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Delaware History Museum and new Center for African American Heritage Grand Opening Set for October 1st

The Delaware Historical Society celebrates updated Wilmington attractions with a historic block party.

Wilmington, DE — With the completion of a major transformation of its Wilmington campus, the Delaware Historical Society is set to unveil the Delaware History Museum, Old Town Hall, the new Center for African American Heritage, and an exhibition called *Delaware: One State, Many Stories*, which presents the most well-known aspects of our state’s history as well as stories that will be new to most visitors. **A grand opening celebration is planned for Saturday, October 1, 2016 from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm when the public is invited to tour the exhibition and take part in a family-friendly historic block party.** Admission to the museum, programs, and entertainment is free of charge October 1st.

The project began in 2014 to commemorate the Society’s 150th-anniversary and was made possible by the *Sesquicentennial Campaign: Ensuring a Future for Delaware’s Past*, which has raised \$6.8 million. The campaign supported improvements to Old Town Hall and the Delaware History Museum to increase accessibility, update classrooms and other education spaces, and create additional galleries and exhibition spaces. The installation of a new core exhibition documenting Delaware’s history and the creation of the Center for African American Heritage, the first such space dedicated to sharing the stories and experiences of African Americans in Delaware, were also an integral component of the campaign.

“The many improvements support the Delaware Historical Society’s focus on history education as well as the role and value of history in contemporary society,” said Scott Loehr, CEO of the Delaware Historical Society. “Visitors will experience Delaware’s history and its many complexities in new and compelling ways.”

Inside the Delaware History Museum, which includes the new Center for African American Heritage, the exhibition, *Delaware: One State, Many Stories*, presents a multi-layered history of the First State in an inclusive and thought-provoking manner representing diverse viewpoints and experiences. Visitors are challenged to contextualize their personal experiences through their engagement with material culture to become empowered stakeholders in the creation and presentation of historical narratives. The exhibition utilizes a variety of themes to present Delaware’s history including *Creating an Identity*, *Famously Delaware*, *Forging Faith and Community*, and *Standing Together for Freedom*.

The museum and Center for African American Heritage will serve as an important resource for Delaware students as well as scholars and historians. The space is also part of the exciting growth that is taking place along lower Market Street in Wilmington.

About the Grand Opening Block Party:

The grand opening of the Delaware History Museum and the new Center for African American Heritage will take place on Saturday, October 1, 2016 from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm at 504 North Market Street with a historic block party celebration. **Remarks by Delaware Historical Society representatives, elected officials, and others begin at 11: 00 a.m.**

During the remarks, the Delaware Historical Society will announce for the first time that the Center for African American Heritage has been permanently named in honor of two exceptional Delawareans who committed their professional lives to ensuring equal rights and opportunities for African Americans and other disenfranchised people. The new Center for African American Heritage will be officially dedicated following remarks.

The block party features educational programs and activities inside the museum plus musical and dance performances indoors and out. The day will include family-friendly fun, museum tours, food trucks, mascots, and more. Performances include a New Orleans-style Second Line Parade featuring Gerald Chavis and area musicians; Twin Poets, Nnamdi Chukwuocha and Albert Mills; UD’s acapella group the D Sharps, Sankofa African Dance Company, the Lenape Tribe of Delaware performing traditional drumming and dancing, and Pieces of a Dream Dance Theater. There will be appearances by the University of Delaware’s YoUDee and Baby Blue, the Wilmington Blue Rock’s Rocky Bluewinkle, as well as face painting and a voting rights activity for children featuring a mock election complete with a voting booth from the Department of Elections. WSTW FM will broadcast live from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm. A full schedule of events is available at dehistory.org/grand-opening-celebration.

About the Delaware Historical Society:

The Delaware Historical Society owns and operates the Delaware History Museum; the Center for African American Heritage, the first space dedicated to sharing the stories and experiences of African Americans in Delaware; a nationally recognized Research Library; Old Town Hall; Willingtown Square, four 18th-century houses surrounding a picturesque urban courtyard located in Wilmington; as well as the Read House & Gardens located in historic New Castle, recognized as an “American Treasure” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service. For more information on the Delaware Historical Society, call 302-655-7161 or visit dehistory.org.

The Delaware: One State, Many Stories exhibition is partially funded by a grant from the Delaware Humanities Forum, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



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