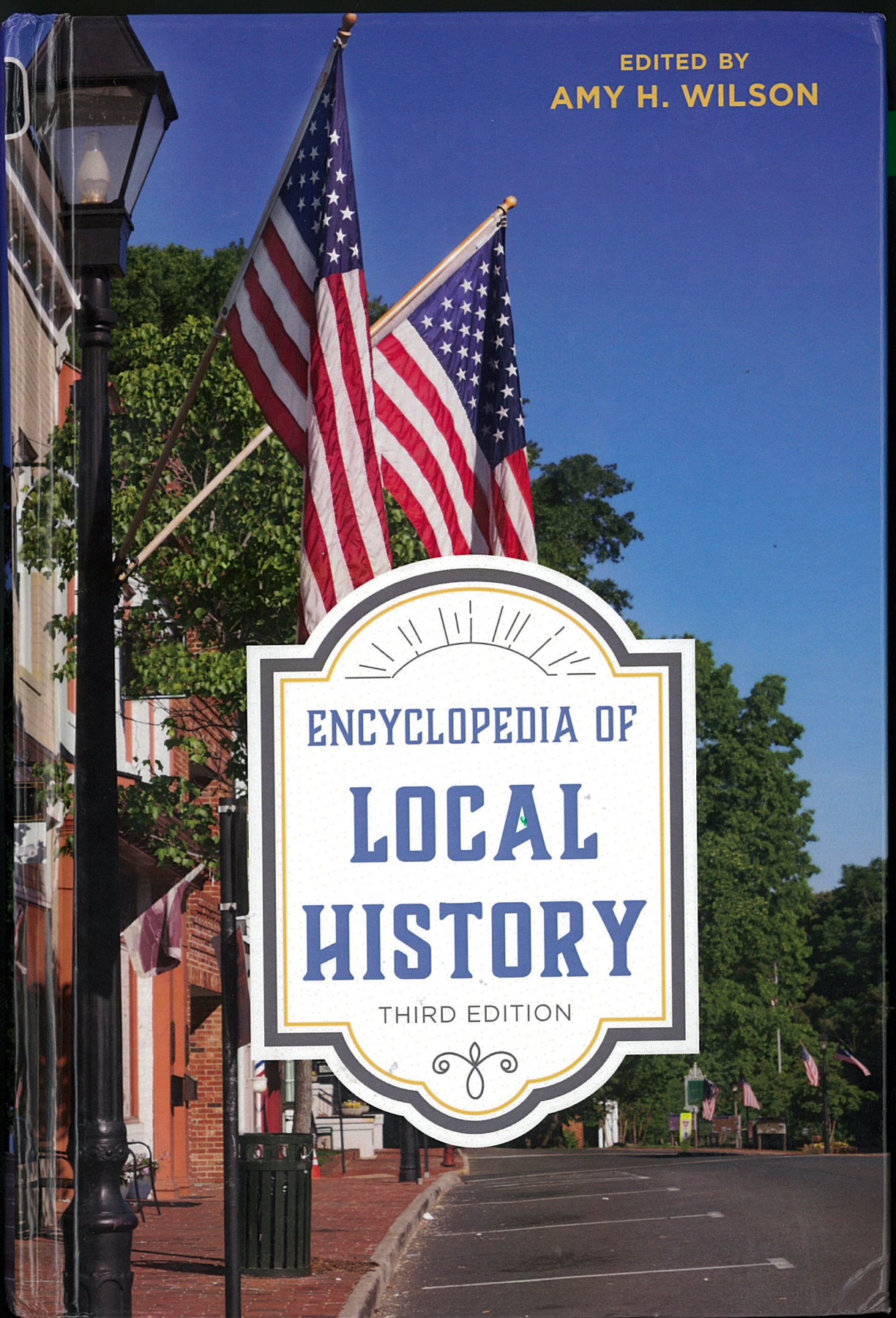


EDITED BY
AMY H. WILSON



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF
**LOCAL
HISTORY**

THIRD EDITION



usually for purposes of advertising. Early broadsides were small and were sometimes referred to as handbills; today they are generally called posters.

building bridges through local history. How do local history organizations build bridges in their communities? How can they contribute so that they are seen as not just a nicety but a necessity? How can they move from just surviving to thriving? Across the nation, local history organizations are striving to answer such questions. There are no easy answers, no one template to take off the shelf.

One effective way is for local history organizations to become less insular and to partner with one another and with professional associations and their own communities to answer such questions. Many organizations are recognizing the history they research and present is not “my” history but “our” history. To be sure, there are differences among us in race, gender, social class, economic status, ethnicity, religion, age, or other factors, so our history is indeed different, but living in the same historic place or town, state or nation, we still have a shared history—a history that can bind us together and help us understand one another more fully. Local history can help us empathize with those different from us and also appreciate how we are all similar. By becoming intentionally engaged in this more inclusive history, organizations are being led to become more engaged in public outreach and in the active preservation of a more diverse history, instead of being just a passive recipient of it. They are finding themselves changing their public pro-

grams, school programs, exhibits, and community communications—on site, off site, and online. They are also seeing that the public, key decision makers, and funders are responding with enhanced support.

The second effective way for local history organizations to build bridges and to thrive is to research, interpret, and promote a more holistic history. This means that they research and interpret the positive aspects of the past, to be sure, but combine them with the negative and the tragic. Rather than intentionally “disremembering” negative things about the past and lapsing into a nostalgia that is blind to prejudice, violence, or exploitation, they shed light on them. They help us understand how things happened and why and what their effects were. They help see good people doing bad things, or good people caught up in a bad system, or remaining quiet and doing nothing. They show good people standing up and speaking out, and not always rewarded. By combining these elements they create tension. They unsettle. They tell a richer, more robust story that injects contradictions, nuance, and complexity into our heritage. Like a good playwright, they create experiences that enhance our lives. By such efforts, these local history organizations are helping individuals and communities to feel that their heritage too has relevance and meaning.

In looking back over his years of writing, novelist William Faulkner, who certainly knew tragedy, said that he wrote (and I’m paraphrasing) in order to “uplift our hearts.” That’s a simple phrase, but spot on. He’s not referring to just my heart or your heart, but to

our hearts. We “uplift our hearts” by trying to tell the truth, warts and all, about our past. If we just look at one side of history—only at the good or the bad, or only at the elite or the oppressed—we don’t uplift our hearts. We are in this life together, and the people of the past were no different. To deny either the evil aspects of history or its good aspects is to defraud our past.

Though we may hear voices to the contrary, I think the public wants history organizations to present this more complete story of the past. Like a good novelist, we need to find ways to tell it. And like a good marketer, find ways to promote it. We should not assume that we know what constitutes “good history” and force it down the public’s throat like a health drink. Instead, we need to ask: How can we find ways for people to hear what we say so that bridges may be built and minds opened?

A well-told story is often the way to do this. And for the story to be heard, the person must be prompted to care—to care about the people in the story and to feel connected to them. Now that story may be told by way of text, artifacts, photographs, documents, video, or computer animations, and even places and landscapes may tell a story; and if it is well told, the public will respond and want to see that that history is preserved and told. By such endeavors, we can change the perception that history is seen as something that happened to somebody else somewhere else, to something that happened to me. And we can build an understanding of how that connects us to others, even to those “different” from us. We are not islands. We can help history be seen as some-

thing not peripheral or extraneous, but rather central to the understanding of who we are as individuals, as a community, as a nation, or as human beings.

Why is that important? Because as Martin Luther King Jr. is said to have declared, “He who controls my mind controls my body. He who controls my history controls my mind.” With this in mind, how can history museums reach out and build bridges that both connect past, present, and future and connect people of different backgrounds and experiences? To answer that question, history organizations must strategically plan for and recruit leadership among their board, staff, and donors who share this larger vision. This requires leadership that is fearless and that seeks a creative tension between change and continuity in order to promote growth. Too often, historical organizations get so caught in operations that they neglect the care and feeding of good leadership, and do not do the careful planning, so the building of bridges suffers.

For historical organizations to nurture leadership, they need to strive to be seen as places that matter, places where people will feel safe and respected—challenged to be sure, but respected. They become places where the history of people of diverse backgrounds is preserved and featured in engaging exhibits and programs, on site and online. They are places where different components of the public—different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, immigrant status (whether native born or recent arrival)—may feel that their history is respected, not shut down. Safe places where community leaders, scholars,

educators, preservationists, activists, and citizens of differing points of views can come together, discuss issues, get to know one another, break stereotypes, and devise positive solutions. If used proactively, local history may be used both to better understand the past and to chart a course for the future that moves beyond polarization. Such a move is desperately needed in the nation today. If done strategically, this process can attract support of different kinds, including funding.

In Dolores Hayden's excellent book, *Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, she tells the story of place-based work in Los Angeles that nurtures leadership and community engagement by lifting up the stories of common people who contributed to the history of the city through their community work. A specific example is the project to recognize publicly the life and service of Biddy Mason, an African American midwife who birthed hundreds of children of different ethnicities and all social classes in nineteenth-century Los Angeles. As an enslaved woman from Mississippi, she trekked with her owner in 1851 in a wagon train to Los Angeles, where she won her freedom in court and made her mark as a highly respected midwife, nurse, mother, landowner, and community and church leader. Among her sayings told from one generation to another was: "If you hold your hand closed, nothing good can come in. The open hand is blessed, for it gives in abundance, even as it receives." In the larger history of Los Angeles, she had been more or less forgotten, and her homestead had become a parking lot.

To remedy this, Hayden, then an urban historian and architect at the University of California—Los Angeles (UCLA), worked with the city government and with Mason's descendants and her church, and brought together scholars from UCLA, community historians, the California Afro-American History Museum, artists, and others. They designed and produced a remarkable set of museum exhibits, educational materials, and public memorials to Mason, including a pocket park named after her and a display along an eighty-one-foot wall that interweaves her life within the timeline of Los Angeles and features photographs, maps, and documents that personalize her history and engage the viewer. Such efforts have in turn inspired similar endeavors in the city.

The point is that there are thousands of Biddy Masons across the nation, whose lives deserve to be remembered and lifted up. When members of under-recognized communities can recognize themselves in public memorials and in their local history institution, a place most Americans view as a voice of authority (see Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *Presence of the Past* [1998]), this enhances a sense of belonging. Further, the recognition of such significant figures and events can offer opportunities to enrich local history by adding contradictions, complexity and multidimensional realities to it.

By seeing history as a way to build bridges, we will open up our museums and invite people to contribute their stories about historical places, events, and activities, which could be used for what is now being called "public cura-

tion." Museum professionals and historians Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski have teamed up and ably presented this process in their book of essays and interviews, entitled *Letting Go: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. In this "public curation" process, as Filene explains, professional curators or historians are not pushed aside, but rather develop partnerships with the public. Such partnerships call for new skills from historians and a willingness to share authority yet still maintain their professional standards. The result can be a more informed selection of what warrants preservation and why, as well as a richer, more nuanced historical narrative—one that better resonates with diverse audiences, for they can see and hear themselves more clearly. This narrative has the curatorial voice, to be sure, but also that of the people themselves, thereby enhancing the public reckoning of the history being preserved and interpreted.

Historic sites too can become places for "public curation," or "public dialogue," places where people whose ancestors were once entrapped by prejudice and locked in conflict and/or accommodation with one another can come together and discuss how their shared, albeit different, histories have shaped their lives and how they hope to build on the past to create a brighter future. Such sites may be historical plantations, frontier settlements contested by Native Americans, battlefields, industrial workplaces, or even households where both the homeowners and domestic servants lived. Almost all of these sites have descendants, and

surveys have shown that visitors want to learn about not just the people of the past, but of today, and the descendants' different points of view make for a more personal, complex, and nuanced story. For example, Drayton Hall in South Carolina has videotaped oral histories with a range of descendants of its former enslaved and slave-owner residents and featured them in tours, conferences, schools, colleges, and public television, in order to add deeply personal dimensions to site interpretation. Partnering with others, it has produced public programs at the local, state, and national levels with personal participation of these descendants, white and black. Middleton Place, Montpelier, Somerset Place, Sotterley, and many other sites have organized family reunions for descendants, white and black together. At Cliveden in Philadelphia, descendants even contributed to the writing of a play dealing with slavery and freedom. Fostering such relationships can also enhance support for the organization not only through the building of goodwill, but also through funding and donation of artifacts, documents, or photographs for collections.

For all of these programs with descendants, the immediate goal has been the development of dialogue, not the finalization of reconciliation or forgiveness since that is a long and deeply personal process. Instead, the organizations have created safe places so that can happen, understanding that everyone is at different places in their journey. One benefit is that descendants themselves learn from one another, both cognitively and experientially. What is required is respect for one another and differing

points of view. The main thing is the descendants' participation, so the public can hear from them. The organization should also respect the silences, the things a person wishes not to discuss. Also, it is critical that descendants know that the historical organization will genuinely support their participation and it will not lead to an embarrassing "gotcha" moment. In such ways, site interpretation may be opened up and dialogue encouraged so that not just museum professionals or historians are telling the stories, but also the real people whose ancestors' history is fraught with the good and the bad of our past and whose presence connects us to that history in ways that words alone cannot.

Another question important to the practice of local history is how to enhance the relationship between a historical organization and the local communities that have been the source for the history in its archives, exhibits, or programs. Too often the practice has been for the organization to do research in a community, identify and remove historical resources (documents, artifacts, photographs, oral histories, or even buildings) from that community, preserve them in their collections or archives, use them in an exhibit or book, and return little to nothing to that community. The community members hardly benefit, and the appreciation for that community's history is not lifted up for all the more people to respect. So a key question for historical organizations, when they are seeking local historical resources, is how will that partnership work? How might the community benefit by having its historical

resources used so that heritage tourism, historic preservation, or school curricula and teacher training may be enhanced? One answer is for the historical organization to interweave into its exhibits, archives, or programs suggestions that encourage its audience to interact with the community at large and to include planning and implementation of such in the initial project and funding proposals.

Mark Twain once declared, "Travel is the enemy of prejudice," and I envision historical organizations producing exhibits and programs and then enabling their public to visit—online, in person, or by virtual reality—those communities, to meet their people, visit their historical places and neighborhoods, go to their churches or restaurants or community centers, and to learn not just cognitively but experientially. In so doing, the organization will deepen its public's connection with the papers read in the archives or with the history featured in the exhibit or program, and thereby help realize Mark Twain's dictum. The historical organization will also help that community to become less isolated and more connected to the larger story of our nation and to receive funding from tourism, perhaps for education and community improvements. Partnerships of this kind can lift one another's boats, a concept that can make funding proposals more attractive.

An ongoing question for local historical organizations is and will continue to be how to find innovative and effective ways to become a part of the lives of young people, so that they too feel connected to the continuum of history. One response, as Step-

hanie Meeks, president of the *National Trust for Historic Preservation, has explained, is to find ways to reach out to the young and connect to "where they are." They are, as she said, "digital natives." Before asking questions to adults or learning from books, they first turn to the Internet or social media. So we need to (and I think we will) find ways to translate both what we are doing and why into ways that reach them digitally. Virtual reality, videogames, animated films, holograms, augmented reality, avatars, or 3-D printing are all ways by which an organization today may engage the young. One may rest assured that in the future, such will be expanded upon in ways that we today can hardly imagine. In light of funders' increasing appreciation of both technology and the need to reach young audiences, funders will be looking for such ways of engagement.

As we strive to enhance the public reckoning of history, we must always be appreciative of one thing: surprise. All of us—of whatever age, color, gender, or ethnicity—need to be open to surprise. We need to be prepared for surprise, and not be afraid. For if history teaches us anything, it is that the future will bring us surprise.

Whether we be staff, volunteers, or board members, what is the one ingredient needed for success in local history? Courage. Because if we are to mainstream an appreciation for history into the American ethos, we need to build bridges. For that to occur, we need courage and not cynicism, whose call is all too easy to heed. Cynicism can convince us that by not trying, we are being "realistic." As good bridge-

builders know, a bridge, to be effective, cannot serve just one side of a divide. It cannot serve just one segment of the public. Our communities have diverse "publics" to connect, and often those "publics" may not agree or even like one another. And the support of a key staff or board member or donor may not be there to start off with. Also, the other side of a bridge may be just that, the "other side," and it may be seen only dimly or misperceived, and may generate fear of conflict or rejection. Thus the need for us, as individuals and as organizations, to have courage and to put cynicism aside.

To be effective bridge-builders, we need to work together and ameliorate our "disremembering." We need to push one another beyond our comfort zones, whatever our station in the profession or in the public, and create expanding circles that engage people in the research, preservation, and interpretation of history, including its tragic moments, in order to, as William Faulkner said, "uplift our hearts." If we can find ways to do that, we will have secured a strong foundation for local history for the future.

This essay is drawn partly from a paper presented at the symposium, "The Future of the African American Past," sponsored by the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the American Historical Association.

GEORGE W. McDANIEL
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See censorship; digital history; diversity and inclusion in museums; house museums; house museums in the twenty-first century; LGBT history, in-

terpreting; local historical societies and core purpose; museum theaters; museums, public value of; radical trust and voice of authority; relevance; slavery interpretation at museums and historic sites; values of history.

Buildings of the United States (BUS).

The *Buildings of the United States* published by the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH at www.sah.org) is a growing series of sixty volumes which, when completed, will provide a comprehensive, scholarly overview of and guide to the architectural heritage of the United States. These volumes roughly correspond to the states although in some cases they are further divided by region or by city. For instance, the cities of Boston, Pittsburgh, and Savannah merit their own volume distinct from the rest of their respective states, and Pennsylvania is divided into two volumes with the first covering eastern Pennsylvania and Philadelphia and the second western Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh. Twenty-one have been published.

The BUS series provides a more comprehensive, focused, scholarly, and up-to-date guide to the architectural heritage of the United States from pre-settlement days to the present than is found in the American Guide Series, which was produced by the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration between 1935 and 1943. Each volume is written by a team of leading local and national scholars and is generously illustrated with photographs and maps. Every volume covers a complete range of structures that shape the built environment of the state or city

including government buildings, grand residences, agricultural structures, commercial buildings, factories, and parks. Attention is paid to both the high-style and *vernacular architecture that is important, representative of a specific style or type of building, or is of historical or architectural interest. These comprehensive guides are valuable reference resources both for the professional (the architectural historian, the preservationist, etc.) and for the general or traveling public. They are useful in elementary and secondary school classrooms, to community planners and historians, and to the tourist industry.

The information contained in these volumes is becoming even more valuable and accessible with the development of SAH Archipedia, an innovative comprehensive, authoritative, and media-rich online database of American architecture jointly developed by SAH and the University of Virginia Press with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This project brings together the entire publication program of the Society of Architectural Historians including SAHARA, the digital image archive developed in collaboration with Artstor, into a unified digital resource. Records are based on entries from the published volumes of the Buildings of the United States series and include building histories, photographs, *maps, and essays. SAH Archipedia, which currently contains records for 13,000 buildings, is available to SAH members and institutional subscribers. The open access counterpart, SAH Archipedia Classic Buildings, which will include records for one hundred most representative buildings in each state,

is available to the public at <http://sah.archipedia.org>.

MARGARET N. WEBSTER
INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

See architectural history.

built environment. The term "built environment" refers to the shape, pattern, function, and appearance of our present surroundings that result from human intervention. The term is often used in opposition to the term *natural environment*. However, the built environment includes designed *landscapes and plantings. The term came into common usage in the 1950s among city and regional planners and was adopted by the *historic preservation community to indicate the broadest possible interpretation of the term *cultural resources*.

W. BROWN MORTON III
INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL
CONSERVATOR

Bulgarians in North America, sources for. See Appendix A.

Bureau of Land Management. See archaeology; maps and atlases.

Bureau of Reclamation. Congress established the Bureau of Reclamation within the Department of the Interior in 1902 with the strong support of President Theodore Roosevelt. The Bureau of Reclamation's charge was development of water resources in the arid West. Reclamation developed over 180 water projects for irrigation, hydroelectric generation, and municipal and industrial uses. Other significant benefits

of Reclamation projects include recreation and flood control.

Reclamation's records include correspondence, manuscript and printed reports, drawings and maps, films, videos, and photographs. Reclamation's original objective was to create new irrigated farms for families in the arid West. Because of that objective, Reclamation was especially interested in the communities and living conditions on and around its projects. Reclamation's early records, especially the photographs, document their efforts. In addition, there are early Reclamation photographs of Western *national parks and projects in the South where swamp and overflow lands were reclaimed.

Reclamation's records and photographs are found in several locations. Older, historic records of Reclamation have been transferred to the *National Archives and Records Administration. The older photographs are in the still-picture collection of the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. Many of those older images are duplicated in the National Archives holdings in Denver, which is the location of the vast majority of Reclamation's written, printed, and image collections that have been transferred permanently to the National Archives and Records Administration. More current records are retained in Reclamation's offices: Washington, D.C.; Denver; regional offices in Salt Lake City; Sacramento; Billings; Boise; and Boulder City, Nevada; and in over twenty area offices in the West.

Burned-Over District. The Burned-Over District is a portion of central



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—**Gretchen Sullivan Sorin**, director and distinguished service professor, Cooperstown Graduate Program

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