



About Historic Philadelphia, Inc.

Historic Philadelphia, Inc. (HPI) was founded in 1994 by former Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, then Philadelphia's mayor, and charged with marketing, promoting, and providing programming for Philadelphia's Historic District, with the ultimate goal of enhancing the experience of both area residents and out-of-town visitors. A nonprofit organization, HPI enhances the visitor experience and helps strengthen Philadelphia's tourism industry through interpretation and interaction, making our nation's history relevant and real. Historic Philadelphia, Inc.'s programs include the Betsy Ross House, Once Upon A Nation storytelling and Adventure Tours, Franklin Square, and the Lights of Liberty.

From its inception, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. has managed the **Betsy Ross House**. HPI oversees all aspects of the museum operations at the historical site which hosts more than 300,000 visitors each year, making it the third most visited historic attraction in the city. The Betsy Ross House, 239 Arch Street, has been open to the public as a museum and memorial since 1898 when it was funded by the privately organized American Flag House and Betsy Ross Memorial Association. Atwater Kent, who funded early 20th century renovations and purchased adjacent properties that now serve as the House's courtyard, donated the property to the City of Philadelphia in 1941. Today, a visit to the Betsy Ross House includes courtyard attractions and performances, a premier audio guide of the historic home, renovated rooms and exhibitions, and new rotating exhibits for visitors of all ages.

As the offerings changed throughout Philadelphia's Historic District with the additions of the Independence Visitor Center, National Constitution Center, and new Liberty Bell Center, so did the need for a way to navigate the rich treasures there. In 2005, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. and Governor Rendell launched a major new heritage initiative called **Once Upon A Nation**. This project aimed to enhance and expand heritage tourism on a regional scale by leveraging Greater Philadelphia's historic people, places, and events to develop a unique "living history" experience for area residents and visitors alike. Once Upon A Nation aspires to have people interact with history in such a way that they will find value and inspiration in its message within their own lives.

- During the 2005 season, three major components of Once Upon A Nation were created:
 - 1) **Storytelling and Colonial interpretation** from trained actors and storytellers throughout Philadelphia's Historic District, bringing history to life right where it happened; and
 - 2) **Heritage "Adventure Tours,"** where historic interpreters lead visitors on immersive walking tours, traveling back in time to interact with important characters from America's past.
 - 3) **The Benstutute**, where storytellers and History Makers are trained in the art of storytelling, Philadelphia and American history, and in customer service. Those enrolled undergo over 100 hours of studying, training, and rehearsing conducted by faculty and leaders from leading colleges and universities, historic sites, and theatrical venues.
- In 2006, HPI raised \$6.5 million for the renovation of **Franklin Square**, one of William Penn's original five squares just steps away from the Liberty Bell effectively extending the Mall experience. Award-winning Franklin Square is an outdoor amusement oasis located in the heart of Historic Philadelphia, featuring Philly Mini Golf, a restored vintage marble fountain, playgrounds, and the *Philadelphia Park* Liberty Carousel. After a day of experiencing the treasures of Philadelphia's history, putt through some

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of the city's most famous icons, take a ride on hometown racehorse heroes Afleet Alex or Smarty Jones aboard the carousel, or enjoy a rest next to the refreshing fountain. Summertime activities include a Once Upon A Nation storyteller and free holiday activities for children and families. Awarded Best of Philly® two times by *Philadelphia Magazine* and one of the top ten playgrounds in the United States by *Dream On Travel*.

- In 2007, Once Upon A Nation expanded programming to a second National Park – **Valley Forge National Historical Park**. The collaboration included storytelling and Adventure Tours in the Park during the spring, summer, and fall.
 - In 2008, in partnership with Penguin and under the leadership of Editor Sandy Mackenzie Lloyd, HPI created an anthology of stories: **Patriots, Pirates, Heroes, & Spies: Stories from Historic Philadelphia**. Comprised of twenty favorite stories from the renowned Once Upon A Nation Storytelling Benches, this book enables visitors to take these unique stories of Philadelphia's history home with them. That same year, the **Lights of Liberty Show** was brought under the Historic Philadelphia, Inc. umbrella, where it was originally created before its debut in 1999. Also in 2008, the Betsy Ross House re-launched the **Flag Day Celebration**, with a street fair, exhibition of flags through the years, and the world's largest Post-It Note flag. The Flag Day Celebration continues annually in June.
 - In 2009, Historic Philadelphia enhanced the food concessions at Franklin Square with **SquareBurger**, a permanent food operation selling specialty burgers, shakes, and salads to much acclaim. The facility is operated by Starr Restaurants. That same year, HPI launched an annual fundraising event, **An Evening in Franklin Square**, to support the Square's operations. Also added in 2009 was a tribute to Abraham Lincoln's 200th Birthday with a special storytelling route for the Once Upon A Nation Storytelling Benches: *Stories from the Underground Railroad*. At Valley Forge NHP, children 8 and up could, for the first time, enjoy the brand new *Valley Forge Secrets & Spies*, with a fun adventure in 18th-century espionage.
 - In 2010, HPI began a \$10 million complete re-imagining of the Lights of Liberty Show and remodeled **Historic Philadelphia Center**. The Center is a new focal point of Independence Mall, and is the headquarters for all of Historic Philadelphia's programs including the box office, providing tickets for Once Upon A Nation tours and performances, the new Lights of Liberty indoor and upcoming outdoor shows, as well as the nearby Betsy Ross House and Franklin Square. The Center, across the street from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, features the PECO Theater, serves as the departure point for all Once Upon A Nation tours, and offers expanded retail operations operated by Aramark.
- The Lights of Liberty** experience was redesigned with digital 3-D technology, creating a new business model and the idea of creating two separate shows: a seasonal nighttime outdoor and separate year-round indoor attraction housed at the remodeled Historic Philadelphia Center. The 15-minute, 3-D film surrounds the audience in the new customized state-of-the-art PECO Theater. *Liberty 360* debuted September 29, 2010. Also in 2010, Historic Philadelphia, Inc. began offering portions of the **Benstitute's** history and customer service training to outside organizations.
- For 2011, the full season of tours and attractions will run April – October, with Once Upon A Nation storytelling and tour programs concentrated between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Year-round attractions *Liberty 360* and the Betsy Ross House complement the full array of offerings. Franklin Square celebrates its 5th birthday all season long, highlighted by the *Civil War Road Show* July 1-4, 2011. And at Valley Forge, the new free program *Call to Arms: 1778!* will recruit young people into the Continental Army in a fun and spirited Military Muster at Varnum's Quarters.
 - Currently, HPI is planning for an all-new digital outdoor show where visitors will experience the story of our nation's birth told as never before. The **New Lights of Liberty Show** will combine the majestic architectural treasures of Independence National Historical Park with cutting-edge technology for a breathtaking nighttime walk through our nation's past.

Throughout its existence, **Historic Philadelphia, Inc.** has and will continue to enhance the visitor experience and help strengthen Philadelphia's tourism industry through interpretation and interaction, making our nation's history relevant and real. For further information, visit www.historicphiladelphia.org or call 215-629-4026. Follow HPI at twitter.com/HistoricPhilly or <http://tinyurl.com/facebkHPI>.