of the collection plan will be to develop a catalogue of the locations of artifacts and archival material in this country related

to black history. A method of cataloguing this information will be developed, so the information will be available to all who request it, or for exhibits.

Anne Farnam, Curator of the Essex Institute of Salem, Massachusetts, will act as consultant on the methods of storage, cataloguing, etc. Dr. James Horton, Afro-American black historian, will act as consultant to determine the kinds of artifactual and archival material that would be valuable to collect. (Dr. Horton will also advise on the education and interpretive trails sections of the plan.)

The product of this section of the planning process will be a written plan for collections. It would contain the kinds of materials to be collected, how collecting would be done, job descriptions for the curators of collections, and the space requirements for collecting and storing the collections.

Information Dissemination

Education Programs

Our educational task is a program of Afro-American history that focuses on two things: history and Afro-American history. For the life and work of George Lewis Ruffin or the movement of the black community from the North End to Beacon Hill to be relevant to black people -- especially young black people -- the ideas and concepts of history, history making, using the past to define the future, must be made relevant to black people.

We must demonstrate the value of studying history. And to do that, we must take an open, fluid view of history ourselves: History is 1) not only dusting off what our ancestors did a hundred years ago, it is also not forgetting what we did yesterday; and 2) it is taking these facts and interpreting them to have such meaning in our present that we can better determine our future.

We intend to develop a comprehensive plan for an education program of black history. This would investigate the more formal avenues of education, as opposed to exhibits and other more conventional, museum-oriented means of educating the public. Among the programs we wish to develop are school programs, teacher training, training for docents and interpreters, and archaeology for high school students. In the school programs we will be examining the feasibility of developing curricula based on black history that could be integrated directly into existing curricula. For example, there is a lack of material in the schools about the history of Roxbury. There is a range of ways in which the Museum can bring that information to the schools. Development of a "Roxbury History Curriculum" would be one means. This could be used by teachers to present local history in classrooms where State or American history is being taught. Such material could consist of teacher background information, kits teachers could use in the classroom, and before and after written material for walking tours of Roxbury.

Dr. Vivian Johnson, curriculum development consultant, will be brought in to plan the education programs. She will be responsible for first developing an overall set of goals for what the education programs

should be doing. Then she will bring in the appropriate consultants in public education, curriculum development, and black studies to develop an overall plan to implement these goals.

We know that in addition to the more formal education programs, we also want to plan training programs. High school and older students can participate in programs to learn techniques of archaeology, historic preservation, conducting walking tours and acting as Museum docents, and other skills related to Museum support staff, which would allow them to experience history in an immediate, tactile way. Once these plans are firmly established, we intend to return to the National Endowment for the Humanities to request a grant for implementation of the education programs.

Interpretive Trails

The Museum now has a single black heritage trail that begins at the African Meeting House and encompasses buildings and monuments related to the black heritage. Walkers can obtain a brochure and follow the trail themselves, or can obtain a guide for groups, for a charge of \$5.00 per person.

We want to locate additional black heritage trails throughout Boston, and possibly outside of Boston - places that are important in black history, or historical places where blacks live now. As does the present trail, the trails we envision for the future will be only partially concerned with the architecture of the trail. The new trails will be primarily concerned with the lives and deeds of the people who

lived in the buildings and the roles they played in the cultural history of their times.

A researcher will locate, research, and plot on a map the historical structures and places for each new trail. Once that plan is detailed, we will obtain additional funding to implement one or more of the interpretive trails.

Byron Rushing, Director of the Museum, will maintain overall responsibility for the trail planning studies. He will be assisted by a researcher. Dr. James Horton, will lend advice on the physical structures and the people who lived within them.

Museum Shop Study

As part of our function in the past, the Museum has operated a small shop in which we have been selling books on black history, photographs with black historical significance, and jewelry, art objects, and sculptures crafted by Africans and by Afro-Americans.

We want the Museum shop to be an extension of the Museum itself -- to increase the visitor's knowledge of history and allow the visitors to take something with them. A Museum shop manager with experience in providing historically-related goods, will be brought in to develop an overall plan for book, shop and catalogue sales. We would examine the shop's relationship to education and other programs. We also want to produce a marketing study to determine how much it would cost to set up and maintain the shop.

Publishing Study

One means of disseminating information about black history beyond the Museum walls and beyond the geographic limits of the Museum will be to publish. As the Museum conducts historical research, collects artifacts, historical photographs, and archival material, and conducts archaeological digs, we will want to publish our results. We can see now that publishing may move in two directions: the scholarly press; and the commercial press. We envision the publishing of interpretive brochures or literature will emerge from specific exhibits or programs, and are not included here.

We will conduct a survey to determine how the Museum may use publishing to disseminate information. Because of the Museum's primary commitment to the general public, rather than to the special needs of the scholar, most of the research into publishing will be with the popular press, where it may be possible for the Museum to publish books that could make money for the Museum's operations.

Plans for the Handicapped

We will investigate methods for making the Museum more accessible to the handicapped. One of our initial planning efforts will be devoted to planning the additions and changes required to make the walking tours more meaningful to blind participants, including the possible use of models, the location of reachable architectural details, and additional means.

Central Facility/Transportation

Central Facility

In the initial study we conducted to develop this planning grant proposal, we looked carefully at the various activities engaged in by the Museum. We also looked at the facilities in which these activities are conducted, and have come to the conclusion that part of this plan should include examination of the present facilities and the preliminary design of additional museum space that would properly house the programs and activities this plan is now developing.

At present, the Museum is dispersed in a number of locations, including the unoccupied Meeting House on Beacon Hill, the fire-damaged Dillaway-Thomas House, and separate office, storage and gallery spaces in Roxbury and the South End of Boston. While the Museum will always be in a number of locations, we want to open a centralized facility for a group of activities that we feel would benefit from being in close proximity. This central facility would be located in Roxbury and could be either a rehabilitated existing building (which would be our preference) or a completely new building.

We envision that the central facility will provide space for at least the following activities:

Central Administration

Communication/Transportation among various buildings

Research

Film Program

Acquisitions

Controlled Storage

Exhibits Design and Production

Security

Gallery Space

Additional space requirements will be examined as planning progresses.

Museum personnel will be working with an architect and museum exhibit designer to determine the space required for the central facility. A survey will then be conducted to locate a building in Roxbury that can be rehabilitated as a museum space and is within easy distance from public transportation. If a convertible space can be located, the architect will provide preliminary plans and renderings for renovation of the space. If an existing space cannot be located, the architect will provide preliminary plans and renderings of a new building.

Part of the question to be answered here is what kinds of exhibit production facilities and controlled storage space will be required by the museum? Is joint production and storage feasible with the National Center of Afro-American Artists? If it is possible, how would such a cooperative effort be implemented?

This planning grant would provide the important groundwork necessary for the building program. The floorplans, renderings, and a written description of the facility would provide a fundraising package to actually establish the building.

Transportation Feasibility

With the Museum situated in a number of locations, we would like to develop a plan to determine the feasibility of having a regular method of transportation among the various buildings. An overall transportation plan would be developed to include accessibility to public transportation for the new facility, parking plans (the African Meeting House is three hilly blocks from public parking), and methods of bringing people to the various buildings of the Museum.

Part of our plan would be first to determine the need for the transportation and the numbers of people it would serve. We would then obtain the services of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to determine the kinds of appropriate vehicles available, including vehicles with special equipment for the handicapped and elderly, and develop a number of alternative transportation plans for comparison.

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STATEMENT OF CASE

"But in all probability the history museum offers more to the disadvantaged, the poor, the alienated of the inner city [than the art or science museum.] At least, it is the resources, the habits and the attitudes of the history museum that can be brought most immediately to bear on the problems facing the new urban community...the history museum offers more directly the gift of incalculable value, the gift of understanding and detachment about the situation of one's own existence. Probably most residents of the inner city have but the sketchiest ideas of how their neighborhoods came into being. Yet the techniques of oral history combined with the examination of the relevant documents and artifacts can provide a valuable exercise in historiography for such residents and at the same time vitally expand the dimensions of the history museum itself, moving it from the passive status of receptacle for momentoes of the past to the active role of discoverer of the past."

MUSEUMS: Their New Audience

(A Report to the Department of Housing and Urban Development by a Special Committee of the American Associations of Museums, July, 1972.)

October, 1976

INTRODUCTION

For traditional museums, involvement in history is equated with taking someone back into the past, with making something in the past come alive. The staff of the Museum of Afro American History is convinced that involvement in history is a means to inform an individual to make intelligent and sophisticated decisions now about the future. The cliché of most historical organizations is that the past should inform the future. For us, a successful exhibit or program is one that makes this connection explicit.

In all our programming, we attempt to connect, consciously and explicitly, with the present and, wherever possible, to suggest alternatives that might be taken by the participating audience in the future. The collection and exhibition of artifacts for black Americans is not a luxury. The African-American historical organization that defines success by its support within the black community must make a tangible contribution to the improvement, health and liberation of that community. Its program should anticipate the future and be as grounded in the always changing present as it is in the past.

The staff of the Museum has spent considerable time examining the appropriate role of a history museum in the black community. For us, historical analysis is one of several resources that can contribute to our community's development. The identification of ourselves as a people in time is the major ideological goal of the Museum. The sign welcoming visitors to our temporary gallery reads: "For this museum, history means people and events through time. We do not know where we are if we cannot remember where we have been; we can't make informed decisions about where to go if we can't recognize where we are and where we've been. History is time past, present and future." We strive to make these connections graphic, explicit and exciting.

THE MUSEUM'S HISTORY

The Museum of Afro American History is a non-profit corporation which was organized in 1964 by Howard Thurman, the first black Dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel, his wife Sue Bailey Thurman, and several other concerned Bostonians. The original purposes are to compile collections reflecting New England's major role during the Abolitionist Era and to develop a Black Heritage Trail. Until 1971 the Museum was housed in a small gallery in the Charles Street Meeting House which was once the home of the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation in Boston.

During this period the Museum held exhibits at the gallery and at institutions throughout the Boston area. Our consulting curator, J. Marcus Mitchell, organized a Junior Curator Program with students from the Lewis Middle School in Roxbury which enabled students to receive instruction and experience in research, photography, leading tours and mounting exhibits. The Museum also created, what has become our most popular exhibit, the Black Heritage Trail, a walking tour of the sites related to Afro American history in downtown Boston and Beacon Hill.

By 1970 it became obvious to the Board of Directors that the increased demands for research, exhibition, and educational programs being made on the Museum could not be met by a part-time and volunteer staff with no permanent headquarters and storage space. The Board voted to temporarily cease our programming, place our material in storage, and begin the planning process for a full-time, professional program to meet the needs of a more aware public. The Museum completed its program plan in 1973. That document noted that the purpose of the Museum was to exhibit, preserve, and collect material pertaining to Afro American history. It then continued:

Who is our audience, who are we trying to reach? Our primary audience should be people of African descent. Black people are the people whose needs will define our program. They are not our

exclusive audience, however, if our programs are not relevant to black people's needs in the areas we have chosen for our work, then no amount of "success" with any other people can cover up our inadequacy. Our secondary audience is everyone else who has the interest to participate in our programs.

What is our geography? The founders of the Museum seemed to have had an idea of a national history museum. Soon this was realized to be unrealistic. At the other extreme, Boston is too small an area in which to confine our research. We see the Afro American communities in New England as our "geography" for study and the New England region as our primary area to serve. We gained national importance when we acquired the oldest extant church building built by Afro Americans for their own use. We will maintain national importance by developing into the major center for the study and exhibition of African American history in New England.

Our educational task is a program of Afro American history that focuses on two things: history and Afro American history. For the life and work of George Lewis Ruffin or the movement of the black community from the North End to Beacon Hill to be relevant to black people--especially young black people--the ideas and concepts of history, history making, the past to define the future, must be made relevant to black people. We must demonstrate the value of studying history. And to do that we must take an open, fluid, view of history ourselves: History is (1) not only dusting off what our ancestors did a hundred years ago, it is also not forgetting what we did yesterday; and (2) it is taking these facts and making some meaning of them, of interpreting them to have such meaning in our present that we can better determine our future.

As an Afro American history institution our co-focus is the interpretation of the past from the point of view of the Afro Americans who lived through it. And we must in all this be committed to being accurate--interpret the facts, yes; change the facts, no.

In 1971 the Board decided to locate a permanent headquarters for the Museum and begin a full-time program. At the same time, the African Meeting House, the oldest extant black church building in the country came onto the market. Built in 1806, the building had been purchased by an Orthodox Jewish Congregation at the beginning of this century when the black community began to move off Beacon Hill. Byron Rushing was hired as a consultant to help raise the \$40,000 purchase price. The Museum purchased the building in 1972 (half of the funds came from a National Historic Preservation grant.) In September of 1972, Mr. Rushing joined the Museum Staff as Executive Director--the Museum's first full-time person. During the past four years, he has overseen the architectural and engineering planning for the restoration of the African Meeting House and the program design and development of the Museum. During the summer of 1973 Mr. Rushing received a NEA Museum Professionals Fellowship and attended the seminar for Historic Administrators at Colonial Williamsburg. Furthermore, the decision was then made to establish two permanent centers for the Museum's programs--one in Boston's 19th century black neighborhood, Beacon Hill, and one in its present black community, Roxbury. The Beacon Hill center will be housed in the African Meeting House on Smith Court and the Roxbury center will be housed in the former manse of First Church, Roxbury, in John Eliot Square.

THE AFRICAN MEETING HOUSE

The African Meeting House on Smith Court off Joy Street is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior. The Meeting House is the oldest extant black

church building in the United States. Completed in 1806 as the First African Baptist Church, it was the home of the first black congregation in New England and of the earliest school for Afro American children in the area. The minister of the church was Thomas Paul (1773-1831), the founder of the movement for independent Negro Baptist churches in the United States. Thomas Paul's ability as a preacher earned him invitations throughout the country and wherever black Christians were attempting to organize their own churches. In 1808 he was instrumental in establishing the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City which later became the largest Baptist congregation in the world. The school, which was originally staffed by Harvard undergraduates and endowed by Abiel Smith, moved into the basement of the church in 1808. In 1834 the entire Smith endowment was used to construct a school building on property adjacent to the church. The Smith School functioned until 1855 when black parents achieved the integration of their children into the Boston public schools. This building still exists and is owned by the City of Boston.

As the only sizeable place in the City of Boston under the control of the black community, the church naturally became a center for their social and political activities throughout the nineteenth century. It was in this Meeting House that William Lloyd Garrison organized the New England Abolitionist Society in 1834 after he had been refused the use of Faneuil Hall. In the ensuing years many leading Abolitionists including Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, Henry Wilson and Anson Burlingame stood on its platform to denounce the injustices of slavery. It was in this building, also, that the famous black 54th Regiment of Boston was recruited during the Civil War. The church is, as well, a structure of architectural merit representative of Boston's simple, Federal style. Recent research by the Museum has revealed that the facade of the Meeting House is an Asher Benjamin design.

Although this building has been used as a synagogue since the early 1900's, its original appearance has remained essentially intact. After negotiations with the Congregation Anzell Lebariz, the Museum acquired the building in July 1972. The purchase price of \$40,000 was partially raised from a grant of \$20,000 from the U. S. Department of the Interior through the Massachusetts Historical Commission which was matched in private contributions.

The African Meeting House will be the physical center for a permanent "exhibition" of 18th and 19th century Afro American history in New England and the starting point and orientation center for our Black Heritage Trail. (The Roxbury Headquarters of the Museum will exhibit and interpret 20th century black history in New England and the history of Roxbury.)

Since 1965 the staff of the Museum has conducted walking tours of 18th and 19th century sites in Beacon Hill and downtown Boston on what has come to be called the Black Heritage Trail. We plan to revise and expand the Trail into self-contained interlocking walking tours of the several Boston neighborhoods in which Afro Americans have lived and which they have helped to build. We will begin with the "North Slope" of Beacon Hill and the 19th century black community--the century that saw the most radical changes in the lives and conditions of Africans in America.

The "exhibition" will have two parts. First, a multi-media orientation/presentation of the history of the black communities in greater Boston from 1638 to the present. The emphasis in the presentation will be on the 19th century and will (a) key into extant sites and physical objects from that period and (b) draw the connections between the 19th century events and present day conflicts and solutions. The visual material will include slides of portraits, petitions, and other documents, dress, tools, furnishings, homes, buildings, and streets. This presentation will be housed in the sanctuary of the African Meeting House. The audience will be

sitting in the very pews constructed by black laborers in 1806.

The orientation/presentation will be the starting point for the second part of the exhibition, a tour of the extant buildings and sites from a 19th century black neighborhood. A pamphlet containing a map and a brief description of each site will be available for those who wish to walk on their own. The Museum will provide guided tours for groups and for our membership. Central to this part of the exhibition will be the participation of adults and children in various activities common to their 19th century urban ancestors. This will include participation in many of the domestic and economic arts and crafts typical of a 19th century urban free black community and participation in simulations of some of the varied political, educational and economic controversies of that time.

The African Meeting House is the only non-private building in downtown Boston owned and operated by black people. When possible and when it does not conflict with our regular programming, the building on Smith Court will be available to Afro American groups that need a downtown meeting space. We can architecturally restore the Meeting House to its 19th century appearance, but we are positive that the spirits of our ancestors will not be satisfied until we restore their and our building into a 20th century Meeting House for black people.

The African Meeting House stands today as a unique and recognized landmark to the role of Afro-Americans in the development of this country and this state. It is a remarkable and fascinating comment on the relationship of black and white citizens of Massachusetts that the oldest extant black church building should be located in Boston--three blocks away from the State House. As a National Historic Landmark (out of the 1,100 Landmarks in the nation, only 12 relate to Afro American history) the Meeting House is recognized for its national historic significance. The restoration of the African Meeting House is of city, state and national importance.

BLACK HERITAGE TRAIL

Since 1965 the staff of the Museum has conducted walking tours of 18th and 19th century sites in Beacon Hill and downtown Boston on what has come to be called the Black Heritage Trail. We plan to revise and expand the Trail into self-contained interlocking walking tours of the several neighborhoods in Boston which Afro-Americans have lived in and helped to build. We have begun with the "North Slope" of Beacon Hill and the 19th century black community--the century that saw the most radical changes in the lives and conditions of Africans in America. The Museum provides guided tours for groups and for our members.

Including the African Meeting House, there are presently eight sites on the Heritage Trail on Beacon Hill directly related to the 19th century black community: The Smith School (the first black school in Boston), the Smith Court residencies, The Middleton House (built by a black veteran of the American Revolution), the Lewis Hayden House (Hayden was one of the leading black abolitionists in the country), Charles Street Meeting House (the home of Boston's first African Methodist Episcopal congregation), the George Grant House (Grant, a dentist, invented the golf tee), The John J. Smith House (Smith, a barber, was one of the first black state legislators in Massachusetts.) In addition there are another seven sites in downtown Boston and the North End.

THE ROXBURY HEADQUARTERS

The permanent center for the Museum's programs in Roxbury will be housed in a mid-18th century structure originally constructed as a manse for First Church, Roxbury. During the American Revolution the building was the headquarters for the General John Thomas and the patriot troops stationed south of Boston. After the war, it was again used as a residence until the 1930's when it was acquired by the City of Boston and "restored" for the Roxbury Historical Society. In the 1960's, the Society was unable to maintain the building and it fell into disuse, The Museum in cooperation with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Public Facilities

Department, and the Roxbury Action Program has put together a package for the rehabilitation and reuse of the building which will be known as the Roxbury Headquarters.

The building is located in John Eliot Square, across the street from the present First Church building and next to the Timilty Middle School. The Headquarters will be the center for the Museum's 20th century Afro American history and Roxbury neighborhood history.

The Museum's exhibits and other programs in Roxbury began in 1974. They are housed in rented and donated spaces in and around Dudley Station in Roxbury.

Although Afro-American history is emphasized in these exhibits and programs, their primary purpose is to demonstrate the value of the study of history, per se, to Afro American audiences. Beginning with an exhibit on Roxbury Puddingstone from which the name Roxbury is derived, this series has extended into exhibits and activities around several Roxbury neighborhoods. These exhibits not only explore the recent Afro-American history of these neighborhoods but also their 18th and 19th century development.

And this local history is set in wider contexts: Until its annexation in 1868, Roxbury was a municipality independent of Boston. It has explicit boundaries-- a geographic definition. One hundred years later the name "Roxbury" in Boston had come to mean the black community--it had acquired a primarily racial definition. Today Roxbury is predominately an English-speaking Afro American community; however, in the past ten years the percentage and number of Spanish-, French-, and Portugese-speaking persons of African descent has increased considerably. One hundred years ago Roxbury was predominately European-American. The black community at that time was located in Beacon Hill. Three hundred fifty years ago Roxbury was a Massachusetts "Indian" hunting ground and the only Africans in North America had been in Jamestown, Virginia for seven years.

The programs in Roxbury are based on the backgrounds, origins, and "immigration patterns" of the various Afro American groups in Boston. Although we are all of African descent, most of us reached Boston via various nations and states, classes and cultures of the Americas. The programs are also based on the history of the neighborhood, Roxbury, that Afro Americans now occupy. Our curriculum is a conjunction of community and neighborhood history.

During school hours, students from pre-schools, public and independent schools are able to attend programs conducted by Museum staff and consultants. Taking place both in and out of the Museum's space, the programs revolve around active participation and involvement with artifacts (anywhere from a Greek revival house and a Gothic revival tower to a mbira and a Trinidadian carnival costume.)

The activities are backed up by a multi-media library. Much of the material in this library was donated to the Museum by Circle, Inc., an indigenous economic development corporation, after it decided to dissolve its curriculum development division. The library houses an extensive collection of material on the Afro American experience for grades K through 12 with pre-school and teacher references. Films, filmstrips, and records are available to be rented to schools and community organizations. Films are regularly shown at the Center.

The Museum staff has begun to revitalize the Roxbury Historical Society. Together we have begun a number of efforts to preserve and conserve historic and symbolic buildings in Roxbury. Recently the Museum led a community drive to save the Roxbury Standpipe--a 133 foot-high gothic revival water tower at the top of Fort Hill. The Standpipe will be restored with \$120,000 in Federal and City funds. The staff has become the leading resource in the Boston area on Afro-American history in New England and local Roxbury history.

The Museum is conducting a program called "What Time Is This Station?" This program

is an experiment to expand the program and philosophy of the Museum into the neighborhood known as Dudley Station. This name is derived from a large mass transit station that is the dominant architectural feature of the neighborhood. The station constructed around 1901 has two levels, takes up half a city block, and serves as both an elevated train line and buses. The buses load on the street level or go up a ramp and load directly across from the "e1" train platform. Around the station has developed the largest retail sales and professional and civic center in Roxbury. In a two block radius from the station are located the district court house, police station, fire station, a post office, the offices of the Model Cities Administration, one High School and one elementary school, the site of the Boys' Club, four churches, two banks, and a host of professional offices and retail stores.

"What Time Is This Station?" attempts three things:

- (1) to present the history of this neighborhood to the residents and users of this area
- (2) to engage the residents and users in the rich variety of activities presently going on in the area; and to give them a behind-the-scenes look at many of these operations.
- (3) to aid the residents and users to develop a plan for the area based on their felt needs and informed by the history of the area and their new look at the area in time as well as space.

"What Time Is This Station?" adds the techniques of historical analysis and the examination of artifacts and sites to the day-to-day observations of the Dudley Station area resident and user. And is one more example of the Museum's programs to use Afro American history to connect past, present and future.

MUSEUM OF AFRO AMERICAN HISTORY, INC.
SMITH COURT
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02114
(617) 723-8863

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Adopted by the Corporation
April 2, 1973

(But in all probability the history museum offers more to the disadvantaged, the poor, the alienated of the inner city [than the art or science museum]. At least, it is the resources, the habits and the attitudes of the history museum that can be brought most immediately to bear on the problems facing the new urban community....the history museum offers more directly the gift of incalculable value, the gift of understanding and detachment about the situation of one's own existence. Probably most residents of the inner city have but the sketchiest ideas of how their neighborhoods came into being. Yet the techniques of oral history combined with the examination of the relevant documents and artifacts can provide a valuable exercise in historiography for such residents and at the same time vitally expand the dimensions of the history museum itself, moving it from the passive status of receptacle for mementoes of the past to the active role of discoverer of the past. The very act of compiling such neighborhood histories would itself be an historical act of great importance.)

(MUSEUMS: Their New Audience

A Report to the Department of Housing
and Urban Development by a Special
Committee of the American Associations
of Museums.

July, 1972)

The purpose of our Museum during all of its very young life has been to exhibit, preserve, and collect material pertaining to Afro American history. These notes are an elaboration on that stated purpose in order to establish (1) a framework within which to determine our successes and shortcomings and (2) some guidelines to formulate at least a five year program for the Museum.

Who is our audience, who are we trying to reach? Our primary audience should be people of African descent. Black people are the people whose needs will define our program. They are not our exclusive audience, however if our programs are not relevant to black people's needs in the areas we have chosen for our work, then no amount of "successes" with any other people can cover up our inadequacy. Our secondary audience is everyone else who has the interest to participate in our programs.

What is our geography? The founders of the Museum seemed to have had an idea of a national history museum. Soon this was realized to be unrealistic. At the other extreme, Boston is too small an area in which to confine our research. We see the Afro American communities in New England as our "geography" for study and the New England region as our primary area to serve. We gained national importance when we acquired the oldest extant church building built by Afro Americans for their own use. We will maintain national importance by developing into the major center for the study and exhibition of African American history in New England.

Our educational task is a program of Afro American history that focuses on two things: history and Afro American history. For the life and work of George Lewis Ruffin or the movement of the black community from the North End to Beacon Hill to be relevant to black people--especially young black people--the ideas and concepts of history, history-making, the past to define the future, must be made relevant to black people. We must demonstrate the value of studying history. And to do that we must take an open, fluid, view of history ourselves: History is (1) not only dusting off what our ancestors did a hundred years ago, it is also not forgetting what we did yesterday; and (2) it is taking these facts and making some meaning of them, of interpreting them to have such meaning in our present that we can better determine our future.

As an Afro American history institution our co-focus is the interpretation of the past from the point of view of the Afro Americans who lived through it. And we must in all this be committed to being accurate--interpret the facts, yes; change the facts, no.

Given all that, how should we exhibit, preserve, and collect Afro American history material? Our programs in the next five years:

A LIVING HISTORY CENTER. Although Afro American history would be emphasized at the Center, the purpose of the Center will be to

Museum of Afro American History
Program Statement-----2

demonstrate the value, relevance, and enjoyment of history, per se. We have begun a working relationship with the Roxbury Historical Society. Together we will sponsor the Living History Center. We will explore both the history of the people who are now the residents of Roxbury and the history of the neighborhood Roxbury from the time it was first settled by the Massachusetts Indians. We will use the "touch and do" and participatory techniques used in children's zoos, science museums, and most recently developed at the Museum of Natural History's People Center. The participants at the Center will be able to do such things as: learn how to conduct oral interviews and compile oral histories of their friends, parents, neighbors, older people in the community; learn how to conduct an archaeological dig for historical artifacts in an urban back yard or vacant lot; quarry Roxbury puddingstone; engage in "exhibits" showing how some present event was effected by a past event; see a newspaper as one form of historical writing and participate in reporting and putting a newspaper together; do candle and ice cream making, breadbaking, potting and brick making, hair braiding, and many other chores and crafts and jobs that our ancestors had to do to live and survive. The Center will be open daily and housed in Roxbury (hopefully at the city-owned Dillaway-Thomas House in John Eliot Square) service the local schools and have programs for adults.

THE BLACK HERITAGE TRAIL. The permanent exhibit at the African Meeting House on Smith Court will be a multi-media presentation of the history of the Afro American communities in greater Boston from 1638 to the present. This exhibit will include a computerized slide presentation using at least five simultaneous projections along with recorded music and narration and a few three dimensional exhibits (the concept is based on "Cityrama" at the Museum of the City of New York). It will be the starting point for a tour of the Black Heritage Trail. We will publish a map and brief descriptions of the sites on the trail--a walking tour from downtown Boston and Beacon Hill to the North End. The Museum will also provide guided tours for groups and for members. The identification of additional monuments, buildings, and sites will continue. The original trail will be enriched through further research and new trails will be designed to follow the development of the Afro American communities in Boston from the South End to Mattapan and in Cambridge, New Bedford, and the other urban centers of New England. Eventually an Afro American history guidebook to New England will be published. Throughout all of these presentations the emphasis will be on the cultural history of the black community--including not only the history of its politics and economics, but also of its religion, kinship and domestic structures, arts and crafts.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITS. We will continue to develop temporary exhibits that will be housed at schools, libraries, churches and organizations throughout the New England region.

Museum of Afro American History
Program Statement-----3

THE JUNIOR CURATOR PROGRAM. The Junior Curators will be revised and expanded into the youth group for the Museum. In addition to working along with the professional staff of the Museum on a volunteer basis and, hopefully, for credit from their schools, the older junior curators will be hired to work as guides on the Heritage Trails, and supervise young people at the Living History Center.

ARCHIVES. Some of the finest collections of Afro American material in the country belong to institutions in Boston and Cambridge. It is not sensible for us to attempt to duplicate these collections at the Museum. When material in these collections would aid our exhibiting it could be borrowed or reproduced. However there is a large area of Afro Americana that few people are collecting: family papers. While white institutions are quietly collecting the papers of "famous" black people, the material that will tell our grandchildren how our average grandparents lived is steadily being destroyed. Photographs, letters, bibles, newsclippings, receipts-- this type of archival material should form the nucleus of the Museum's two dimensional collection. The papers of grass-roots, self-help community organizations are in similar danger.

The Museum's archives cannot be limited to written material; it must also develop a tape library of oral histories of black people who have lived and worked in New England. The written and oral history preserved in the archives will be a resource for all the other programs of the Museum.

The archives will actively collect geneological material on black families in New England, again, both through oral and written sources. And the indexing of the collection will be designed to aid geneological researchers.

Almost all of this material is free for the asking if we can get it before it is thrown away (or before the subject dies or has a stroke) and if we can offer a safe repository for the material. Salvaging this material just to protect it from destruction is an important role for the Museum. Ten years from now we may decide that certain material we hold would more usefully be housed in some other institution. However if that material is not saved today, such a decision will be moot in the future.

Along with Suffolk University we will continue building our AFRO AMERICAN LITERATURE COLLECTION with an emphasis on the oral histories and the papers of New England black authors.

ACQUISITIONS. We will budget an annual amount of money for the acquisition of mainly three dimensional material (e.g. the Museum does not own a pair of shackles!) and items to fill in gaps in our permanent exhibit and for use at the Living History Center.

CLEARING HOUSE. From the vantage point of the only institution in New England concerned solely with black history we must stay aware of the services we might provide historical researchers and the public. We plan to:

- (1) Organize and conduct a series of seminars on the problems of researching black history;
- (2) Create a union catalog of Afro American material in the collections of New England institutions; and,
- (3) Produce a calendar of events in New England relating to black history and culture.

OUR SPACE ON BEACON HILL. The African Meeting House is the only non-private building in downtown Boston owned and operated by black people. When possible and when it does not conflict with our regular programming, the building on Smith Court will be available to Afro American groups that need a downtown meeting space. We can architecturally restore the Meeting House to its 19th century appearance, but we are positive that the spirits of our ancestors will not be satisfied until we restore their and our building into a 20th century Meeting House for black people.

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