



ABOVE Violet Oakley, Bain News Service, Publisher/Retrieved from the Library of Congress

Violet Oakley's Capitol Murals Turn 100

In January 1919, trailblazing artist Violet Oakley completed work on a series of three murals for the Pennsylvania State House's Senate Chamber and Supreme Court in Harrisburg—*Unity and The Creation and Preservation of the Union*, *The Little Sanctuary in the Wilderness*, and *The Slave Ship Ransomed*. One hundred years later and about 100 miles away in Philadelphia, a project to conserve Oakley's original sketches and studies for the murals was completed at CCAHA. The treatment was done in preparation for the centennial exhibit *Picturing a More Perfect Union: Violet Oakley's Mural Studies for the Pennsylvania Senate Chamber, 1911-1919*, which opened at the State Museum of Pennsylvania in November 2019 and runs through April, 26, 2020.

Though the road to commercial success was uncertain for Oakley, the path to identifying her talents was a direct one. She was born in 1874 in Jersey City, New Jersey, into an extended family that included 23 artists. Her grandfathers on both sides of the family were painters and members of the prestigious National Academy of Design. When Oakley's family moved to New York City, her natural gifts were further developed at the Art Students League of New York, where she studied painting with James Carroll Beckwith and Irving R. Wiles.

After Violet's father, Arthur Oakley, lost his job on Wall Street during the economic panic of 1893, his mental health rapidly declined, and he was institutionalized. The Oakley family moved to Philadelphia to seek treatment, and Violet worked as an illustrator to help earn money. In Philadelphia, she started

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

A Decade of Collaboration with Moravian Archives

Frequent hurricanes, high humidity, and the swarming presence of insects and other pests take an inevitable toll on paper collections. In the Caribbean islands of the Eastern West Indies, the 18th and 19th century records of the Moravian Church were relentlessly buffeted by the extremes of the tropical environment. Dating back to the first arrival of the Moravians on the islands in 1732, the records they kept contained detailed and unique information on the free and enslaved people of color in the region. But because of their condition, the information remained inaccessible—with most of the records too fragile to be digitized or exhibited.

Manuscript volumes from the *Eastern West Indies Records Preservation and Digitization Project* of the Moravian Archives began arriving at CCAHA for treatment in 2018. Senior Conservation Assistant Jillian Wilcox recalls that the volume she worked on contained pages that "were so, so brittle." Thousands of broken, loose fragments were scattered throughout the volume. Along with other members of the team

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

- 2 LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- 3 QUESTIONS FOR JESSICA SILVERMAN
- 5 RHSP & DHPSNY GROWTH & OUTCOMES
- 8 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BOARD

Nancy Ash / Philadelphia Museum of Art
Stewart Cades / Overseas Strategic Consulting, Ltd.
Beth Cole / Williams Coker Berezofsky
Walter Crimm / Walt Crimm Associates
Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa / Harry Ransom Center,
University of Texas at Austin
Alison Gilchrest / Institute for the Preservation
of Cultural Heritage
Derek Jones / Atelier Art Services and Storage
Bruce Katsiff / James A. Michener Art Museum (retired)
Larry Massaro / Vanguard (retired)
Steven Miller / Morris Museum
(Executive Director emeritus)
Debra Hess Norris / University of Delaware
Stephen Perloff / The Photo Review and
The Photograph Collector
Sandra Phoenix / HBCU Library Alliance
Michele Stricker / New Jersey State Library
Page Talbott / Talbott Exhibits and Planning

STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE

Edie Tanis Brenna / Records and Client
Services Administrator
Aja Davis / Manager of Administration & Operations
Michelle Eisenberg / Deputy Director
Jason Henn / Manager of Marketing & External Relations
Laura Hartz Stanton / Executive Director
Lee A. Price / Director of Development
Adrianna Province / Registrar

PRESERVATION SERVICES

Stephanie Bailey / Education Program Manager
& Preservation Consultant
Liyah Desher / Preservation Services Assistant
Dyani Feige / Director of Preservation Services
Samantha Forsko / Preservation Specialist

CONSERVATORS & TECHNICIANS

Jungohk (Theresa) Cho / Senior Book Conservator
Amber Hares / Book Conservator
Heather Hendry / Senior Paper Conservator
Richard Homer / Senior Book Conservator
Chloe Houseman / Paper Conservator
Barbara Lemmen / Senior Photograph Conservator
Zach Long / Photograph Conservator
Jessica Silverman / Director of Conservation
Anna Yates Krain / Senior Conservation Assistant
Jilliann Wilcox / Senior Conservation Assistant

FELLOWS

Juliet Baines / Mellon Fellow
Benjamin Kirschner / NEA Fellow
Emma Ziraldo / NEH Fellow

HOUSING & FRAMING SERVICES

Zac Dell'Orto / Manager of Housing & Framing
Benjamin Iluzada / Housing Technician

IMAGING SERVICES

Maggie Downing / Manager of Digital Imaging
Keith Jameson / Digital Imaging Technician
and Facilities Manager
Andrew Pinkham / Photographer

**DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE
& PRESERVATION
SERVICES FOR NY PROJECT**

Marissa Halderman / DHPSNY Communications Assistant
Anastasia Matjkiw / DHPSNY Program Coordinator
Amanda Murray / DHPSNY Preservation Specialist
Kate Philipson / DHPSNY Archives Specialist

Danielle L. Lyons / Designer
Jason Henn / Editor

LETTER

from the executive director

Dear Friends,

In the time since our last edition of *Art-i-facts*, CCAHA has experienced some big changes. In March of last year, Director of Conservation Mary Schobert retired after 37 years at CCAHA. It is rare for someone to devote their entire career to a single organization, and Mary's work both helped shape the Center as we know it and left an indelible mark on the field of conservation.

Mary's departure left very big shoes to fill, and her successor, longtime staff member Jessica Silverman, was formally named Director of Conservation in May 2019. We spoke to Jessica for an interview in the summer 2016 issue of *Art-i-facts*, when she was the lab's Senior Paper Conservator. We're happy to chat with Jessica again in this issue to get an update on her work and to hear more about her vision for the future at CCAHA.

CCAHA's programs have also grown in some exciting new ways in the past year. Our DHPSNY program continues to provide preservation services throughout New York State, and our Regional Heritage Stewardship Program (RHSP) has expanded from the Deep South and Appalachia to also include the Intermountain West (Nevada, Utah, and parts of Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico).

As always, though, our commitment to be a leader in the field of conservation is unchanged. This issue details just two of the extraordinary projects we have worked on in recent years, both highlighting the ways in which our staff collaborates across departments—from onsite surveys to conservation treatment to digitization and housing—to tackle projects with great results and meet our clients' diverse conservation needs.

Sincerely,



Laura Hartz Stanton / Executive Director

Founded in 1977, the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) is a one-stop shop for every conservation and preservation need. CCAHA specializes in the treatment of works on paper, photographs, and books, as well as state-of-the-art digital imaging services. CCAHA's preservation services staff present education programs and conduct preservation assessments nationwide. CCAHA also offers conservation fellowships, fundraising support, disaster assistance, and more.

 **Learn more at www.ccaha.org/membership.**



QUESTIONS

for Jessica Silverman

In our summer 2016 issue of Art-i-facts, we introduced you to Jessica Silverman, then CCAHA's Senior Paper Conservator and Preservation Consultant. In early 2019, during her eleventh year on staff, Jessica was promoted to Director of Conservation, overseeing all of CCAHA's treatment, housing, and imaging services. We chatted with Jessica about the move to this new role and her vision for CCAHA looking ahead to the future.

Can you remind us how you got your start in conservation?

Taking classes for my Associate's degree in Fine Art was really when I first became aware of conservation as a profession. A light bulb went off in the middle of an art history class where the professor was showing slides of the conservation of the Sistine Chapel ceiling and some of the challenges those conservators faced. What really caught my attention was how they were using scientific analysis combined with their understanding of the craft of Michelangelo's time to make decisions about how far to go with the cleaning. The results were so dramatic that it sparked controversy.

What brought you to CCAHA?

I started at CCAHA in 2008 as a Post-graduate Fellow. I had two consecutive years of fellowship after getting my degree at the Winterthur/University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation. My advisors strongly suggested that I apply for the fellowship here because it was such great experience. And it was!

As Director of Conservation, what is your vision for the future of CCAHA?

I think we're in a moment of change at the Center. As we continue to help our clients carry out their preservation and conservation projects, I also hope that we can dedicate more time and energy to research. I would really love to harness all the talent and creativity that we have here at

CCAHA to solve problems in conservation and propose new techniques. We work in a field that relies quite a bit on research in order to move forward, and there must be ways for us to partner with science and history departments—especially at the great universities we have in the Philadelphia area—to help lead those changes. I'd like to see us have more projects like our recent NEH-funded research on ungilded daguerreotypes.

Another topic that we talk about frequently is how the Conservation Lab and our Preservation Services Office can work together more. Each brings different things to the table, and when we work together, I think we can offer even better services, maybe even some new services to clients. CCAHA staff has been doing more consulting and responding to emerging client needs. That's where I could see Conservators and Preservation Specialists coming together and offering more comprehensive consulting.

And then geographically, we're focused on expanding to serve underserved areas. Preservation Services is really leading these efforts with the Regional Heritage Stewardship Program, expanding our educational services to the Southeast, Appalachia, and Intermountain West areas of the country.

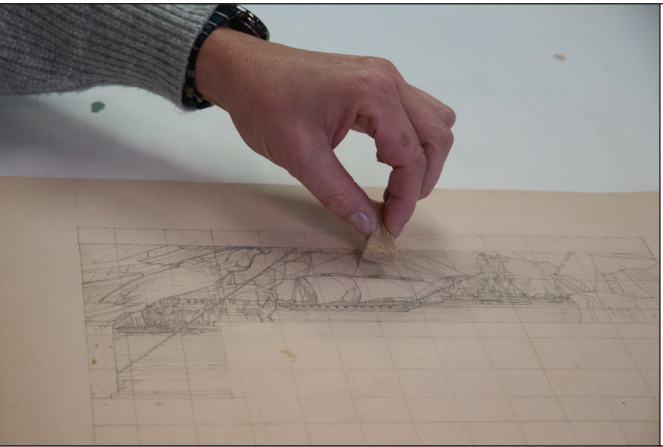
We're always changing. I think that, with such dedicated staff that have been here for such a long time, we could be very insular and just keep doing the same thing. But since we value professional development,

teaching and education, we have two to three Post-graduate Fellowships every year. The Fellows are really the ones that keep us fresh. As much as they gain from us working with CCAHA's knowledgeable conservators, they give just as much back to us. They're bringing the latest technologies and advances, and they're often bringing information gleaned from other parts of the world as well. There are constantly new technologies to aid us in what we do.

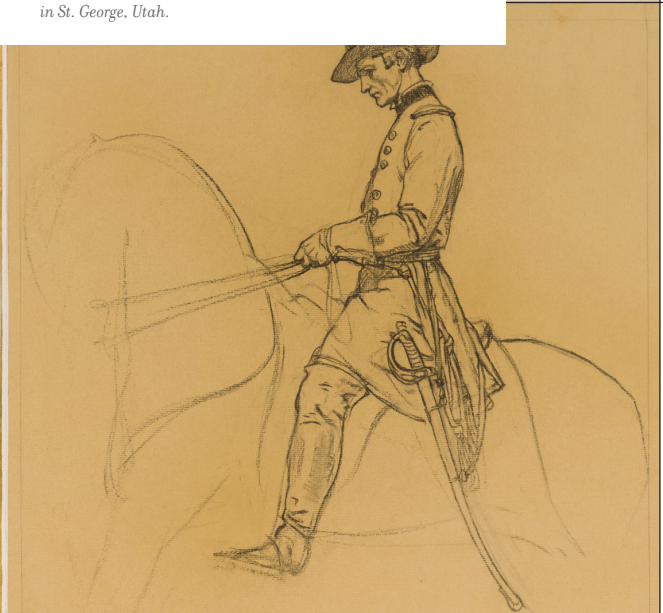
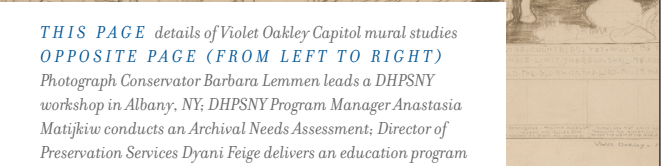
The last time you were interviewed for Art-i-facts, you discussed some of your favorite projects. Have there been any recent projects that presented special challenges?

Currently, this week's challenge is a really beautiful architectural rendering that's mounted to a very thick paper board, and our Senior Paper Conservator, Heather Hendry, has been working on the report and proposal for it. After doing some testing, she discovered that the adhesive attaching the watercolor rendering to the thick board is synthetic. That really limits what we can do to reduce the adhesive and separate the drawing from the acidic board. We had to discuss it amongst ourselves and then go back to the client to offer some options. Conservation treatment is often a compromise. You present all of the options to the stewards of these artifacts and work those choices out with them. It's a partnership.

—JASON HENN



THIS PAGE details of Violet Oakley Capitol mural studies
OPPOSITE PAGE (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)
 Photograph: Conservator Barbara Lemmen leads a DHPSNY workshop in Albany, NY; DHPSNY Program Manager Anastasia Matijkiw conducts an Archival Needs Assessment; Director of Preservation Services Dyani Feige delivers an education program in St. George, Utah.



classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA), eventually transferring to the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry (known today as Drexel University), where she studied under celebrated American illustrator Howard Pyle.

In addition to raw skill and an ability to work in a wide range of media, one of Oakley's great strengths ensured her future—she was a gifted visual storyteller capable of presenting complex, coherent narratives. The development of these narratives began with studies of human figures and detailed sketches like those we surveyed and treated last year.

Though she was essentially an unknown, an early mural commission for a local Philadelphia church received positive reviews. In 1902, at age 28, Pennsylvania State Capitol architect Joseph Houston selected Oakley to paint a series of murals in the Governor's Reception Room. Houston's selection made her the first American woman to earn a major art commission, and her series, *The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual*, was completed and unveiled in 1906.

Several years passed before Oakley was invited back to Harrisburg to assist great American illustrator Edwin Austin Abbey on an assignment to paint murals in the State House, Senate Chambers, and the Supreme Court. When Abbey died in 1911, local press coverage confirms there was overwhelming public support to hand the project to Oakley. Incredibly, she labored on these murals, with their themes of liberty and justice, at a time when she was unable to legally vote. And even though she was one of the leading artists in the movement known as the American Renaissance, Oakley still contended with newspaper headlines that addressed her

anonymously as the "woman artist" at work in the Capitol.

When Violet Oakley died in 1961, she left behind a vast body of work spanning eight decades, but the murals in Harrisburg remain central to her legacy.

For CCAHA staff, the survey and treatment of Oakley's mural studies was a two-phase project. The first phase consisted of an on-site survey, which was conducted May 1, 2019, by CCAHA's Senior Paper Conservator Heather Hendry. On that trip, Heather viewed the entire collection of approximately 60 sketches in order to assess their condition and devise a treatment proposal.

"The most apparent problem was the foxing stains that occurred throughout many drawings," Heather describes. "Most of the papers were physically in good condition because Oakley used generally good papers, but in many of them foxing either developed in the paper or was transferred from contact with less stable secondary supports. The drawings also show evidence of their use in a working studio, so there were smudges in the media and stray paint marks, and we would not want to remove that evidence of the artist's hand."

As Heather and other CCAHA staff members worked on the drawings, a whole host of tiny clues began to emerge from the objects—inferences about the conditions in Oakley's studio and glimpses into her decision-making process.

"As we worked on the project, we learned from the art historian [at the State Museum] that the secondary supports with gold borders were actually applied by Violet Oakley and her studio assistant," Heather says. "As I mentioned, many drawings had foxing that had transferred from

the secondary support materials, and we would normally recommend removing them. However, in this case, the mounting was a sign that Oakley had both considered this drawing to be more than a sketch, that it stood alone as a work of art, and also that she had tried to sell it separately after the production of the murals. This made the secondary support very important evidence that we will preserve in its place, attached to the artwork, and the gold borders will be displayed within the window mats when they are framed.”

Spending so much time with Oakley’s sketches put her work in perspective for our staff, and the contrast between the rough and completed versions of these images was special to experience firsthand. The day of that first survey in May, Heather walked straight from viewing Oakley’s sketches to standing in front of some of the finished full-scale murals.

“The Senate Chamber was not open to the public that day,” Heather recalls, “but her other murals in their intended setting were incredible. Although it’s awe-inspiring to see her compositions in full color on a monumental scale, I think her drawings are even more special because you can see every line of her amazing drawing skills and really get up close to see everything she put into them.”

—JASON HENN

PHILADELPHIA-BASED, NATIONALLY MINDED: CCAHA’S REGIONAL PRESERVATION PROGRAMS CONTINUE TO EXPAND



In January 2019, CCAHA was awarded a Preservation Education and Training Grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This grant, in part, provided funding for our Regional Heritage Stewardship Program (RHSP). Started in 2017, RHSP has a track record of delivering vital preservation trainings and services to communities with limited access to trained conservators and other preservation resources. This award enabled the RHSP program to continue work in Appalachia and the Deep South and to expand into new parts of the country. In 2019, RHSP offered programming for the first time in the Intermountain West, a region that includes Nevada, Utah, and parts of Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. Thanks to our partners at Utah Humanities and the Utah Division of Arts & Museums for helping make this expansion possible.

Learn more at
ccaaha.org/initiatives/regional-heritage-stewardship-program

Now in its fourth year, the Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services for New York (DHPSNY) program continues to achieve impressive numbers in its outreach to the Empire State. Started in 2016, DHPSNY is a program of the New York State Education Department’s Office of Cultural Education, which contracts with CCAHA to deliver statewide services supporting organizations that safeguard New York’s historical documents and library research materials. Modeled in many ways on our Philadelphia Stewardship Program, DHPSNY is headquartered at CCAHA, and our small staff of archives and preservation specialists deliver education programs, present at conferences, and conduct surveys at locations across New York State. Through its first three years, DHPSNY interacted with members of nearly 1,000 collecting institutions in one form or another; 2,024 people attended educational workshops and webinars; and 120 institutions were awarded free Planning & Assessment Services.

Learn more at dhpsny.org





ABOVE Pages from a Speaking Book, containing a catalog of female members of the Moravian Church in Antigua, 1839-1844 (Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA)

assigned to these treatments, Jillianne’s formidable task was to prepare the volume for digitization.

Many projects at CCAHA start slowly, often taking years to unwind. CCAHA’s involvement with the Eastern West Indies project for the Moravian Archives started in 2010 when two of CCAHA’s preservation specialists visited the site to conduct a preservation needs assessment and the collection caught their attention. Laura Hartz Stanton (now CCAHA Executive Director, then Director of Preservation Services) remembers returning from the assessment very excited about the collections.

For context – the Moravian Archives collects, preserves, and makes available the records of the Moravian Church in North America and the Caribbean, starting from the 18th century to the present. The Moravians came to the Caribbean to bring Christianity to the enslaved population of the region, leading to the establishment of the first Afro-Protestant mission churches in the Caribbean, as well as in the Americas as a whole.

Luckily, the practice of record-keeping has always been an integral part of Moravian society. As a result, their record-keeping in the Caribbean was remarkably detailed, including information that cast new light on the lives of the enslaved people and the plantations where they worked, lived, and died. For instance, the church registers, catalogs, and membership lists from the island of Antigua include information about the members’ (or prospective members’) baptismal names, the name of the plantation where they worked, when they were baptized, when they became full church members, where they went if they left the mission church, who they married, and when they died.

The significance of the information in these records cannot be overstated. However, years and years of previous exposure to a tropical climate has severely damaged the records. While they are now kept in a stable environment at the Moravian Archives, the records remain extremely fragile and in many cases were completely inaccessible to researchers.

In the 1960s, the Caribbean records were transferred from the islands to the Moravian Archives where they could be stored in a more stable environment, with climate-controlled vaults and a fire suppression system. But the collections were large and the poor condition of much of the material was daunting, posing a large challenge.

This was the situation when CCAHA staff first visited in 2011. A step-by-step process started to emerge, with each project naturally leading to the next. After the preservation needs assessment, a CCAHA conservator performed a one-day conservation assessment, and this in turn led to a much more comprehensive seven-day item-level collection survey, performed in 2016 with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Using data from this collection survey, the Moravian Archives staff selected material for two pilot projects: *Archiving Antigua*, a digitization project which received funding from the Council for Library and Information Services (CLIR), and the *Eastern West Indies Records Preservation and Digitization Project*, a treatment and digitization project with funding from NEH. To help with funding, CCAHA Director of Development Lee Price worked with the Moravian Archives Director and Archivist Dr. Paul Peucker to help define project scopes and prepare grant applications.

The five volumes of the *Eastern West Indies Records Preservation and Digitization Project* suffered from iron gall ink deterioration, torn and broken leaves, insect damage, and liquid stains, as well as missing pages and many loose fragments. Conservators carefully treated each leaf in every volume, relaxing creases and mending tears. For two of the volumes, each leaf received an aqueous calcium phytate treatment to arrest the corrosion of the iron gall ink and suspend ongoing damage to the paper.

Faced with a bewildering array of fragments, Jillianne Wilcox carefully set about sorting the fragments into groups, working with CCAHA Senior Book Conservator Richard Homer to organize the pages and fragments. Placing the fragments was like working on a jigsaw puzzle with hundreds of pages and an unknown number of

pieces, but Jillianne recalls that the process became easier the longer she worked on it. One volume required over 200 hours in treatment.

Two volumes arrived partially bound and were disassembled to release the pages for treatment. Before they were rebound, the treated leaves were passed to the digitization team for scanning. Digitizing the leaves while unbound allowed for the full pages to be captured, without losing any information to distortion or the shadow of the gutter.

As the *Archiving Antigua* CLIR grant only funded digitization and not treatment, a series of 110 volumes was selected that posed minimal risks for the handling involved with digitization. Prior to imaging, each volume was inspected by a CCAHA book conservator, who provided special handling instructions. These volumes were imaged on a Linhof book imaging easel, which contains two panels that are independently adjustable to reduce stress on fragile bindings. The pages were captured using a Phase One 100MP digital camera, which allowed for the capture of 2-page spreads in one capture with a single click of the shutter. High resolution TIFF files were provided to the Moravian Archives.

As the CCAHA imaging team continued to work, another team at the Moravian Archives began adding a remarkable amount of metadata, ultimately uploading the files to the Digital Library of the Caribbean. The resulting online archive not only makes the material accessible to researchers and scholars, but vastly increases its discoverability through searchable terms and descriptions. "After following this project for ten years, it has been such a treat for me to see this material available online at last!" Laura says, thinking back to her first 2010 visit to the Moravian Archives. "The content of these documents is so important to history. It's been an honor for CCAHA to play such an important role in making this material freely available to everyone, from researchers to genealogists and, above all, to the descendants of the people mentioned in these pages."

To view examples of the material, please visit dloc.com and search "Moravian Archives."

—MAGGIE DOWNING
Manager of Digital Imaging



TOP TO BOTTOM After treatment image of a church register from the Moravian Church in Antigua, 1771-1798; Cover of a speaking book, containing a catalog of male communicant members of the Moravian Church in St. John's, Antigua (Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA); After treatment image of a church register for male members of the Friedensthal Mission in St. Croix, 1744-1832. (Courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA)

¹ John Catron, "Slavery, Ethnic Identity, and Christianity in Moravian Antigua," *Journal of Moravian History* 14, no.

² (2014): 153-178.



264 S. 23RD STREET PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19103

t 215.545.0613 f 215.735.9313 www.CCAHA.ORG

EVENTS + PROGRAMS

Throughout the year, CCAHA offers a number of programs to provide staff at collecting institutions with the knowledge and skills to support their collections care efforts. To register for any of these programs, please visit our website at ccaaha.org/events.

COLLECTIONS CARE TRAINING *workshops provide hands-on instruction in a range of topics for staff of cultural institutions. Major funding for these programs is generously provided by the William Penn Foundation, with additional support from the Independence Foundation, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.*

PUTTING BEST PRACTICES INTO PRACTICE *is a two year program, generously funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, which offers bimonthly webinars to enable individuals and organizations all over the country to learn from experts.*

Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the
REGIONAL HERITAGE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
(RHSP) is an initiative of CCAHA that brings vital preservation services to regions of the country with limited access to conservators and preservation expertise.

BECOME A MEMBER!

CCAHA membership is open to all nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations, including museums, archives, libraries, historical societies, academic institutions, state agencies, cooperative conservation programs, and private foundations. Benefits include \$125 credit towards a condition report, treatment proposal, and estimate; reduced rates for CCAHA-sponsored education programs; and a subscription to CCAHA's printed materials.

Learn more at:
www.ccaaha.org/membership.