A CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION
IN THE AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM

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This study traced the evolution of experiential education in American history museums from 1787 to 2007. Because of a decline in attendance, museum educators need to identify best practices to draw and retain audiences. I used 16 museology and history journals, books, and archives of museums prominent for using the method. I also interviewed 15 museum educators who employ experiential learning, one master interpreter of the National Park Service, and an independent museum exhibit developer. Experiential education involves doing with hands touching physical materials. Four minor questions concerned antecedents of experiential learning, reasons to invest in the method, the influence of social context, and cultural pluralism. Next is a review of the theorists whose works support experiential learning: Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Lewin, Bruner, Eisner, Hein, and David Kolb plus master parks interpreter Freeman Tilden. The 8 characteristics they support include prior experiences, physical action, interaction with the environment, use of the senses, emotion, social relationships, and personal meaning. Other sections are manifestation of experiential learning, transformation of history museums, and cultural pluralism in history museums. The research design is descriptive, and the procedure, document analysis and structured interview. Findings are divided by decades after the first 120 years. Social context, examples of experiential learning, and multicultural activities are detailed. Then findings are discussed by patterns of delivery: sensory experiences, actions as diversion and performance, outreach of traveling trunks and of organized activity, crafts as handwork and as skills, role-playing, simulation, hands-on museum work, and minor patterns. The decline of involvement of citizens in the civic and cultural life of the community has adversely affected
history museums. Experiential learning can stop this trend and transform museum work, as open-air museums and the National Park Service have demonstrated. In the future history museums may include technology, a more diverse audience, and adults in its experiential educational plans to thrive. Further research is needed on evaluation, finances, and small museums.
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by

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

*Museums are places of possibility.*
--Rika Burnham & Elliott Kai-Kee

When a visitor enters a museum, he or she comes with prior experiences, keen senses, various emotions, and informal learning expectations. The museum has a special opportunity to engage a willing learner who is open to the possibility of new experiences. The history museum in particular has always been a repository of collection and memory, faithfully preserving artifacts of the past, at times to be viewed with awe or nostalgia. It concurrently has served the integral role of an educator. In the history museum, the viewer constructs his or her own meanings as he or she interacts with objects and activities. Pioneer interpreter Freeman Tilden asserted, “The visitor is unlikely to respond unless what you have to tell, or to show, touches his personal experience, thoughts, hopes, way of life, social position, or whatever else” (1957/1977, 13).

Beyond learning through text or a tour guide’s script, the visitor often seeks a hands-on experience. Today, more than ever, he or she wants choice and involvement when coming to the museum. As Jan Packer (2006) pointed out, many visitors come to participate, not just to be lectured. Packer further suggested that such activity can “include a rich sensory experience, novelty, surprise, fascination, nostalgia, and the freedom to explore and to engage with information at a range of levels” (341). At its best, the institution offers tools and materials with which people, whether they are children or adults, can explore other times and other places. In considering children and their relationship to these places of learning, Bruno Bettelheim concurred when he said, “because a world that is not full of wonders is one hardly worth the effort of growing up in” (1980, 25). As for adults and museums, Wade Richards and Margaret
Menninger felt that active inquiry helps adults to engage in a learning experience “emotionally” (1993).

Clifford Geertz (1973) echoed the idea of engaging adults, for a museum can enable people of different ethnicities and cultures, not just the dominant Western European one, to find their story. It is almost as though the physical place becomes the Greek agora or forum. Voices once silent are raised. Attention must be paid to the sounds of the voices of the impoverished, women, ethnic minorities, the old, the disabled, and interest groups (Lusaka & Strand, 1998). It is time for the American history museum to examine and erase the bias of the past in order to embrace the diversity of all Americans. Visitors of different ethnic backgrounds and cultures bring with them different ways of interacting, and the museum can welcome or resist this fresh challenge.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of experiential education in history museums in America from its use in the beginning to employment in exemplary programs in 2007. This is accomplished through a perusal and analysis of 260 articles in 16 key journals in museology and history for their entire run; in addition, I reviewed newspaper banks such as the New York Times (as New York was called the “nursery” of museums) from 1851 to the present by using the key word “museum,” finding a total of 61 articles. I also looked at histories of early museums and founders, as well as writings by these founders. John Cotton Dana, director at Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey, wrote eight- to forty-five- page pamphlets instructing his staff and staff at other museums in museum education and work. In 1917 Dana wrote, “To make itself alive a museum must do two things: It must teach and it must advertise” (24). Some people feel he predicted websites when he said, “Museums of the future will not only teach at
home; they will travel abroad through their photographs, their text-books, and their periodicals” (25). Some 384 documents plus 17 interviews comprise the references.

As formal education seems to move into a “virtual world,” created through electronics, a physical experience becomes more important. This is precisely what museums can contribute to the field of education. In the present atmosphere of direct instruction and testing in the public school arena, testing is viewed as the most objective means of determining learning. In contrast, in 1958, Wallace Rosenbaur (1958) of Stamford Museum was thinking of experiential education when he said that what people simply hear stays apart from them until they can interact with it and know it for themselves. He stated, “The quality we call life must be experienced and understood, and one individual cannot explain it to another. It is something that cannot be taught or even shown. What can be done is to create a situation in which the individual learns” (8).

Advocate for the arts and education theorist Elliot Eisner (1991) agreed. He opposed the current widespread use of testing as the major means of evaluation of learning, instead of acknowledging the need for hands-on activities and the competence of the teacher as artist and critic and evaluator (86). A 2002 museum manual further confirmed Rosenbauer’s foresight, declaring that “the criterion of success for a museum exhibition is whether it has achieved an affective experience, inducing a new attitude or interest, not whether visitors walk away from the museum having learned specific facts” (Lord and Lord, 2002, 17).

David Carr mentioned that “the purpose of the museum at its best is, like the purpose of a great educator, to cause some kind of troubling incompleteness for the user, and so to inspire human change” (2001, 176). Tilden echoed Carr’s sentiment in his Principle IV of Interpretation: “The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation” (1957/1977, 9). Such a viewpoint empowers the visitor. True objectivity is not a viable option anyway since all history
is value-laden, not absolute fact; this realization can free the viewer for an experience and meaning-making (Lusaka & Strand, 1998).

Besides entering into an activity, the museum learner also needs moments to reflect as an integral part of the experience. Both George Hein (1998) and David Kolb (1984) emphasized this component in their experiential models. Kolb even defined all learning as the “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (1984, 38). He was saying that “learning transforms experience”; it is a process, not an outcome (38). Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee said, “We ask visitors to turn away from their immersion in everyday concerns and to slip into the world of the object” (2005, 68). All of these researchers wished their visitors to continue learning through thoughtful reflection after the visit to the museum; such reflection, while an important part of experiential learning, is a private event that cannot be documented unless follow-up interviews are done days or weeks after the experience. Because of money, time, and limited staff, normally this is not feasible, so relatively few visitor studies have been mounted. In the present study, only that which may be observed—external behavior—was tracked through newspaper and journal articles and chapters of books.

Most of the time experiential learning was identified by some action, be it milking a cow, making candles, or role-playing in a colonial setting complete with costume. Whether or not the person was deeply involved in the experience or whether it had great personal meaning to him or her is open to question. Two other ways that experiential learning was identified was by reports of use of his or her senses or a verbal/nonverbal expression of emotion on the part of the visitor, as detailed in the following chapter. Finally, an article read might only contain one sentence about an activity that would lead to identification of experiential learning. Such is the case in a 1928 article in *The New York Times*. New York’s Museum of the Peaceful Arts exhibited a
collection of miniature machines called “Mechanical Wonderland” to answer questions about how machines work. The New York Times stated that the exhibit “includes fifty models, which may be operated by the visitor” (Puzzles of modern machinery are shown at museum exhibit, 1928/September 30, p. 156). Collecting examples of such experience-oriented learning that it may inform present practice was my goal.

Not all museum personnel liked the focus on experience. Some scholars felt it was too practical or vocational and lacking in substance; they thought it could be a fad (Kolb, 1984). Even philosopher Hilde S. Hein (2000), who is quite familiar with museum work, felt the museum administrators must be under a magic spell of those whom she would characterize as charlatans because they have exchanged their first love, the object, for the experience. On the other hand, museum consultants B.J. Pine and J.H. Gilmore have done extensive research on businesses and museums producing some kind of experience for the individual. In their article “The Experience Economy” examples of these experiences include a concert, a festival, an adventure camp, and a theme park. People enjoy being involved and feeling something, however superficial the involvement is. The two researchers insisted that the experience economy, with its power to transform, is here to stay. To compete for the average American’s leisure hour and money, the museum, therefore, should join in the trend by offering “experiences” and marketing them.

Origin and Significance of the Study

My own interest in experiential education, though I did not know the term at the time, began in 2000 when I was hired as an educational specialist at a small home-life museum, the Layland, in Cleburne, Texas, first for children and then adults. Working from a personal constructivist philosophy, I found myself facilitating more and lecturing less. That is, I expected
the learner to build on his or her own prior experiences. I set up situations for children to dig for, clean, draw and identify dinosaur “bones” or to handle objects, go on scavenger hunts, play spoons, and talk about their future as pioneers. In adult programming, patrons listened to an opera star explain “The Marriage of Figaro,” following it with a trip to the opera and a culminating discussion. Realizing adults desire participatory programs, also, the museum offered a writing class, and, to my surprise, two students’ works were published. Since I was new to the field of museum education, I looked to other educators at state historical meetings and to the literature for guidance. I could find little on experiential education, though a few lines about participation, often with no specific details, appeared in a scattering of articles.

Why is such a study needed? None exists. Another compelling reason is the declining attendance at, and civic engagement in, the history museum. The museum needs to find ways not only to attract but also to sustain relationships with loyal audiences. Experiential learning may help. While museum officials seldom mention their struggle for audiences, two recent reports from the National Endowment for the Arts document a decline in attendance. First, the 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, conducted through the United States Bureau of Census for the National Endowment for the Arts, showed a statistically significant drop in number of visits to historic sites from 34% of adults in 1992 to 32% of adults in 2002 (Rep. No. 45, 2004, 18). Second, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, Dana Gioia, asked for an additional survey, Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America. He pointed out that the decline in reading “parallels a larger retreat from participation in civic and cultural life” (Rep. No. 46, 2004, vii). The percent of adults involved in literary reading fell from 54.0% in 1992 to 46.7% in 2002; the rate of decline was 14% (ix). This is significant because 44% of literary readers attended art museums in 2002, while only 12% of non-literary readers did so, and
49% of literary readers attended performing arts events in 2002, compared to 17% of non-literary readers (ix). This decline has also been felt by the history museum, for literary reading correlates with many forms of cultural participation. Limited hours at many museums, closed portions of open-air museums, and less foot traffic at major museums in New York at the height of the tourist season all show that attendance and finances are problems. Museums have to compete for audiences with other venues of entertainment if they are to remain civic and cultural centers in their communities.

House Resolution 389, passed on February 8, 2006, in the House of Representatives of the United States of America, celebrated 100 years of museums as professional institutions. In H. R. 389 the House of Representatives noted some important facts about museums and the American people. Americans view the museum as one of the “most trustworthy sources of objective information,” and, therefore, see it as a major resource for children’s education; they even make it one of their top three choices for family vacations (House Resolution 389, 2006/February 8). Museums spend more than “one billion dollars and more than eighteen million instructional hours annually for elementary and secondary education programs” (House Res. 389). The resolution further notes that 16,000 museums receive an average of 865,000,000 visits from all kinds of people every year in the United States (House Res. 389). The resolution is in Appendix D. These institutions have a responsibility to research and employ best practices in education for people eager to learn; experiential education is one of those best practices. This study means to put in one place “what was” and “what is” the state of history museums regarding experiential education.

Definition and History of Museum

The first question of interest is: What is a museum? The American Association of
Museums defined it in this way:

For the purposes of the accreditation program of the AAM, a museum is defined as an organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule. (Swinney, ed., 1978, 9)

Graeme Talboys added his thoughts that a museum is more than objects; indeed, it should offer one the opportunity “to see, touch, hear and have sensual, emotional, and intellectual interactions with and experience of what is in that place” (2000, n.p.). David Carr saw the museum as a work in progress. He called the museum, among other things, “a mind-producing system, perhaps an organism, an embodiment of a larger, shaping cultural mind…an intimate frame for our lives, what we think of them, and what we want them to become” (Carr, 2001, 173). Perhaps a look at the evolution of the meaning of the word will refine its definition.

Originally, museum referred to a building for learning. The word originated from a library and temple dedicated to the Muses, as the Mouseion in ancient Alexandria. This idea changed after the Renaissance with the advent of an outstanding museum in England—the Ashmolean, which was a collection of exotic objects, put in a building at Oxford University (August, 1983, 138). The institution was founded in 1683 on a collection of rare items of the John Tradescants, father and son gardeners for nobility; the son issued a catalog of the collection with the help of lawyer Elias Ashmole, who persuaded Tradescant to deed it to him. The custom of the catalog continued in America as early founders compiled and published catalogs, although Charles Willson Peale could not find buyers for his. After adding collections of coins and books, Ashmole offered the collection to Oxford with the provision that it must have its own building, which would have rooms for research and teaching. Gradually, the word museum came to be associated with the second floor of the building where the objects were stored. At this point, the
The concept of museum became tied to a specific place.

After the founding of the Ashmolean, such places flourished in England because the Vatican gave money to establish them, and then in 1753 the British Museum came into being, based on Sir Hans Sloane’s collection (Alexander, 1979). In 1793 France’s great monument to art was founded: the Palace of the Louvre. In the United States the institution developed more slowly; first, in 1773 came the Charleston Museum (natural history) and then the first great American director, Charles Wilson Peale, began collecting in his Philadelphia home, a collection which finally went to Independence Hall. The National Museum, known today as the Smithsonian Institution, was established in 1846 by an act of Congress with a bequest from an Englishman, James Smithson. When George Brown Goode became director of the Smithsonian in 1873, he expanded its mission to preserving science, humanities, and the arts (Alexander, 1979).

Three other great museums came into existence in the United States in 1870—the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. No history of American museums, however cursory, would be complete without mentioning John Cotton Dana, founder of Newark Museum in 1909 and a man who urged people to come to museums. He said:

A good museum attracts, entertains, arouses curiosity, leads to questioning and thus promotes learning. It is an educational institution that is set up and kept in motion—that it may help the members of the community to become happier, wiser and more effective human beings. (Lipton, 1979/Spring/Summer, 11-12)

These words from another age resonate among current museum educators who wish to invite all the people of America, to encourage them to lift up their voices, and to give them opportunities to learn through experiential means.

In recent years the definition of museum has been enriched with additional viewpoints.
Carol Jeffers said that the museum “is no longer a physical place, but rather, a metaphorical space in which the human community is free to explore and reconnect” (2003, 115). In such a space, dialogue and a visitor’s own meaning-making can occur. Both alone and with others, known or stranger, the visitor can interact. Peter Richards added this elegant meaning of museum:

A facility that fosters creativity…is a place that allows people to discover, develop and exploit their own natural intelligences. It’s a place where there are no stupid questions, and it is not a place where there is only one right answer. It’s a place that values irreverence, the lively, the dynamic, the surprising, the playful. And it is a place that values, above all, curiosity and the ability to make connections, to make those cognitive leaps. (2005, ii)

Certainly, Richards’ words set the stage for the type of participation found in experiential education. James Clifford countered with a political definition, seeing museums as “sites of ‘an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges of push and pull’” (Starn, 2005, 91). These writers demonstrated that the museum continues to evolve. This is a good thing, as G. Browne Goode in 1895 affirmed, “A finished museum is a dead museum, and a dead museum is a useless museum” (1895, 10). And so the museum has passed from being a “sacred grove” to becoming a place preserving materials that would tell a national story—in this case, the *American* story” (Jeffers, 2003, 110).

Beyond definition, Robert Archibald considered the true function of museums. First, he stated that “emotional distance from either object or audiences diminishes the value and undermines the impact of our work” (1998/November/December, 33). He then asked, “If we don’t care, what’s the point?” (33). Calling museums “the crucibles of democracy,” he poses the question:
Do we realize that places that are good for people are also good for the planet—places that nurture relationships, places that inculcate a sense of identity, places that are conducive to neighborliness, spirituality, beauty, tranquility, mutual obligation, respect and reciprocity that cannot be commodified in the marketplace? (35)

To Archibald, museums appeared to be more about people than preservation, more about education than collection, and more about community and personal meaning-making than elitism and scholarship. Carr agreed, saying that selection and presentation of information in a museum is political, in a sense, for it is meant to interest, provoke, or even make its viewer uncomfortable; at that point, learning begins (2001, 179).

This study dealt specifically with the history museum in the United States. Randolph Starn (2005) estimated that such institutions comprise two-thirds of all museums in the United States. They are accessible to many people and range from huge public collections to small-town shelves of mementos (Starn, 2005, 68). The practice of experiential education was considered in all types of history museums: historic homes, outdoor museums, battlefields, parks, and traditional history museums in buildings. Even land can be a “history museum” of sorts as one considers its natural and cultural history. Molly Baker reminded readers that “as a society we are not in the habit of relating to land in a direct and intentional way” (2005, 270). She argued that land should be experienced “through all the senses, including the emotional/affective—not only as it is today, but also as it was in the past and will be in the future” (270). Many of the examples came from large institutions, but best practices of smaller facilities were documented as they could be discovered. Professional staff members of smaller museums have published less often in professional journals, so their contributions were less frequently documented.

Definition of Experiential Education

The next question is: What is experiential education? In the simplest terms, it is learning
with a physical dimension, characteristically with people’s hands touching materials. The visitor must participate, rather than just observe—most obviously in doing things, such as sawing wood or weaving cloth—and more subtly in assuming a role of a historical character. Freeman Tilden in 1957 commented, “Not only must it [participation] imply a physical act, it must also be something that the participant himself would regard as, for him, novel, special and important” (1957/1977, 73). He gave examples of riding a barge on an old canal, climbing the ladders to cliff dwellings, or riding the ruts along the Natchez Trace (74-75). What experiential education is not is watching a demonstration or reflection by itself. Whether it is “living history” is open to interpretation. Perhaps living history could be used as a method of teaching students. An aspect of historical reenactment, living history is usually a vivid depiction of the life of everyday people at a given time period in the past, which involves feeling as though one has been transported to another time (Anderson, 1984, 35). It is usually performance-oriented, that is, done for other people.

In more sophisticated, constructivist terms John McCarthy and Peter Wright characterized experience “as an irreducible, dynamic interrelationship between person and environment, in which meaning has sensory, affective and emotional dimensions, as well as cognitive and socio-cultural aspects” (2005, 3). Expanding on the subject, the two authors drew parallels between experience and a conversation which develops and changes—ever dynamic (3). John Dewey concurred with the idea of interaction with an environment and added that the experience must “run its course to fulfillment” (1934, 35). He pointed out that true passion about subject matter will bring forth meaning from previous experiences for the seeker. Maxine Greene (1995) stated that she has so focused on imagination because it enables people to go beyond the familiar to the stranger or the ‘other’. 
Another aspect of experiential education is that people do it voluntarily. Falk and Dierking stated that it is “learning individuals do because they want to rather than because they have to” (2000, 211). People want to be in control of who, what, where, when and how they learn. Jan Packer (2006) noted the value and enjoyment in such learning.

The Association for Experiential Education gave the following definition for this type of learning: “Experiential education is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values” (Retrieved September 27, 2006). The key words here are direct experience and focused reflection. The Association explained further:

*Throughout the experiential learning process, the learner is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning.
*Learners are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic.
*The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning.
*Relationships are developed and nurtured: learner to self, learner to others and learner to the world at large. (Retrieved September 27, 2006)

Important aspects that help define experiential education are the emphasis on the activity and engagement of the learner in making his or her own meaning, the authenticity of the learning task, and the dimension of relationship or community. This latter aspect, social intercourse, whether with one’s friends or strangers in a museum, does impact any experience, as would the lack of social interaction.

The Association for Experiential Education began as an outdoor adventure organization in Colorado in 1972. It has grown to include teachers, camp counselors, therapists, environmental educators, coaches, corporate team builders, and mental health professional workers. Anyone who teaches through direct experience may join and receive the peer-reviewed
Journal of Experiential Education, a newsletter, and discounts for conferences and publications, as well as access to a member directory and a jobs clearinghouse site. A telephone conversation with Accreditation Director Henry Wood at the headquarters in Boulder, Colorado, revealed that more members from the academic community are becoming involved (personal communication, 15 October 2007). Some of these academic associates are doing brain research on experiential education which has not yet been published.

John Dewey, who said, “All genuine education comes about through experience” (1938/1997, 25), insisted that not only is quality of experience important but that the experience has two sides. The first side, the immediate response of “agreeableness or disagreeableness,” would indicate some interaction with the exhibit or activity, while a second side would be the influence this experience had on later personal experiences (27). Alvin Powell reported in the Harvard Outward Bound Project that “learning from each other and learning by doing are hallmarks of experiential education” (2000, 2). From this mass of description, a cogent definition is difficult but possible. In its most elemental form, experiential education involves some physical doing, not just watching or thinking. Learners will have a choice in the experience, whether it is active learning, emotion, or entertainment. Some of the senses will be used. The learner may engage in activity alone or with others. Maybe experiential education will open doors to insight and love of history that history museums have long wanted to inspire in their patrons. And then museum-goers will have better lives as a result of connecting with the past in an authentic way.

Now the museum belongs to all people. People of color, who have been marginalized in this arcane world, are coming to the museum. Stephen Greenblatt (1991) spoke of hearing the voices—the silenced voices—as he viewed items in the Jewish Museum in Prague, and it was a
moving experience for him, although he knew everyone will not experience exactly what he did. Other people must be open to hear what they can hear. The museum educator can play a vital role in providing the ambiance or framework for the experience. Eisner compared this role to that of the midwife and described teachers as “shapers of environment, stimulators, motivators, guides, consultants, resources” (1999, 659).

Research Questions

The major research question of this study follows:

How has experiential learning evolved over time as an educational component in the history museums of the United States?

The four subordinate questions include:

1. What were the antecedents to experiential learning?

2. Why should the museum invest in experiential learning?

3. What is the social context of the times when experiential education began to appear and expand?

4. How have experiential education and the museum been influenced by multiculturalism?

The major research question is fully answered in Chapter 4 and discussed through trends or patterns of delivery that emerged over time. The earliest pattern was a sensory experience of playing of the organ. Another first pattern was performance. As early as 1914, John Cotton Dana of Newark Museum established a lending department that made “9,000 shipments per year of birds, minerals, textiles, sculptures, pottery, dolls in costumes of many countries, and other objects transported to and from the schools by vans paid for by the Board of Education” (Alexander, 1983, 397). Outreach through these traveling trunks, so popular in the 1960s and
1970s, is one trend that has emerged and remained popular in the museum. Others will be traced through the evidence.

The first ancillary question is: What were the antecedents to experiential learning? Given that the earliest museums were categorized as science and art and so venerable a museum man as Director of the Smithsonian Institution, G. B. Goode, wrote in the 1890s that he was not sure about how historical museums would work, the study can start with experiential learning documented as active participation in the early museums and the first children’s museum, the Brooklyn Children’s Museum (1899). For example, in the Philadelphia Museum, an interesting American museum founded in 1785 by Charles Willson Peale, one could play the organ, examine an electrical machine, and have a machine called a physiognomitian draw one’s profile (Goode, 1901). Children’s museums are based on studies in science, art, and history. Miss Anna Gallup, curator-in-chief at Brooklyn Children’s Museum since 1902, recommended in a 1937 article that other children’s museums follow its lead with jigsaw puzzles of objects, modeling in clay and question and answer games plus joining one of the clubs focused on Indian lore, stamps, birds, trees, plants, and a variety of other subjects. Director of the Brooklyn Children’s Museum in 1992, Mindy Duitz said the museum was still experience-oriented with participatory exhibits and special techniques for teaching with objects. Students learn through firsthand experience. She and her staff continued to allow children to come to the museum without an adult in a program called Kids Crew Kids, an almost unheard-of practice. By looking through many journals on museums in general and, later, history museums in particular, I found clear examples of participatory exhibits and programs. Over time some historic sites involved the visitor. A flag flew over the first proclaimed historic house on July 4, 1850; it was at Newburgh, Virginia, George Washington’s headquarters, and was treated as a shrine (Wallace, 1996, 5). But anyone
who has been to Washington’s now restored home at Mount Vernon, 150 years later, knows that
the site, managed by the National Park Service, is presented very differently. The visitor is
invited to participate physically and emotionally in the Mount Vernon experience.

Since no educational method forms in a vacuum, other questions come. The second one
is: Why should the museum invest in experiential learning? An analysis of certain theorists, both
old and new, can answer this question and justify use of experience in programming.

The third is: What is the social context of the times when experiential education began to
appear and to expand? One cannot study history apart from society, so it is important to know
what was going on through the decades. Museum literature offers a plethora of articles on social
context, recognizing the impact of society on institutional practice. It may not be well-known, for
example, that social reformer Jane Addams began the Labor Museum in Hull House in
November 1900 to address the growing schism between immigrant parents and their children. In
the new museum parents would give lectures on, and demonstrations of, their skilled crafts, thus
garnering the respect of the children (Cushman, 1983). Music with singing, textile classes
featuring weaving, embroidering and other needlecraft, woodworking, pottery making, and
bookbinding were all included (1983). Assimilation by the children had caused a rift between
them and their parents. Becoming “Americanized” in this era meant a rejection of one’s ethnic
identity. The museum found an answer to this dilemma in activities of a celebratory nature
around ethnic contributions. This led to cultural pluralism. Addams’ museum was a forerunner of
two other types of museums: the community museum and the neighborhood museum. The
museum reflects the social and political context of the time. It responds to such things as war
conditions. An inspiring model was the reaction of Director Edgar Schenck at the Bernice B.
Bishop Museum and Honolulu Academy of Arts when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor
(Museums of Honolulu go through Japanese air raids unharmed, 1942). He kept the museum open and featured noon concerts to boost morale. Other museums entertained the soldiers. The Museum of Modern Art in New York produced films on safety (Museum News, 1942). The Director of the Chicago Historical Society said history museums should take their place in helping win the war (Shattuck, 1942).

The final ancillary question is: How have experiential education and the museum been influenced by multiculturalism? Power plays a crucial role in the museum setting, just as it does in all human relationships. Fortunately, many museum professional workers are now aware of how some racial ethnicities and classes of people have been marginalized and slowly move toward inclusion and education. They realize some of their curriculum is biased. One museum that has transformed itself to accept all cultures is the Museum of the City of New York, which started with a wealthy clientele and rooms of lovely memorabilia in 1923. But its address on 103rd Street grew unfashionable. When other ethnic groups moved into the neighborhood, the museum adjusted to reflect said diversity; in 1944, it began giving lectures in Spanish and added an exhibit of Jacob Riis photos in 1947, of Bojangles’ dance shoes in 1951, and of the art of Negro artists in 1957 (Wallace, 1996). The museum continues to serve its changing community.

In the same way, Dana’s Newark Museum was a thriving place of activity in the 1930s with activities in its Junior Museum and classes of sketching, making models, and doing nature studies with adults in the main museum. Then white flight occurred as the whites moved to the suburbs. A racial riot broke out in 1969 just as the museum was sponsoring an African music and dance festival (Alexander, 1983). It, however, continued all activities. Because it had invested in the total community, the museum was instrumental in getting people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds to communicate openly with each other, engaging in discourse. Of course,
cultural conflict is not always solved in this way.

The rationale for using experiential education in museums comes from its effectiveness as a more enduring process throughout life that enhances the connections between education, work, and personal development. True, the method differs from traditional education and behaviorism, but it has sound foundations in the work of Piaget and Dewey. In addition, Kurt Lewin, George E. Hein, and David Kolb have studied experiential learning in depth and can contribute reasons for employing it in school, the work place, and the museum.

In summary this research examined experiential learning from 1787 to the present through document analysis and interviews with museum personnel. The purpose was to trace the evolution of experiential learning in history museums. Throughout this study experiential learning is defined as learning with a physical component of hands touching materials and the actual “doing” of something such as weaving cloth or sawing wood. The next chapter is a review of the literature that describes and focuses on theories related to experience and experiential learning by educators and educational psychologists plus the author of a seminal work on interpretation of historic sites in parks.
Definition of Terms

This section defines key terms that are important to the study of experiential learning and shows how these concepts apply to the research.

*Cultural pluralism* in this study referred to a celebratory approach for viewing the contributions of various ethnic groups as part of America’s diversity. Assimilation into the American mainstream remains central to the Americanization process (Appleton, 1983). Later the term *multiculturalism* was used interchangeably for this term by the museum, even though their meanings are different.

*Experiential education* is a “philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values” (Warren, 2005). In this research the focus is on physical action in which visitors to the museum engage. For purposes of this study, experiential education refers to hands-on activities. This type of activity differs from just listening to a lecture or viewing a film.

A *history museum* is a historic home, outdoor museum or recreation of a village or farm, battlefield site, park, or traditional museum indoors with artifacts. This dissertation reported on examples of each one of these. The range of these museums extends from premier history museums such as Colonial Williamsburg to a shelf of objects in a town hall. This term differs from other types of institutions such as an art museum or a science museum.

*A museum* is an “organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule” (Swinney, 1978, 9). The history museum differs from the museum sometimes in purpose and activity.
Multiculturalism involves inclusion of underrepresented minority groups, while addressing social injustices and inequities. The ideology grew out of a response to the limitations of cultural pluralism that excluded people of color with its selective interpretation of history.

Social context refers to major historical events occurring in the United States between 1787 and the present that have impacted the work of museums. In this study social context refers to how museums have both reflected and responded to happenings in the life of the museum. Examples of such events include wars, the Great Depression, the “immigrant problem,” the Civil Rights Movement, and the Women’s Movement.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part is experiential learning. This examination of the literature reviews eight theoretical components that underlie experiential learning. It considers these concepts within the context of their applications in history museums. These concepts also support the definition of experiential education. In order, these concepts include the impact of prior experience, actions of hand-on activities, interactions with the environment, use of the senses, employment of emotion, social relationships, and influences on personal meaning. The influences on personal meaning may affect future life because learning is extended into new areas as a result of an experience in the museum. This examination includes a background of the theorists pertinent to the subject and how their theories give credence to experiential learning as used in this study. The second part of the chapter reviews manifestations of experiential education in the history museum and the history of museums and their founders. The third part concerns social context at these institutions through the decades and the resulting evolvement of three major types of museums. The final section discusses cultural pluralism and the history museum, although sometimes the museum calls this multicultural activity.

Experiential Learning

Multiple theorists have contributed to the conceptual basis of experiential learning. Their words have had far-reaching influence. Leading theorists in this group were John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Kurt Lewin.

John Dewey (1859-1952) studied at the University of Vermont and Johns Hopkins University. He became noted as an American educator, psychologist, and philosopher. He taught philosophy at the University of Michigan, University of Chicago, and Columbia University and
founded the progressive laboratory school at the University of Chicago. Dewey (1897) felt the starting point of curriculum was the experience of the child, and, indeed, the goal of education was the growth of experience of the individual. He wished to eliminate passive learning; his work on the definition and role of *experience* in learning is seminal. Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was one of the most influential researchers and theorists in developmental psychology. Originally he was trained in biology and philosophy at the University of Neuchatel in Switzerland; he turned to become a psychologist. Today he is best known for his theories of childhood development. Piaget’s ideas about one’s constructing his or her own meaning and assimilating environmental events harmonize with experiential learning. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian scholar and psychologist who worked extensively with mentally retarded children and led a group of youthful scholars. He studied psychology, philosophy, literature, law, and later medicine at the Moscow Imperial University. He taught, wrote, trained teachers, and founded a psychological laboratory. In his own time in Soviet Russia, he was relatively unknown and unpublished, dying early in his career from tuberculosis. Today interest among educators has grown in his theories, which explore the role of the individual in his or her own learning. Vygotsky felt human beings can intentionally transform the environment (Schunk, 1991/2004). Feeling this interaction was vital, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of meaningful actions to a person. Such interaction with the environment and emphasis on individual action links his work to experiential education. Kurt Zadek Lewin (1890-1947) was born to a family in Poland. He immigrated to the United States in 1933, where he resided for the rest of his life. He studied research and applied psychology at the University of Berlin. Now Lewin is called the Father of American Social Psychology. His specialties were group dynamics and organizational development. Kolb said Lewin’s laboratory training movement gave focus to “the value of
subjective personal experience in learning” and thus influenced Kolb’s work (1984, 10).

Contemporary learning theorists who have examined experiential learning include Jerome Bruner, Elliot Eisner, George E. Hein, and David A. Kolb. Jerome Bruner (1915-) is a developmental psychologist recognized for his theories of cognitive growth and the spiral curriculum, which says instruction must match a child’s ability (Schunk, 1991/2004). Educated at Duke University and Harvard University, he became a research professor of psychology and senior residence fellow at New York University. Bruner felt learners assign meaning to events based on social and physical environments of the learners. He focused on interaction among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Elliot Eisner, the last of the 1960s activists who is still involved, advocates the inclusion of the arts in curriculum as a significant way of viewing the world. A longtime professor at Stanford University, he has worked in both the world of art and of education. He believes in multiple methods of evaluation. His interests include art education, curriculum, and qualitative research. Educated at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Roosevelt University in Chicago, and at the University of Chicago, he has been a professor of education and art at Stanford University from 1965 to the present. Eisner believed that process was important and that one could construct one’s own meaning from his or her actions, rather than from being told what to think. George E. Hein received his education at Cornell and the University of Michigan and has done research at California Institute of Technology, Boston University, and the Harvard Medical School. He is professor emeritus of the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is senior research associate at the Program Evaluation and Research Group, which he co-founded in 1976 to evaluate museum education work in Boston. He favors a constructivist view of education in museums. The last theorist is David A. Kolb (1939-), who wrote extensively about experiential
learning. Educated at Knox College and Harvard University, he became the professor of organizational behavior of Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. Interested in individual and social change, Kolb (1984) said that people learn from experience through participation in events and through reflection. Thoughtful observations and insights of these illuminate the characteristics of experiential learning.

According to Lynn Dierking and John Falk (2000), experiential learning can bring discovery, renewal, and fulfillment to the seeker, whether he or she is a child, adolescent, or mature adult. Co-founders of the Institute for Learning Innovation, which collaborates with institutions and organizations to encourage the growth of free-choice learning, they have asserted, “Life requires a greater search for meaning that can only come from experienced events, places, peoples, and knowledge outside the normal realm” (211). Researchers such as Dierking and Falk, who study visitors in museums, are interested in the acquisition of knowledge in context; they call this authentic learning situated cognition, meaning simply that many processes concurrently produce learning. Experiential education forms part of that learning as David Kolb (1984) stated that one must have a grasp of experience and some transformation through it. This is consistent with the theories of Jean Piaget (1970), although Piaget highlighted transformation. The student new to academia—or to the museum—often is not prepared for such an experience, and certainly not for a major change in his or her life. Another group which can be influenced by experiential learning is that of mature adults. As more adults change careers late in life, experiential learning can provide more linkage to the work world. Museums that embrace experiential education can greatly aid learners who have come to the museum as a part of “the modern search for authenticity” (Dierking and Falk, 2000, 211).
Prior Experience

The visitor to the museum, with the possible exception of the child on a school field trip, comes of his own volition, bringing a mosaic of all his or her previous experience. These will influence and direct both viewpoint and actions, for learning is based upon personal experience. David A. Kolb (1984) has posited that all learning is just relearning. He agreed with John Dewey (1934) that when a person observes any object, exhibit, or historical place, he or she views it through personal meaning and values from prior experience. Lev Vygotsky used the metaphor of a hammer in a more emphatic description of the strength of these events: “The individual brings to bear all his inherited experiences in his encounter with all the influences of the environment. Like a hammer, the environment pounds and forges this experience, and reshapes it, and meanwhile the individual struggles for self-affirmation” (1926/1997, 53). He agreed that, in this way, the person seeks his identity in the world. Further, Vygotsky (1926/1997) believed that prior events in life become the only teacher that can transform the individual; in his work on pedagogy, he felt the child actually teaches himself. Elliot Eisner’s position coincided with that of Vygotsky, for Eisner affirmed, “What we choose to symbolize is rooted in our experience” (1994, 17). Symbolism implied the use of imagination, which Dewey said emanates, packed with meaning, from prior experience (1934, 272). Vygotsky concurred, asserting that students cannot construct fantasy unless the elements for understanding are a part of their personal experience.

Physical Action

The heart of experiential learning is physical action, normally with hands touching materials. This characteristic links the museum with the real world. Educational philosopher John Dewey said that just as education is an “emancipating and enlargement experience” (1933,
77), it also is always an “affair of action” (278). He felt that true interest stemmed from actions with which a person identified (1913/1970). Dewey further asserted, “What counts is what we do, not what we receive” (1934, 102). Sensory qualities are worthwhile, but action is better. As for the changes experiential learning can bring to education, Dewey wanted the school to move the activity from authority to the student, from a structured discipline to unstructured learning, and from “learning from texts and teachers to learning through experience” (1938, 19). He was a pragmatist.

Dewey’s contemporary, Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, (1926/1997) also focused on action and new forms of behavior. He said the process of any reaction was comprised of stimulation, processing of stimulation, and responding action. Further, Vygotsky defined thinking as a “solution of a new problem of behavior through selection of essential reactions” (92).

Jean Piaget, the respected educational psychologist known for his child development theories, agreed with the necessity for action. He stated that knowledge “results from multiple interactions between the subject and the object” (1978, 651). His own studies of these multiple interactions have greatly influenced educational theory. He also said, “The operative aspect of thought deals not with states but with transformation from one state to another” (1970, 14).

David Kolb, whose study of experiential learning relates to the work world as well as the educational one, picked up the idea of transformation of actions and added two intellectual operations. Kolb’s process lists four different kinds of ability that a learner needs: “1. concrete experience, 2. reflective observation, 3. abstract conceptualization, 4. active experimentation” (1984, 30). Concrete experience and active experimentation both require action on the part of the learner. Kolb wished to create a tension and integration between concrete and abstract and active
experimentation and reflective observation, empowering the learner to make decisions and solve problems in a holistic manner.

Kurt Lewin, founder of American social psychology, placed great emphasis on subjective experience and personal involvement. From a phenomenological perspective, he began listening to participants along with the leaders in his experiments; as a result, he founded training groups and advocated a participative-management style (Kolb, 1984). Lewin (1999) focused on action in learning, writing that the impulse to act stemmed from an internal need.

Another influential American cognitive psychologist, Jerome Bruner, designed experience-based programs. He (1968) advocated the use of manipulative objects in science and math curricula and encouraged instructors to fill the environment with stimuli. He averred that children especially want to participate “as players rather than spectators” (155). Bruner (1960) also said people can learn by modeling behavior of an expert, but, to retain new learning, they must have opportunities to practice the new skills.

Museum educational theorist George E. Hein (1998) stated in his book, Learning in the Museum, that all knowledge was constructed by the learner and implied that the construction occurs through stimulus-response or action. Knowledge outside the student was gained through expository and discovery methods. Knowledge constructed by the student occurred through stimulus-response. In the work of the earlier researchers mentioned, Kolb found that learning often results from resolution of conflicts: for Lewin, the conflict arose between concrete and abstract and between observation and action; for Dewey, conflict came from impulse versus reason; and for Piaget, it came from assimilation contrasted with accommodation.

Perhaps the best rationale for engaging in action to facilitate learning comes from the master interpreter of the national parks, Freeman Tilden. He mused, “The fullest appreciation of
unspoiled nature is found by those who are willing to imitate in some degree the experience of the pioneers, even though it be actually a pale partaking” (1957/1977, 68). This could be climbing the ladders to cliff dwellings at Montezuma Castle in Arizona, an activity no longer possible because it was ruining the fragile environment, or taking a handful of corn grains and grinding this corn to meal, an experience which would harm nothing because the artifacts for grinding are quite abundant.

Interaction with the Environment

Action necessarily takes place in an environment. Interaction with the surrounding world is the next trait of experiential learning. Vygotsky (1926/1997), in fact, believed that the person’s experience is completely determined by it. He insisted, “Experience has a biosocial orientation; it is what lies between the person and the environment that defines the relationship of the person to the environment” (2004, 496). His theory suggested that children experience crises in development at seven years of age in which experience takes on new meaning when their newly acquired abilities to generalize engage with the external world. Piaget (1954) concurred, for his work describes how intelligence was shaped by experience and cognitive development, through interaction of the person with concrete environment. He proposed two types of reaction: assimilation, which subordinated the external world to the person, and its opposite, accommodation, which pushed the person to change, in response to surroundings.

Kurt Lewin (1999) said actual behavior depended on circumstances, conditions, and objects that surround a person and the individuality of the person, creating a psychological habitat. In harmony, David Kolb (1984) stated that holistic learning is adaptive across life situations, in school and work, and spanning time and space. It involved a transaction between the person and his background. Finally, Dewey (1934) defined experience as interaction of the
organism with environmental conditions, whether they were human material or institutional. He succinctly explained, “Things and events, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changing and developing through its intercourse with things previously external to it” (246). From his perspective, experience was both the result and the reward. Indeed, such interaction can be transformed into actions all the researchers approved—“participation and communication” (22). Dewey passionately described this connection and transformation when he wrote, “The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment, in which sensuous material and relationship are most completely merged” (103).

Use of the Senses

How then does one perceive the environment? One grasps reality through the physical senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. Use of the senses is integral to experiential learning. Kolb (1984) called this apprehension, while comprehension simply introduced order. He further reflected that apprehended experience, such as smelling a rose, can extend one’s experience in the external world. Tilden (1957/1977) noted that younger children, in particular, use all their senses to experience the world and that odors and taste are very important. Piaget (1954) discussed sensorimotor intelligence in providing an equilibrium between the individual actor and the environment. This means that a person perceives the world through his or her physical senses and bodily movements in it; that is the way he or she adjusts to, and finds balance in, the physical world. He (1977) said that arrangement of objects in categories and their order in these categories is rooted in sensorimotor operations and that each sense functions in close connection with the others, for example, visual with tactile perception. Vygotsky (2004) also seemed fascinated with the merging of perception by the physical senses
and movement, which equal a dynamic whole.

In a return to basic definitions, Dewey defined the actual senses as “organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him” (1934, 22). The live animal is present in both its actions and physical senses with participation becoming “fruitful” through the latter (22). When he commented that every experience “contains an element of seeking, of pressing forward,” Dewey noted that these organs are involved (255). He found no division between intellectual insights and sensory aspects. On a concluding note, Elliot Eisner observed about the influence of sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing: “Our experience, both empirical and imaginative, is influenced (but not determined) by the acuteness of our senses” (1994, 17). Thorough employment of these mechanisms enhances any experience.

Emotion

Emotion is another essential component of experiential learning. Park interpreter Freeman Tilden acknowledged the “pleasant feeling of participation I had had in walking portions of the old Oregon Trail in Western Nebraska and Wyoming” (1957/1977, 77), noting that the key element of his experience was emotional. He drew strength from feeling kinship with the people who had first trod there. John Dewey, likewise identified the role of emotion in learning but intensified the idea when he stated, “To be set on fire by a thought or scene is to be inspired” (1934, 65). Dewey (1913/1970) said that experience is what happens when emotion and meaning come together. People take interest and become dynamic, concerned, and involved when an outcome in any event becomes important to them. Vygotsky (1926/1997) maintained that adroit evocation of emotion can be a valuable talent and tool. A teacher must want the student to feel deeply He even said, “It is precisely the emotional reactions that have to serve as foundations of the educational process” (107). When a person has an emotional reaction to the
environment, new relations may be formed. Vygotsky also asserted that emotion is essential to fantasy. The ability to imagine is integral to role-playing in an enactment, interacting with an object, or participating in a simulation in a history museum. The Russian psychologist further affirmed that an emotional tinge can attach itself to tastes and smells, making them pleasant or unpleasant. Most people have felt this. Dewey summed up the important effect of emotion on experience by declaring, “When excitement about subject matter goes deep, it stirs up a store of attitudes and meanings derived from prior experiences” (1913/1970, 65).

Social Relationships

Social relationships are another important element of experiential learning. Most of the time, visitors to museums come with friends or family. Even when alone, they may be affected socially by other visitors or museum personnel such as docents, curators, or guards. Dewey (1913/1970) found this relationship worthwhile, not only for children, who love approval and whose every action is bound up with others, but also for adults because they, too, like to engage with others. George Hein (1998), a constructivist himself, encouraged more social interaction and networking for learning of all kinds in the museum. Vygotsky called social environment the “lever” of the educational process (1926/1997, 49). He found the teacher the director of that environment, as well as being its “governor and guide” (49). Freeman Tilden exhibited a more emotional perspective on the interpreter/teacher relationship when he stated, “The interpreter is not just teacher but a companion in the adventure” (1957/1977, 88). He further urged his educators in parks to “love the thing” [whatever they wished the campers to experience] and “love the people” (90). All individuals seek connections with others. If the social relationship is present, the visitor or student will most likely have a more meaningful encounter.
**Personal Meaning**

A last salient characteristic of experiential learning is the personal meaning that the experience brings to the participant. Tilden stated that the visitor to the park or museum has two interests. One is in “whatever touches his personality, his experience, and his ideals” (1957/1977, 11). The other resides in the great human story, as he or she asks, “Why did men act as they did? How would I act under such circumstances? What does it all mean to me?” (24). To illustrate his point, Tilden explained that a visitor to George Washington’s home might find that the first president’s spirit might appeal to him and stimulate him to attempt greater things in his own life. Dewey concurred, saying that an intelligent mind desires “purposeful action—with an activity that means something” (1913/1970, 92). All educators should strive to construct meaningful activity. Tilden acknowledged that this was not easy, for the teacher must sometimes struggle with “what to say; how to point the way; how to connect the visitor’s own life with something, even with one thing” (1957/1977, 105). He also observed that great teaching and great interpreting are the same because in his view teaching was a form of interpretation.

David Kolb (1984) pointed out that, in experiential learning, ideas are not fixed but rather re-formed through further experiences. The learner is free to experiment and to change his or her mind. Vygotsky (1926/1997) believed that the teacher of children should basically just organize the environment in a way which would arouse interest and then let the child make his own meaning. Noting that the Greeks believed all philosophy started with wonder, Vygotsky paralleled this by saying that all new knowledge in the world starts with “a certain sense of craving” (107). He felt that intense longing was a deeply felt need for personal meaning. Tilden explained what he meant in this example:
The prehistoric ruin must somehow manage to convey the notion to the visitor that
the ancients who lived there might come back this very night and renew their
possession, and that there will be a renewal of the grinding of corn, the cries of
children, and the making of love and feasting. (1957/1977, 69)

If such experiences stir the learner, Kolb said he or she can grasp and “transform the
experience” (1984, 41). Knowledge will be acquired through both apprehension and
comprehension; at that point, the visitor who has transformed it into personal meaning can
extend that meaning to other areas of his or her life, enriching them.

Experiential learning is clearly grounded in respected learning theory. Writings of Piaget,
Dewey, Vygotsky, Lewin, Eisner, Hein, and Kolb all affirm its efficacy. The work of master
interpreter Freeman Tilden adds further insight. History museums today have widely adopted
elements of experiential learning in furthering their education mission, but they have not used it
to the utmost. Having shown the positive contributions that participatory learning can make to
patrons, this study reviewed, much like a treasure hunt, documented occurrences of experiential
learning in American history museums through museological literature from early days to the
present. This examination may enhance present museum education practice.

Manifestations of Experiential Learning in History Museums

Although the professional position of museum educator is relatively new, museum
education is not. Philip Youtz declared, “It is the job of the educator to communicate ideas: He
must deal with active thought” (1930). G. B. Goode expressed the same idea in the 1800s, stating
that the museum should be a “house full of ideas” (1901, 72). The Commission on Museums for
a New Century in 1984 suggested that educators should look at operating structures and the ways
people learn in museums and begin a dialogue between the museum and school (Bloom, J.,
Powell, E., III, Hicks, E. & Munley, M. (Eds.), 1984). People’s personal experience with the
exhibits or programming is important, for a concept the museum is presenting will only have
meaning if it can be related to an experience (Guerra, 2006). Interaction with the exhibit on the part of the learner will promote his or her personal growth. The experience will be better if the learner interacts with the environment himself (Hein, 1998). Recently David Carr wrote that people must go through the experience, and that “we enter museums to enter ourselves” (2004, 45). The ultimate goal for any teacher is to bring about a change in the student that has personal meaning to him or her.

History museums have the responsibility of interpreting the past to reflect modern re-examination of history. Colonial Williamsburg added slave quarters and a slave auction, as a result of criticism concerning their absence from a site that was historically peopled predominately with enslaved Africans. An exhibit of the Enola Gay, the B-29 bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb in 1945, stirred much controversy at the National Air and Space Museum. A long section on postwar nuclear race, as well as the “horrible effects” of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was left out after great criticism from veterans and members of Congress (Lewis, N.A., 1994). Another responsibility is to reach out to new and marginalized groups in the community; the museum officials can meet with underrepresented groups to plan museum offerings in exhibits and programs and retain professional leadership privilege while still sharing some of their authority (Wallace, 1996). New points of view stimulate fresh ideas. The Commission on Museums for a New Century recommended that museum educators “reexamine practice” and evaluate exhibits from the point of view of members of the community, explore ways to learn with technology, and take responsibility for educating adults (Bloom, J., Powell, E., III, Hicks, E. & Munley, M. (Eds.), 1984, 60). Sometimes museum guests just want to be entertained, but the wise educator listens to what they say and then leads them to something better. After all, museums are not amusement parks. Visitors should reflect on
information as “particular and disengaged critics” (Wallace, 1996, 125). One successful participatory project for adults and the schools occurred in a program in Michigan called “History Sharing through Our Photographs.” Senior citizens selected family photographs to show to students in schools, and then together they discussed them. One lady, for example, shared that she had driven a wagon across Wyoming, so she could marry a cowboy. The children enjoyed the stories and engaged with the senior citizens. The program was a great success. Another example of adults and children working together occurred when members of a Celtic group decided to help children learn about the Celtic civilization in Europe. They invited children to an outdoor festival to take part in activities in four areas: Food—making butter and cooking oatcakes, fiber—processing wool, forest—a nature hike to see use of forest resources, and fighting—a cattle raid with a run to the fort and screaming (May, 2004).

One who seeks to understand experience looks for the way objects connect with his or her life (Youtz, 1930). Typically in museums visitors create their own meaning through action, touch, or the senses, as well as through intellect. Sometimes a whole family will re-construct its own history. Many of the older collections of history museums are chance accumulations, but, before the turn of the twentieth century, museum director George Brown Goode (1851-1896) felt that historical museums could have a powerful effect on social studies if they changed from being a “cemetery of bric-a-brac into a nursery of living thoughts” (Alexander, 1983, 296). Samuel Langley, third secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, praised the contributions of Goode in his widening the scope of museums. Goode (1901) said a museum always must prove its claim that it is a center of learning, a chief agency of higher civilization. To this end, another early museum director, Charles Willson Peale, published a good catalogue as a guide to the holdings of his museum.
Open-air museums constitute another type of experiential institution. These living museums preserve historical sites and set them in motion with interpreters who do what the people originally did there. The senses become critically important (Anderson, 1984). John Coles, an archeologist at Cambridge, said when one attempts to live as our ancestors did, wishing to resurrect the past, he or she becomes aware of many things but especially of “inventive” abilities (87). Jay Anderson, who sometimes called these museums “time machines,” said they need to address four aspects: context, process, folk life, and cultural difference from the world today (75). Plimoth Plantation, established in 1947, for example, recreated a Pilgrim village; it is a good example of leading visitors to experience the social context, to process the experience, to participate in the activities of folk life, and to engage in discussion about differences as interpreters stay in character. The experience is complex—and the impact varies—as the museum addresses the visitor’s “comfort, culture, community, and curiosity” (Hein, 1998, 150).

Charles Willson Peale, a noted painter who started an American museum in 1785 and two of whose sons became museum directors, once asked, “Can the imagination conceive anything more interesting than such a museum?” (Alexander, 1983, 53) Almost a hundred years later, George B. Goode, due to his scholarship and systematic classification of objects in the museum, was considered the father of the modern American museum. He felt the institution should present objects in such a way that knowledge, culture, and enlightenment would surely follow. He expanded the definition of museum to include zoological parks, botanic gardens, aquariums, some churches, public monuments and even historic cities (Alexander, 1983, 305). He wrote a history of American museums that chronicled the earliest general collections as a bird and insect collection gathered by a Mr. Arnold and a group of wax anatomical models made by Dr. Chovet of Philadelphia and one made by Professor John Morgan of the University of Philadelphia, all in
British colonial times. One of the first museums, a mixture of birds and portraits of presidents, was founded by Peale in Philadelphia in 1785. Peale had taken part in the American Revolution, using his time off the battlefield in painting forty miniatures for soldiers in 1777-78; one soldier commented on this uncommon activity during the war: “he fit and painted and painted and fit” (Alexander, 1983, 51). Peale charged 25 cents admission to the new museum in his house and kept a small menagerie of live animals in a stable. Another way Peale raised money was to publish museum accession lists with donors in Philadelphia news sheets; his marketing strategy worked. Eventually, the American Philadelphia Society was able to lease a new building for a museum, and Peale staged a six-block parade to move all his stuffed animals and museum items to it. Later, his museum would be located in the building known today as Independence Hall. He was innovative in that he gave 40 lectures in four months, illustrating them with stuffed specimens of animals and including music, poetry, guides, and a catalog. He bought a complete skeleton of a mammoth for $300 and started a much publicized excavation at Masten Marl Pit for more. His main contribution to museology was in providing a natural context (habitat) for exhibiting animals. Later, Peale’s sons, Rubens and Rembrandt, would run museums of their own. In 1790, a Dr. Hosack brought the first cabinet of minerals from Europe (Goode, 1901). By 1815 there were the Baltimore Museum, Columbian Museum in Boston, Turrell’s Museum in Boston, and the Western Museum in Cincinnati, funded by Robert Best, M. D. In 1876 the centennial year for the United States, the Smithsonian Institution became a fully-supported museum. That year Goode published a 351-page catalogue of North American animals and fish.

Throughout their existence people have asked an important question about museums: Do they really show history as it is? In depicting the history of a country, even the placement of an object can affect interpretation (Hein, 1998). The history museum staff members hold great
responsibility in presenting one-of-a-kind objects. David Carr said he always wonders what was missing during his visits to the museums. The first historic house opened in 1850, and it presents a case study. At this time, the upper and middle classes were establishing historical associations to preserve old buildings and battlefield sites, and, by 1910, they had created one-hundred house museums to save American identity and values and to “Americanize” the immigrants (Wallace, 1996, 6-8). The visit to these historic shrines would once again blossom in the 1940s through 1960s during the Cold War. In 1948 alone, “one million visitors” made a pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, the birthplace of Washington (18). Founder of the Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey, John Cotton Dana (1856-1929) espoused the philosophy that the museum existed to serve the community. A librarian as well, he declared a then almost radical belief that the ideal library was the center of community with books available to all. He often shocked his contemporaries and started arguments, but his passion was wide public use for the museum (Alexander, 1983). Dana kept the library open every day from nine o’clock to nine o’clock; he allowed community groups to meet there, made a 50 volume library available to teachers to check out, collected magazines and books for physicians, and even established the first children’s library room in the country in 1894. Dana fought censorship and connected with the community, as, for instance, exhibiting paintings by Newark citizens that brought in 32,000 visitors in two weeks in 1903 (390). He appealed to the people with exhibits on locally significant topics including “New Jersey Clay Products” (1915), “New Jersey Textiles” (1916), and “Nothing Takes the Place of Leather” (1926) (396).

Transformation of History Museums

Three major types of history museums evolved out of the traditional museum. Social context fueled this change. The first was the open-air museum. Open-air museums (known also
as living history museums) came into existence in America during the 1920s and after. Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin wrote to Henry Ford to urge him to preserve the town of Williamsburg, Virginia, that he felt automobiles had destroyed. Ford ignored him, but John D. Rockefeller agreed to join in the effort, restoring eighty-two buildings and constructing over three hundred others on their foundations (Wallace, 1996). Rockefeller had already helped preserve certain French shrines; Versailles, for example, needed a new roof, which he provided. Rockefeller was delighted with the results of what came to be known as Colonial Williamsburg, which he wanted to be historically accurate. He did not mind spending seventy-nine million dollars on construction (14). Paradoxically, at the same time, he was building the modern Rockefeller Center in New York City. Colonial Williamsburg just had one problem: It commemorated only the elite planter class. Although the Williamsburg project did not appeal to Henry Ford, he did feel the need to preserve the legacy of American invention and technology. During the 1920s he created Greenfield Village, a miscellany of items with no central idea. A massive museum of the history of technology, it consists of important historic structures relocated to the site as if they were in a single small town. There a European windmill from New England juxtaposes Thomas A. Edison’s original laboratory. Visitors flocked to Dearborn, Michigan, to view Ford’s eclectic but significant collection. By 1944 Herbert Kellar of the McCormick Historical Association in Chicago proposed agricultural and economic living museums (Anderson, 1984). He saw that the old way of farming was passing, and in an increasingly urban society it was important to preserve the farms for the education of future generations. In 1946 Old Sturbridge Village, a New England village of the 1840s with the Pliny Freeman Farm, was founded; there one could get a sense of the life and emotion of the time, although living history sites often present generalizations subjective and incomplete. In 1957
Freeman Tilden of the National Park Service challenged rangers to “unfreeze their sites” and “people” them with demonstration, participation, and animation (1957/1977, 36).

The second type of museum was the outdoor agricultural museum or farm. In 1970, the Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums was established with the proposal of another McCormick Historical Association founder, Marion Clawson, for 25 to 50 living historical farms; this was supported by the Curator of Agriculture at the Smithsonian, John Schlebecker (Anderson, 1984). By 1976, the organization included 71 farms, prehistoric sites, historical parks, battlefields, and forts (36). ALFHAM opened to all open-air sites in 1981—villages, ships, historic houses and others. But the living history sites had to change with the times, so in the 1970s, the issue of slavery came to Williamsburg, and interpreters involved the black community and black historians in their interpretation (Wallace, 1996). Dramatic scenes showed a black family experiencing conflict over whether to harbor a runaway and a slave who practiced voodoo (Lee, 1992). The Brush-Everard house on Palace Green began to be used to tell the story of its sixteen slaves housed there, as well as of the prosperous white family. The opening of the slave quarter at Carter’s Grove in Colonial Williamsburg showed the very different story of these slaves from the ones at the house; it also created a more comprehensive picture of the personal lives of enslaved African Americans of the 1840s. By the late 1960s, the living historical farm movement had promoted the concept of interpreters living in the houses and becoming less clean but more authentic.

The third type of museum was actually already established, but the urban museum worked diligently to transform itself to reach a diverse population. Urban museums found themselves growing distant from residents of changing neighborhoods during the 1960s and 1970s. The Museum of the City of New York tried reaching these audiences, new ethnic groups,
with a 1973 Exhibit on East Harlem and a 1978 Exhibit on Puerto Ricans (Wallace, 1996). In addition it sought to address social issues, as the culture changed and people became more open about sex; for example, it mounted the 1979 Exhibit on Venereal Disease and Drugs, using multimedia. Baltimore’s City Life Museum offered services of after-school programs for children, jobs for teens, and relevant exhibits showing black heroes applying for work in the 1890s parlor, 1940s corporate office, and 1990s microbiology laboratory. The Strong Museum in Rochester welcomed controversial subjects in developing “Altered States” about the use and abuse of drugs from 1920s prohibition to the 1960s “crack” house; visitors could vote on solutions to the problems presented. New sterile, fancy museums were built, which often left out important segments of history or only showed the beautiful; some wags called this being “Williamsburgered,” probably referring to the pristine atmosphere there that ignored the reality of historical facts such as slavery and filth (21). Two projects illustrate the movement to be authentic and to include many voices: the Ellis Island Museum and the Atlanta Historical Society. The Ellis Island Museum was not romanticized; because of academic freedom given and sufficient funds, historians were able to research it completely and spend one hundred and sixty-one million dollars on it (63). Its Isle of Hope and Isle of Tears are realities, true to what occurred there. While historically accurate in presentation, it does not engage the visitor in current debate on tough issues, such as immigration. The Atlanta Historical Society has used innovation in its design, which is a circle with four pods that offer four separate historical environments to which visitors may “time travel” (50). Museums continue to change, evolve, grow, or sometimes die, due to insufficient funds or insufficient vision.

Since learning is a social activity that involves interacting with peers and others, it makes sense to consider social context in all educational endeavors. First-person interpreters recreate
social context each time they take on a persona and interact with others. Sometimes the
interpreters will engage the visitors to historical sites or museums in such a way that those who
wish to experience the community become interpreters themselves. Experienced researcher of
learning in the museum, George E. Hein said, “Positions on intellectual issues also reflect social
political views” (1998, 98). Seldom do museums address political issues that really concern
people, such as overseas wars, immigration, jobs leaving town and factories abroad, and global
warming. One time the New York Public Library did mount an exhibit on garbage, but this was
an exception (Wallace, 1996). Wallace recommended that people locate themselves in time and
become “historically informed makers of history” (128). The Jewish Museum of New York and
the NAACP were able to have a successful dialogue in a shared exhibit called “Bridges and
Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews” (51). Museum professional staff members
have come to admit publicly that they interpret the past and cannot present absolute truth. Jay
Anderson wrote about value judgment in desirable living history museum practices of “logic
underlying work, the seasonal significance of custom, and the temporal dimension of everyday
life” (1984, 77). He was showing how growing and harvest seasons and daylight affected
everything the people did. The process of planting and harvesting and the mixture of colonial
people at Old Sturbridge Village, which includes Yankees, Whigs, rowdies, Presbyterians,
fishermen and serving girls, provide important social context for visitors to experience. What
caus ed history museums to grow? There were collectors, seekers of knowledge, proud
Americans, and social reformers, all of whom wanted them to promote their own interests.

In the 1920s certain business leaders wanted to bring history to the masses. Rockefeller
and Ford represent the most prominent examples. Jefferson’s home of Monticello was restored to
commemorate the contribution of the third President of the United States. During the Great
Depression of the 1930s, the federal government took a more active role in preserving and interpreting the legacy of the past. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal assisted museums in two ways: the Historical American Building Survey and the Federal Writers Project, both of which did excellent documentation of history. The survey identified and provided valuable information about historical buildings, which brought about the next step of saving them. In 1933 the Civil Conservation Corps began restoration projects, and the Historic Sites Act helped bring about preservation. Stone Museum in Pleasant Valley, Connecticut, in the Peoples State Forest, for example, was built by the CCC in 1934. The Federal Writers Project employed out-of-work writers to interview many types of Americans, providing an authentic picture of Americans and their lives in this period of history. One such product was the American Guide Series, a collection of travel guides promoting tourism and patriotism. In 1935, 35 million vacationers drove on the nation’s highways, many of them using the guides (Findlay, J.A. and Bing, M., 1998). Many World War II veterans returned home with a renewed appreciation for the past, while, at the same time, they looked to the future. Following the global conflict, museums came to be seen as having an education function, and major corporations built museums again: Boeing built the Museum of History and Indians in Seattle, for example, in 1952 (Wallace, 1996). In 1954, American Iron and Steel established the Ironworks at Sangus, Massachusetts, and in 1957, R. J. Reynolds restored a tobacco plantation in Old Salem.

In the 1960s and 1970s, people focusing on idealism and social consciousness perceived museums as out-of-touch ivory towers, that is, the province of elite places that had nothing to do with the common man (Bloom, Powell, Hicks, and Munley, (Eds.), 1984). In time museums changed and adapted to new social contexts, adding heritages of many cultural groups—not just the dominant ones, becoming accessible, and reaching out to excluded groups. So many issues
arose, such as civil rights, Vietnam War, protests, and gender-based dissension, that it seemed as if history would be completely rewritten (Wallace, 1996). Blacks, feminists, Native Americans, and antiwar activists began using historical materials to promote their interests. They noticed severe discrepancies in earlier interpretations of the past. One example of a museum changing its programs to meet the needs of Caribbean and African American constituencies is the Brooklyn Children’s Museum which provided parenting classes for teens, after-school programs for children who had to return to an empty home while a parent worked, and a Night Journeys exhibit about dreams that cut across cultures (Lavine, 1992). During this time of turmoil, a grassroots movement began to establish new museums to preserve local culture.

During the 1980s and 1990s, powerful people such as politicians, millionaires, and prominent religious fundamentalists called for a return to the old ways, the old narratives (Wallace, 1996). This backlash against new interpretations and additions of heretofore silenced voices permeated many American institutions—government, education, economics, religion, and culture. Any negative issue, such as poverty or unemployment, was not to be mentioned in the museum. In the 1990s, museums, which were products of the Industrial Age, had to change in order to survive in an information society and employ effectively new communication and media technologies such as the computer, and at the same time help their patrons find their way in this new age (MacDonald, 1992, 158). Now media and entertainment began to dominate the sense of cultural identity, since for some the movie past became “the” past. To address this issue, in 1988, the Smithsonian showed the way Hollywood displayed and distorted the jungle in a series of thought-provoking film clips (Wallace, 1996). The history museum must change to incorporate technology as it is in the twenty-first century. Technology can be helpful, as the California Museum of Paleontology discovered; the museum typically had fifteen visitors a day but
increased by one thousand visitors per day by computer after it began its website (Wallace, 1996, 105). Other museums are fitting into the new social context by adding lobbies, salons, shops, theaters and restaurants, hoping to be the center of community social life (MacDonald, 1992). Longtime museum director Stephen Weil once said, “The texture of American life is thickening. No matter how special we may feel, [museums] are an inextricable part of the American community” (Bloom, Powell, Hicks, & Munley (Eds.), 1984, 19). Social context must be considered in any activity the museum chooses to promote.

Cultural Pluralism and History Museums

A major consideration in any study of learning in museums is the role of multiple cultures. University of Chicago sociologists during the 1920s and 1930s emphasized the value of employing a holistic approach to research and giving voice to people who have been “marginalized by the larger society” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/2007, 9-10). The majority of the history museums have practiced cultural pluralism, which is defined as “two or more distinct groups functioning separately and equally without requiring any assimilation of one into the other” (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006, 32). They have celebrated diversity without confronting injustices or controversial cultural issues. However, after the 1970s, when multiculturalism appeared, some museums took steps to reconsider and change exhibits and programming to reflect and show a valuing of other cultures. The process has been slow.

The definition of hegemony may also inform the present study. It means “ways in which privileged cultural groups maintain dominance of other groups through various cultural agencies that exert power” (Gall, M., Gall, J. & Borg, 1963/2007, 510). In America the dominant Anglo-British culture has tended to frame all experience in terms of its values. Opposing such hegemony may be feminists, social critics, members of ethnic or religious minorities, and others,
who say that *power* must always be considered as a major influence in social relations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/2007). This probably means that all research, even if it seems to be straightforward description, may be colored by the perspective of the author of the document, the informant, or the researcher. While inductive research, that is, study or observation in which a generalized conclusion comes from particular instances, is meant to be a building or emerging process, these thinkers suggest that true inductive reasoning is not possible. Humans make errors and every story may have multiple meanings: Museums are not “repositories of truth” (Hein, 1998, 151). But they can present multiple perspectives.

As early as the late 1800s, G. B. Goode (1901) said the museum of the future should meet the needs of the common man as much as those of the professional man. Exhibits should be cross-cultural since people bring different prior experiences with them (Lavine, 1992). Still, the majority of visitors to most museums are usually white. Delpit (2003) wrote about the culture of power and codes for participation in places such as schools and museums. She discussed five aspects of power: presence of issues of power in classrooms, the codes mentioned above, the codes as a reflection of the culture in power, the acquiring of power by being told the rules, and persons in power least aware of its existence. Many people will never participate in institutions of learning unless someone helps them understand how to gain access to these institutions. This is quite true in museums, which need to be more accessible psychologically. Some museums may need to change narratives for inclusion. Narrative is a way to organize experience and construct identity as humans. It has the “capacity to contain and entertain within it contradictions, nuances, tensions, and complexities” (Cochran-Smith, 2003, 95). After all, a person’s racial ethnicity, class, socioeconomic status, gender, language, national origin, and other cultural features all affect his or her perspective of any experience. A professor of
education at Boston College, Cochran-Smith has examined personal but unconscious racial bias
to inform her teaching and her guidance to students who will become teachers. To facilitate
learning, there must be “discourse,” which implies community (Jeffers, 2003). It is critical to
listen and to engage with others in order to combat the feeling of isolation or of being silenced;
this is especially important when race is a factor in a situation and is not being addressed
(Cochran-Smith, 2003). Museum educators should examine themselves to be sure they are not
keeping alive the cycles of oppression. As long as the impact of race and economic class is
ignored, the dominant class may retain its power. Emotion, experiences, and behavior of those
previously excluded on whatever basis may cause them to demand their place in the museum.
For example, women artists have banned together to promote their art in museums and galleries.
Holocaust museums have combated prejudice. Taboo topics have been approached. When the
New York Public Library decided to give an exhibit on homosexuality in 1994, “Becoming
But the exhibit broke all attendance records with 17,258 in the first week and 1,000 per day from
June to September (Wallace, 1996, 121).

There have been other changes, for example with the inclusion of the Native American
side of exhibits at the Little Bighorn Battlefield, formerly Custer Battlefield. The Chinatown
Historical Museum wanted to reclaim its history but also to connect with its present
neighborhood. When confronted by many different cultures, sometimes the museum needs a new
focus, abandoned canons, training, more help, and a more diverse board (Duitz, 1992).
According to the Commission on Museums for a New Century of the American Association of
Museums, it is time to recognize the wave of new immigrants in small towns and suburbs with a
25% increase in annual population coming from immigrants: 40% Asian; 40% Hispanic (Bloom,
By 2004, one half of the U.S. population was minority (24). The Commission further stated that it is time to recognize the United States’ diverse cultures with new museums.

David Carr explained what a museum can do:

There are many possibilities of experience in the invitational institution: we absorb, hold, assemble, connect, construct; we fabricate; we plan; we expect; we anticipate, we hope; we hypothesize, infer, assume, fantasize; we ask, pause, converse, clarify, return and linger, compare, elaborate, recollect; we remember and evoke; we discover surrender, we become. We thread the needle of our thought, and then we sew. We wait; we want. And as we do, we stitch the fabric of experience. (2004/September/October, 45)

And that fabric must have multiple colors.

A cursory look at tables of contents of a major museological journal, Museum News, revealed that museums are interested in serving various cultural groups. The September/October 2005 issue addressed inclusion of all ages in “Dude, Where’s My Museum? Inviting Teens to Transform Museums” and of various ethnic groups in “Inside the ‘Black Museum.’” In the latter article, author Andrew Masich told of changing his view of the Cheyenne Indians after spending time with Cheyenne elders in a sweat lodge near Custer’s Little Big Horn Battlefield (2005). An article called “Immigrant Voices: A New Language for Museums” appeared in the May/June 2006 issue, while four years before, the May/June issue featured “Identity and Community: A Look at Four Latino Museums.” The second article discussed at length four Latino art museums in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, and Austin, Texas; although they are classified as art museums, it is appropriate to mention them in this paper since all four museums actively interpret and communicate Latino history and culture (Zamora, 2002). Lonnie G. Bunch, the founding director of the Smithsonian’s Museum of African American History and Culture, wrote an article (adapted from his 2005 address to the Association of African American
Museums) that gave four major reasons why a museum specifically about African American history is necessary: “the danger of forgetting,” “the power of inspiration,” “the power of illumination,” and “the mirror,” the last making visible those overlooked but also letting everyone see the commonalities of Americans (2005, 50-53). He also explained why those in the African American museum field need to work together. They would be collaborators, not competitors, developing performances and programs together. They could mount a campaign to collect African American treasures of the past or highlight the work of each other’s museums. All would benefit. Such associations arose out of multiculturalism with a concern for diversity, equity, and social justice.

Another successful ethnic museum that is breaking new ground is the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The museum grew out of discussions with Native Americans. The building itself fits the architecture of Native American thought, for it blurs the distinction between the inside of a building and nature outside. The people are participating in developing exhibits, and the main idea reflected in the museum is the presence and identity of the Native peoples now: “Don’t you dare indicate that we are a historical relic” (Hayden, 2004, 52).

Another museum journal, Cultural Resources Management, now known as CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship, also documents museums’ research and exhibits of multicultural topics. For example, Karen Byrne’s “Ethnic Exhibits and Public Controversy” is about a temporary exhibit entitled “Jewish Soldiers in the Civil War,” at Ford’s Theater Museum. Its dual purpose was to address discrimination and to present human interest stories of Jewish soldiers on both sides, including that of Benjamin Levy, a drummer boy who became the first Jew to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor (1998). Surprisingly, it caused great
controversy as some people felt it was divisive and promoted the interests of one ethnic group (1998). Issue 2 of 1997 of the journal contained 27 articles about African-American history, and Issue 20 of 1997 contained 30 articles about Hispanic history. Multiculturalism is also an evolving conception, more inclusive with cultural relevance and educational equity. It addresses social injustice. The sample reviewed here tended to reflect more of the celebratory approach to cultural diversity.

This chapter has discussed the characteristics of experiential learning and the major theorists whose work support them. It has also informed the reader about the manifestation of experiential learning in history museums, the way museums have changed in America, and the way cultures have been included in the institutions. Chapter 3 gives the resources and procedure used in conducting the study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This qualitative study employed a descriptive research design. The chapter is divided into the descriptive research design, document analysis and structured interview, and the data collection process used to ascertain the evolvement of experiential learning in history museums from 1787 to the present.

Descriptive Research Design

Beginning with the primary research focus: How experiential learning has evolved over time as an educational component in the history museums of the United States, the study examined emerging themes and patterns. Other concerns addressed were antecedents of experiential learning in the museum, social contexts of the times from point of origin of the museum in the United States, and the representation of multicultural content in exhibits and programming to the present day. The purpose of the study was to examine the implementation of experiential education in American history museums, so that museum educators may be better informed about this pedagogy. It was accomplished by a thorough review of documentation of practice in the literature from 1787 to 2007 and interviews with museum personnel who came to light as practitioners of experiential learning in the present.

Qualitative research was appropriate for this study. Its soft data was “rich in description of people, places and conversations and not easily handled by statistical procedures” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982/2007, 2). The purpose was to look at every aspect of a problem or phenomena or behavior in its environment, in this case, the phenomena of experiential learning. With roots in many academic disciplines, such as history, sociology, and anthropology, qualitative research is “dynamic, problematic, open-ended and complex” (Gall, M., Gall, J. and Borg, 1963/2007, 490).
Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen claim that most qualitative researchers see what they produce as a “particular rendering or interpretation of reality grounded in the empirical world—producing an interpretation of reality that is useful in understanding the human condition” (1982/2007, 27).

One of the daunting tasks of the qualitative researcher, while collecting all possible data, is to evaluate it; he or she is to search and find “essences” and themes in the material (Wolcott, H.F., 2001, 44). Qualitative research considers concepts of meaning, everyday life, and descriptive data such as “personal documentation, field notes, photographs, people’s own words, official documents, and other artifacts” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982/2007, 44-45). Sometimes a visit to a place or person who appears repeatedly in the literature is in order. Empathy with subjects and awareness of one’s own perspectives is key.

Knowing the past and present practice of the use of experience in museum programming may help museum educators now in the field. Descriptive research concerns the current or past status of a topic and asks “what is” and “what was,” as it “describes achievements, attitudes, behavior, or other characteristics of a group of subjects” (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997, 281). An authentic depiction of the topic is an effective way to begin any study, so that cause and effect, development, and/or differences from other like subjects may be tracked, and the meaning of people or things may be understood (Gall, M. et al, 1963/2007). The result is thick description, a term which denotes “statements that re-create a situation and as much of its context as possible” (451). Through this methodology, the researcher can understand the perspectives of the subjects, asking them pertinent questions not only to uncover the experience but also any and all meanings they assign to such experience and the ways they build community in their lives (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982/2007).
Another type of research is historical research. Historical research, often descriptive in nature, looks for data to explain a phenomenon from the past so that present practice can be better understood (Gall, M. et al, 1963/2007). Any time one describes persons, places or events, there is a possibility of rich data being collected that could be gathered in no other manner. In observing people or events or conducting an interview, for example, good fortune can play a role. Furthermore, patterns, which are types of variation in one case that can be related to variations in another case, and themes, which are “salient, characteristic features of a case,” hopefully will emerge (452). This means that some topics will repeatedly occur. They may show a pattern or an idea that is characteristic of several examples. These will assist the researcher in analysis.

Historical research and qualitative research share these qualities: emphasis on context, consideration of behavior in natural settings, appreciation of the “whole” experience, and the importance of interpretation in the process (Edson, 1986, 13-27). The two mesh well. Qualitative research seeks to include the perspectives of informants, so context will be included as much as is feasible in and through methods used in the study. Some of the methods in descriptive design may include observation, surveys, interviews, and document review. The process is very important, encompassing source and method of recording raw data, analysis of data, notes on process, description of concrete events, use of quotations from participants, and “contextual completeness” (Gall, M. et al, 1963/2007, 474-475). The question in any historical inquiry remains: Is it possible to reconstruct events on records of others? The researcher must be astute, noting details that have been left out and having the ability to organize data. Some of the archival materials the researcher may read are diaries, letters, and other accounts in related material in libraries. Often the researcher must discard expectations and view every page, searching for any
incident or even word that is relevant to his or her topic. Data collected can come in the form of
words or pictures in a variety of sources (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982/2007).

Document Analysis and Structured Interview

The research method consisted of two phases. The document analysis phase started to
reveal patterns and key words. These dictated the premier museums which were using
experiential learning. This in turn led to names of educators to interview for the study. The
document analysis process also led to formation of interview questions, key places, and
prominent practitioners of experiential learning. In addition, some informants recommended
other interviewees. For example, committee member Dr. Baker recommended a National Park
Service interpreter, William Gwaltney. He recommended other people to interview, such as
independent exhibit developer, Dr. Deborah Mack. That was the second phase, structured
interview.

Repositories of information used included the libraries of the following universities:
University of North Texas in Denton, Texas; Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas;
and Baylor University in Waco, Texas, with special help from the Library of the Department of
Museum Studies at Baylor for the data collection process. The latter is the best collection of
museum studies materials in the state of Texas. In addition, the Cleburne Public Library in
Cleburne, Texas, has made available materials through the interlibrary loan system. Research for
this study also includes work at the New York Public Library, the research library and archives
at Brooklyn Museum, and the research library and archives at Newark Museum in Newark, New
Jersey, which houses writings of museum pioneer John Cotton Dana.

The procedure of data collection included both document analysis of secondary sources
and primary sources and the structured interview. Secondary sources were books on the history
of museums. Primary sources included professional journals, newspapers, letters, programs, and pamphlets from archives. A document analysis of the professional journals that discuss museum programming and operations furnished ample proof that experiential learning has been used in the past and continues to expand. The journals, though drawn from the fields of education (*Journal of Museum Education*), history (*History News*), museum studies (*Museum News*), and aesthetics (*Journal of Aesthetic Education*), all contained studies of museums. *The New York Times* documented small events at the museums that would not merit a magazine or journal article, giving a more complete picture of education. The second part of the process was the structured interviews, which were primary sources. The time period itself, 1787 to August 2007, came first from the literature and then the opportunity to interview competent practitioners of experiential learning in the field today.

The *Living Historical Farms Bulletin* became *ALHFAM Bulletin* in summer 1992. It has run every other month from 1970 to the present and is published by the Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums, an organization for open-air history museums and related sites. It includes general and topical articles on historical agriculture, trades, clothing, foodways, interpretation, historic site administration, and living history interpretation, as well as book reviews. This publication which grew from a few mimeographed pages of events at different open-air museums, primarily farms in 1970, contained a plethora of experiential learning. It enabled the researcher to see the breadth and depth of simulated living and reverence for old crafts and old times among some excellent museums and museum personnel. Deborah Reid, the secretary of the organization, provided insight into the organization, which still promotes community among its members. Perhaps half of all experiential learning reported takes place at the sites mentioned in this journal.
_{American Historical Review}, 1895-present, is published by the American Historical Association, which was chartered by Congress to oversee the protection of the historical legacy of the United States and is the most influential scholarly journal in the United States. Issued quarterly, its mission is the dissemination and evaluation of historical scholarship, using comparative and transnational themes. It is published at Indiana University. Normally museum personnel and historians do not tread on each other’s territory. But Randolph Starn thought that historians should be concerned about museum work. He wrote a brief guide to museum studies after the late 1980s; it was published in this journal. It may have been the most helpful article of all as it led to work of other scholars in the museum field.

_{Common Ground: Archeology and Ethnography in the Public Interest_ has run from spring 1996 to the present. Formerly _Federal Archeology_, it is published by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior. “Common ground” refers to space, physical or psychological. Although the journal emphasizes archeological resources, it deals broadly with cultural resources of all types. Readers include those in governments, universities, and private firms, as well as land managers, curators, Native Americans, and others. Although the researcher had not predicted it, the National Park Service emerged as a major proponent of experiential education. This journal documented how the park rangers have changed in their interpretative methods.

_{CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship_ has been published twice each year by the National Park Service, since fall 2003. Formerly titled _CRM_ or _Cultural Resources Management_, the National Park Service issued it under this name from 1977 to 2002. It addresses history and development of trends and emerging issues in cultural resources in the United States and abroad. This publication particularly addressed children’s activities such as a field trip to Fort Frederica.
National Museum in Georgia, which introduced them to local history through excavations, and the treatment of different cultures at the historic sites managed by the National Park Service. The renaming of The Battlefield of Little Bighorn (for the Native Americans) evoked emotion, for example. The service teaches a reverence for historic places through this instrument.

The *Curator* is a juried quarterly publication issued by the American Museum of Natural History since 1958. It is a professional journal for the expression of comment, reflection, and research on all the activities of museum work. *The Curator* yielded few but fruitful articles. Articles tended to be more developed and more elegantly written than in some of the journals; the experiential learning episodes in *The Curator* were rich in detail. Edward Alexander, in a 1961 issue, built a descriptive picture of Peale’s Philadelphia museum and of Colonial Williamsburg. To the rich sensory description, he added the ideas and feelings the people who once lived there.

The *Docent Educator* was a quarterly publication begun in autumn 1991 and continuing to winter 2004, with the index in the final issue. It was a national professional journal for docents published in Seattle, Washington, and contained innovative methods and examples of successful programs for the needs of docents. It was discontinued because the creator could no longer sustain the publication. This small paper, for that was what it was the majority of the time, had some of the best-constructed hands-on learning activities. For example, in a 1997 issue, a docent suggests children’s activities such as learning to make a tipi and design a parfleche at The Plains Indian Museum in the Buffalo Bill History Center in Cody, Wyoming. It truly served the needs of docents and the needs of this investigation.

*Forum Journal* is published quarterly by the Center for Preservation Leadership at the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C. It is a forum in which to express
opinions, encourage debate, and convey information to Forum members who wish to save America’s diverse places and revitalize communities. The journal has begun to feature many articles about children’s experiential learning at historic sites, such as an excavation by fifth graders at Henry Clay’s Home in Ashland, Kentucky. This was helpful. The National Park Service’s new interpretation of historic sites such as Little Rock’s Central High School National Historical Site and Manzanar National Historical Site (for the Japanese Americans interred there during World War II) were also helpful.

*History News* is published by the American Association for State and Local History, the national professional organization for history museums. Its purposes are to advance knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of regional and local history in the United States and Canada and to serve as a clearinghouse for articles on historic preservation and history museums. It has been issued since 1945. The primary contribution of *History News* to this study was the diversity of activities in “doing” history, many of which related to one of the types of historical museums. For example, a 1989 issue gave instances of experiential learning from children’s museums in seven states. Exploration of diversity at the Southern Jewish Experience’s residential seminar for teachers was featured in 1994, while a 2003 issue documented a study of the Chinese immigrant experience based on the Chinese Underground Tunnel Tour in Pendleton, Oregon.

*International Journal of Heritage Studies*, published bimonthly by Routledge in London and New York, has been published since 1984. It is an academic, refereed journal for scholars and practitioners from many disciplines who work in heritage and cultural preservation and interpretation. Its topics vary from aesthetic objects in the museum to wildlife in a nature reserve. Only one of these was used, but the discourse of David Carr is always worth reading and reflecting on.
The *Journal of Aesthetic Education* is published quarterly as a cooperative venture of the Superintendent of Schools in Springfield, Illinois, and the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. It has been issued since spring 1966. It stimulates understanding of aesthetic education and study and appreciation of music, literature, dance, visual arts, film, theater, architecture and the aesthetic dimensions of all life and education. Even though this is an arts journal, the elegant writing style of David Fenner and the creative thoughts of Carol Jeffers about “experience” in the museum drew the researcher to this publication.

*Journal of Experiential Education* is issued by the Association of Experiential Education members and published three times annually as a professional journal by Indiana University Press. Peer reviewed, it has been published since 1978 and features a diverse range of articles on outdoor education, service learning, environmental education, research and theory, and therapeutic applications. The Association began 35 years ago as an outdoor adventure organization, but now it has drawn academic staff in. Ongoing research, particularly brain research, should prove interesting. The contribution to this study was the excellent presentation of land-based education, experiential in nature.

*Journal of Museum Education* is published three times per year by the Museum Educators Roundtable with editing in Washington, D.C. It has been issued since 1975 and encourages and reports practices in the field in context of related theory. From the first *Roundtable Report*, this journal has addressed specific questions of interest to the educator in the museum. Theoretical and practical solutions exist side by side in articles. It is an exciting forum for educators. The fall 1984 issue illustrates this principle as the copy explores characteristics of older adults, statistics of the growing population of seniors, and appropriate programming.

*Museum News* is a semi-scholarly magazine published bimonthly by the American
Association of Museums. Written for museum professionals by museum professionals, it has the most comprehensive coverage of current issues and trends in the field. It has been issued since 1922. Without Museum News this study could not be realized. Year after year the magazine yielded traces of the use of education and experiential learning in the museum. Many rich examples emanated from this source.

Museum Studies Journal is published twice a year by the Center for Museum Studies, John F. Kennedy Center, San Francisco. It has been issued since spring 1982. Its focus is museological research, museum history, and discussion of controversial issues for museum professional staff and students. Only one of these was used for a specific article, that is, Jane Addams at Hull House. It was a valuable contribution for establishing early examples of experiential learning.

The Museline is a quarterly publication of the Texas Association of Museums, which has been published since 1982. It highlights Texas museum events, fostering educational and cultural opportunities. In 2007 it became an electronic online publication. Study of this publication led the researcher to events at Texas museums. It also led to B. J. Pine and J. H. Gilmore, marketing cofounders of Aurora, Ohio-based Strategic Horizons LLP, who conduct seminars to help participants create experiential learning in their institutions and communities.

Museum International is published quarterly by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and has important information for curators, managers, educators, documentalists (or archivists), volunteers, and museum professionals in a variety of fields. Thematic and readable, the periodical states that its purpose is to create and improve museums of the world. It has been issued by UNESCO since 1948 and is published in separate editions in French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and English. Its initial title was Museum. This journal was used once, as its focus in
other peoples draws it away from the Americas.

The *Public Historian* is a peer-reviewed quarterly published by the Department of History at the University of California at Santa Barbara and the National Council on Public History. It has been published since fall 1978. It relates to the field of public history, including museums and addresses methodology, professional matters, research, and reports. A deeper look unearthed the reviews of major exhibits at the back of the journal, many of which were interactive or experiential in nature, and led to exhibit developers and other museums, such as an insightful look at the Cold War through the exhibit, *When Barbie Dated G.I. Joe*.

The second type of document analysis involved newspapers. I looked at *The New York Times*, 1851 to present, using the archives on the Internet. *The New York Times* offers abstracts of significant news on business, education, international and domestic affairs, technology, sports, science, health, arts, style, and travel. It provides helpful historic reports on museums and educational activities within these institutions.

Through a computer search a few other newspapers have appeared. The newspapers gave evidence of hands-on work not reported in the journals: events, exhibits and programs. Experiential learning often appeared in New York, the birthplace of many museums. The newspaper yielded much on social context as it related to the large museums such as the American Museum of Natural History. The attendance at that museum and other New York museums in the early part of the twentieth century was often reported as 5,000 for a lecture or 63,000 for total attendance at an exhibit.

A third form of document analysis consisted of books that concern the history of the museum and significant founders and their philosophies, as well as more recent developments.
Directors and educators Charles Willson Peale, George Brown Goode, John Cotton Dana, S. Dillon Ripley, and Joseph Veach Noble had an inestimable influence on today’s museum. Some of these names also appeared in the journal articles, while titles of both books and journals were available through well-known databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, MUSE, and WORLDCAT. Such databases enable students to extend their research far beyond what was possible in the past and gain access to much more material.

Today’s researcher literally has the world at her fingertips via the Internet and these mechanisms to guide one through it. ERIC stands for Educational Resources Information Center, a national information system providing users with ready access to more than 1.2 million bibliographical records of journal articles. It is sponsored by the United States Department of Education. JSTOR, which is short for Journal Storage, is an online system for archiving academic journals in full-text; some of the material dates back to 1665. MUSE is a unique collaboration between libraries and sixty scholarly publishers with 100% full-text, affordable and user-friendly online access to over three hundred high quality humanities, arts, and social science journals. Finally, WORLDCAT is the world’s largest network of libraries content and services. Users can search collections in thousands of libraries in the world. For instance, once the researcher identifies a journal or book, he can access WORLDCAT to find out which libraries in the world have it. The key words used for my search were “museum” and “museum education.” There was no mention of “experiential learning” until the 1980s.

The fourth source for document analysis included pamphlets and programs by John Cotton Dana at Newark Museum in New Jersey, a letter from the educator at the Brooklyn Museum Archives and Research Library ordering supplies for hands-on activities, and the old logs at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut. These primary sources were quite valuable to the
The second form of data collection in the procedure was structured oral interviews, conducted mainly by telephone with a few interviews in person. Staff at museums which had published numerous articles on experiential learning in the literature were able to provide further insight on the continuation of experiential learning or context or multiculturalism at their institutions. I did request interviews with educators at Rancho de los Alamitos and the Field Museum, but the educators were too busy at that time. Another way interviewees were discovered was through recommendations by other informants. The persons interviewed included Dr. Jay Anderson at Utah State University, sometimes known as the father of living history; Cathy Barthelemy at Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Alexa Fairchild at Brooklyn Museum, Jay Gaynor and Kristen Spivey at Colonial Williamsburg, William W. Gwaltney from the National Park Service, Dr. Ed Hood at Old Sturbridge Village, Mike King of Rancho de Las Golondrinas, Dr. Deborah Mack, an independent exhibit developer in Savannah, Georgia; Lisa Marcinkowski at Mystic Seaport, David Allison and Nancy Stark at Conner Prairie Museum, and a group of educators from the Brooklyn Children’s Museum: Kayla Dove, Roslyn Smith, Gloria Cones, Delia Meza, and Aiesha Turman. Many of these people are well-known in the field. Dr. Anderson, for example, has written the earliest books for living history and worked to develop several living history sites, which use experiential education.

The majority of the data emerged from a document analysis of the print sources.

Procedure

The topic selected was the evolution of experiential learning in the American history museum. A preliminary survey of the *Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums Bulletin*, 1970-Fall 2006, and *Museum News*, 1975-Fall 2006 revealed that present
educators were employing experiential learning in programs. This immersion into the last thirty years of museum development and education helped me to understand what was possible and to find a working definition of *experiential learning* as used by museums.

Dr. T. Lindsay Baker, a member of the dissertation committee, has given invaluable advice on resources, museums, and museum personnel. Having spent his career in history museums in Texas, taught university history courses, and written numerous books, Dr. Baker is well-qualified to direct research on museums. At present he is the associate professor of social sciences and W.K. Gordon Chair of Industrial Texas and Director of the W.K. Gordon Center (Thurber, Texas) at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. He helped merge two worlds with a common purpose: history of an educational method in museums, rather than schools, with implications for both.

After the preliminary survey, the process used was location of material by theorists whose work illuminated experiential education. Hundreds of articles from the journals were located in the Library of the Department of Museum Studies at Baylor University. In the early days of the American museum, lines were not so clearly drawn between specific types; for example, a museum such as Charles Willson Peale’s in the eighteenth century exhibited stuffed wildlife, portraits he painted of the presidents, and some historical items in the old Pennsylvania State House. Consequently, information about any museum from this early period was used. Next, a computer search of the *New York Times* was in order. This revealed examples of experiential education as shown in museum program publicity, although the term itself seldom appeared.

After gleaning appropriate sources on experiential learning in books, journals, and newspapers, the material gathered was searched for emerging patterns and themes. And after
studying the sources in chronological order, arrangement of the material by methods of delivery of experiential learning offered another perspective. For example, one trend of outreach was called traveling trunks, a term picked up in the 1970s; yet now these loans to schools could be documented from early twentieth century with John Dana at the Newark Museum in New Jersey and continue to spring 2007 with museum educator Cathy Barthelemy at the Fort Worth Science and History Museum in Texas. Next I traveled to New York City, the nursery of many museums such as the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, to undertake interviews and to look at archives of some of these prominent museums plus materials in the venerable New York Public Library. In addition, I undertook telephone interviews with educators at exceptional institutions which include Old Sturbridge Village, Conner Prairie, Colonial Williamsburg, and visited Mystic Seaport, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn Children’s Museum, and Newark Museum. Museums were also visited just to inform understanding of articles about them; these included the Museum of the City of New York, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Questions were developed for the interview to address issues in the research question. As shown in the appendix, of most importance were the queries about the actual use of experiential learning in the museum, both for children and adults. Social context and multicultural inclusion were also approached. Each staff member who was interviewed was fully informed of how data collected would be used. I conducted the interviews. After each session, written notes were printed and a printed copy of the notes was given to the informant for him or her to check to insure that the information recorded was accurate. A major goal was using many voices to tell a more complete story of how experiential learning has been employed by museum professional educators.
The content of the interviews has led to valuable information about present practice that is not available in any other way. After giving the following definition of experiential education: learning with a physical dimension: learner must participate, rather than just observe—most obviously in doing something such as sawing wood, or, more subtly, in assuming a role of a historical character, for example, seven questions were asked. The seven questions were as follows:

1. Are you providing experiential education in your museum programming at this time?
2. If yes, please give examples of experiential education in children’s programming.
3. What is the number of programs for children with experiential learning in the past twelve months? What percentage of the total is this?
4. If adult programs have included experiential education, please give examples of these.
5. What is the number of programs for adults with experiential learning in the past twelve months? What percentage of the total is this?
6. What ethnicities and different cultures have taken part in such programs? How effective was this educational method?
7. Does experiential education fit in with the social context of your institution? Why or why not?

The results of the data collection process included a wealth of material on experiential learning, with the bulk of it coming from journals. Almost three hundred articles mentioned experiential learning, though not by that name. Most of the time the words “participation” and “involvement” were employed. Through WORLDCAT.com important first-hand material became available, so the researcher traveled to Baylor University or Newark Museum or the New York Public Library to see the material. Going to New York and Connecticut and New
Jersey and visiting museums throughout the summer added more insight about how experiential learning works out in programming. Activities at Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Connecticut, were exemplary programs.

The second phase of data collection, the structured interview, took place in July and August. The seventeen educators interviewed were open and willing to talk of their experiences. Often they had worked at other museums and could add insight about experiential learning at those institutions. They had also visited many museums and knew much about other curriculums. A roundtable discussion with five educators at Brooklyn Children’s Museum proved especially helpful as the researcher noted the interaction among the staff. The knowledge gained from the telephone interviews was material that is not written anywhere. It added a completeness or wholeness to the study, especially the information from the National Park Services administrator and the independent exhibit developer, Dr. Mack, who contracts with museums to design and develop exhibits. Each person interviewed contributed valuable facts and comments about experiential learning to this investigation.

The findings from this data collection process extending from 1787 to 2007 are presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter reports the findings of the study and a discussion of those results. Examples of experiential learning in American history museums are cited here from a thorough search of historical sources, and museum literature, as well as interviews of professional educators at institutions known to use the method extensively. Besides museums, historical societies and expositions sponsored by them have been included in the early literature, for many historical societies later started museums.

Americans have a long tradition of being “doers”; this quality has appeared in the museum through the method of experiential learning. From the museum of Charles Willson Peale in 1787 to the forthcoming exhibit “African Burial Ground,” collaborated on by exhibit developer Dr. Deborah Mack, to open in the fall of 2007 (phase 1) and in the fall of 2008 (phase 2), history museums have been involved in experiential learning.

The first invited visitors to play an organ and have a profile drawn, while the latter invites students to ask questions about remains found there and to tell their own stories. From 1787 to 2007, there was no differentiation into specialized museums. Similarly, some children’s museums deal with wide ranges of subjects. Consequently, both they and early institutions of no designation have been included in this study.

The focus of this study is experiential learning. The investigation also explores the social context of some exhibits and the inclusiveness of multicultural themes and audiences. Indeed, what occurs in museums mirrors quite well what happens in society. Because of a paucity of information from 1787 to 1899, the first 120 years are grouped together. After the first 120 years, the chapter is divided into decades because of the historical periods already established in
people’s minds. Each decade begins with general descriptors of the time period. Following the findings is a discussion of results as they answer the major research question and the ancillary research questions. Each decade provides more information as experiential education grows.

Findings

History Comes Alive: 1780-1899

Experiential learning took place in American museums from their earliest years. Early museum founders seemed fascinated with history and often offered somewhat sensational exhibits to attract the public. They hoped to bring history to life through audience participation. Our distance in time from these beginnings, however, makes it more difficult for us to document the hands-on education that occurred as the pioneer museums were growing in maturity. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contests and entertainment attracted people into historical museums or fairs. As early as 1787, Charles Willson Peale at the Philadelphia Museum offered visitors the opportunity to plan an organ or to have their profiles drawn by a physiognomitian machine (Goode, 1901, 70). The machine captured external facial features that might reveal qualities of mind or character by their configuration. The American Museum in New York also emphasized the arts by sponsoring a competition in 1855 that offered money prizes for the best original five-act play (The museum prize plays, 1855). The winner received $500 with $250 going to the one in second place. Would-be playwrights submitted 57 manuscripts. In that same year, Barnum’s Museum in New York used two sensational contests to draw in visitors. One was a very popular “Baby Contest.” Parents entered their offspring in three categories for prize money: triplets, twins, and fat children (The baby show, 1855, 8). The second competition was a beauty contest in which gentlemen could submit daguerreotype photographs of lady friends to hang in the museum for three months. There visitors voted for the
100 most attractive contestants (Barnum forever, 1855). The winning women received $10 and
posed for full length oil paintings that hung in the museum for three months. During the time,
visitors viewed and voted for the top twenty. The grand prize winner received 1,000 dollars.

In 1882 Bunnell’s Museum also chose to mount its own beauty contest. Twenty
young ladies competed in person, and visitors voted for their favorite. It took the staff eight hours
to count the thousands of votes cast (The contest of beauty, 1882). The ten winners appeared the
next week at the museum, with one of them chosen as the “handsomest woman in America” (2).
With her golden hair and blue eyes, the winner received 100 dollars in gold. The participation of
museum visitors in voting drew them to the institutions by the thousands.

Expositions also offered experiences to people. The California Midwinter Exposition in
San Francisco in 1893 featured a recreation hall plus grounds on which visitors could participate
in athletic contests (Golden state’s great fair, 1893). The next year the fair recreated mining
camps and provided two opportunities for adults to engage in hands-on activities. In the dance
house, “young and pretty Spanish girls” gave visitors instruction in the steps of the fandango
(Mining camp relics, 1894, 3). A recreated gambling hall afforded some adults the opportunity to
buy chips or get free “gold dust” and learn how to play “roulette, monte, Indian poker, chuck-a-
luck, and faro” (3). History was coming to life. And then came the turn of a new century.

The “Immigrant Problem”: 1900-1909

Notable events during the progressive era in the first decade of the twentieth century
included the Gold Standard Act, the assassination of President McKinley, the 1906 Earthquake
of San Francisco, and the for-medicinal-purposes-only restrictions on opium. Many Americans
also became concerned about the integration of massive numbers of immigrants who were
arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe. One problem was the breakdown of the families, the
alienation and fragmentation. By denigrating their roots and becoming Americanized, the youth were alienated from their parents. The schools drew the children from their heritage, causing conflict in the home. Museums embraced the intercultural movement led by Rachel Dubois, cultural pluralism, which celebrated the contributions of ethnic groups. In this way perhaps healing could come to the intergenerational conflicts. New York and other cities filled with new arrivals which were willing to work for low wages. Overcrowding, another problem, resulted. Some 500,000 of the overall 4,500,000 people in New York City lived on just 864 acres with as many as 5,000 people on some blocks (The growing evil, 1908, 8). Such situations inspired a two-week exhibit by a committee representing city departments and “public-spirited organizations” at the American Museum of Natural History (8). People came to the museum to discuss what to do about the massive human influx, a type of participation. In 1908 the same museum mounted a three-floor show, the “International Tuberculosis Exhibit,” about the spread and prevention of tuberculosis, in response to strong public health concern about the disease (Tuberculosis shows, 1908). In order to reach members of the community, museum staff members prepared labels in English, German, Italian and Yiddish. They even promoted immigrant visitation by organizing a Jewish Day that drew 63,112 people, more than had ever come to the museum in a single day (7). All the guests remained orderly, though they came in squads of 1,000 through multiple doors.

Jane Addams, the founder of the settlement house movement, at Hull House in Chicago in 1900 created a Labor Museum that actively applied principles of experiential learning. Her older foreign born visitors could put into use tools of the types formerly used in labor in the “old country” and “delight to show that they, too, have ability to produce interesting and useful products” (Foibles of the fair sex, 1904, p.35). Addams empowered immigrants by giving them
the chance to demonstrate to their children these skills (p. 35).

Children had the opportunity to participate physically in activities at many museums during the first decade of the twentieth century. The American Museum of Natural History in New York welcomed them as well as adults. Staff members assembled cases containing four sets of mounted birds (owl, robin, blue jay and bluebird) that schools could borrow for children to see, handle, draw, and write about (City children taught, 1905). These sets were followed by specimen cases of insects, mollusks and other animals. This is an early example of loan kits consisting of hands-on teaching materials that came to be known later as “traveling trunks.” In 1907, the museum exhibited the work of kindergarten children in the basement for the International Kindergarten Union Convention at Teachers’ College. The art work of the children, which included paintings and clay models, some of them quite good, reflected children’s surroundings: New York lamp posts, washing hanging on the roof, a boy flying a kite, flags, circus, trolley car, and the Brooklyn Bridge (Work of tiny hands, 1907). In 1899 the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, the first of its type in the country, came into existence. An early influential director, Anna Billings Gallup, said, “Whether [the visiting child] copies a label, reads a quotation, talks about the group of muskrats with his playfellows…matters but little so long as the effect of the visit is to enhance his love for the best things in life” (1908, 371). The children could sort and polish minerals or borrow objects to study and play with at home. In an attempt to involve older young people in 1905, high school students under the supervision of Brooklyn Children’s Museum educator Mary Day Lee built a wireless telegraph station (Paine, 1999). In 1910 a secretary, Marguerite Wilson Carmichael, helped young people to organize a tree club, which eventually planted and maintained thousands of trees in Brooklyn.

Hands-on education found fertile soil in which to grow during the Progressive Era.
Immigrants were encouraged to come to the museums. The first children’s museum flourished in this first decade of the new century. In addition, the first loan kits or traveling trunks and the first hobby clubs were created. The immigrant problem, however, was not solved and would continue to impact society.

**The Great War: 1910-1919**

From 1910 to 1919, the American people continued to be concerned about the integration of growing numbers of immigrants, but the threat, and then the reality of a world war overshadowed everything else. The Great War occupied the minds of many Americans. It was to be the war that ended all wars. Instead, it would provide fertile ground for another world conflagration. Following the conflict, the 1918 Spanish Influenza epidemic swept the nation. Inventions, such as the automobile and the airplane, were changing society. Amendments to *The Constitution* creating the income tax, prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages, and giving women the right to vote also impacted all Americans.

Museums reached adults with experiential education, benefiting many of them. For example, over 50 young upper-class men and women studied a Hopi Indian snake dance and wore Hopi costumes to perform the dance at a funds-raising event for the blind at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City (Society, studies, 1914). After American entry into World War I, a time when the government encouraged conservation of food and fiber, the museum sponsored a program to encourage people to eat tinned whale meat as a substitute for beef (Whale meat lunch, 1918). Explorer Admiral Robert Edwin Peary came to lend support and join in the meal of whale meat served four ways. The museum wished to support the war effort in this small way.

Children continued to engage in learning activities in museums during the teens of the
twentieth century. At the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, Albert Brooks set up a telescope every Monday night in the months of June through October in nearby Bedford Park so that young people could observe the moon and constellations (Paine, 1999). Children there also collected salvage and grew victory gardens in the war effort. At the American Museum of Natural History in New York, 50 children, aged 5 to 15, met Wednesday afternoons or Saturday mornings to model with clay or draw animals from live and/or wax specimens (Developing artistic instinct in children, 1911). Enamored with magic lantern slides of photography, the museum educator, nevertheless, developed programs in which blind children could touch special collections (Teach blind, 1915). The American Museum of Natural History also circulated 10,000 specimens to an estimated 1,300,000 school children in traveling loan kits in 1915 (p. 6). Service to the blind and to the public schools clearly had become a priority for the museum.

Through the decade of the teens, museums continued to serve children and displayed a social conscience. People worried about entry into the Great War and did what they could to help. Museums offered increasing opportunities for participatory learning as they sought to be active in their communities.

Roaring Optimism: 1920-1929

The 1920s included good events such as the opening of the Lincoln Memorial, Macy’s first Thanksgiving Parade, the first nonstop solo transatlantic flight of The Spirit of St. Louis, penicillin, and Babe Ruth’s homerun record. A time of prosperity and optimism buoyed the spirits of the people for the majority of the decade. Museums were increasing in number, and the opportunities for experiential learning were expanding. But it was also a time of the United Soviet Socialist Republic being led by Stalin, 40,000 Ku Klux Klan members marching on Washington, D.C., and the Scopes Monkey Trial about teaching evolution in the schools.
Perhaps the darkest day was October 29, 1929, the Stock Market Crash.

Programs of projected magic lantern slides had given way to radio shows and motion pictures, though lectures were still popular. Experiential education continued to thrive. Millionaire John D. Rockefeller had underwritten the creation of a large open-air museum, Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, which became the largest open-air museum in America. Concurrently Henry Ford built Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, to spotlight the history of American technology and to honor great inventors. These institutions eventually became leaders in experiential education.

Museums invited adults to participate in many different types of learning activities. In 1924 John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum in Newark, New Jersey, and an advocate for the common people using such, declared that they should be more than a “gazing gallery” (Art for the people’s sake, 1924, p. XX12). He exhibited citizens’ crafts and linked the day-to-day work of the people of the city to exhibits, stating that citizens should help determine what goes in the museum as “a place of help and inspiration” (An art centre for workaday life, 1925, p. 8). One of his hands-on activities in 1925 involved linoleum workers coming to the Newark Museum to study and touch art designs there that they might use in their own work. Earlier, in 1922, he sponsored a kite-flying contest in the city parks, to be entered by Chinese people only, as a means to reach out to this group. At the same time Dana made contact within this ethnic community to prepare for a Chinese exhibit for his museum in 1923 and as a forerunner for the Chinese Exhibit at Philadelphia’s World’s Fair in 1926 (Museum to show progress of China, 1922).

In New York City in 1922, the American Museum of Natural History invited musicians from 30 different ethnic groups to play in an “inter-racial” concert during music week (Children
end music week, 1922). Meanwhile, in the late 1920s, an exhibit in the Museums of the Peaceful Arts in New York featured an airplane cockpit into which a visitor could climb and manipulate control knobs and levers in order to simulate piloting the craft (Schwarz, 1930).

Historical societies were also active during the decade. A good example is New York’s Greenwich Village Historical Society, which celebrated different days in the neighborhood, such as New York Day, History Day, American Indian’s Day, Literary Day, Poe Day, Music Day, Drama Day and others in 1923 (Greenwich Village Days to be revived, 1923). Guests often participated in learning activities, for example, by reading selections on Drama Day or wearing especially prepared costumes on Art and Colonial Day.

At this time children’s museums flourished with many offerings of hands-on activities and a strong link to Scouting. By the 1920s, the Boy Scout Movement, founded in America in 1910, was thriving. In 1926 the Brooklyn Children’s Museum worked with Scouts in day camps to tag thousands of “plants, trees, wild flowers, rocks and mosses” on nature trails (A summer outdoor university open to Brooklyn Boy Scouts, 1926, p. XX15). The training allowed the boys to receive special badges while at the same time benefiting the general public. Scout troops were encouraged to make their own exhibits. One way they did this was to mount specimens in cigar boxes and place them in the museum, thus forming displays that Scoutmasters and museum personnel critiqued (Boy Scout use of Brooklyn Children’s Museum, 1930, 4). The museum in 1929 reported serving 1,000,000 young people through its loan kits made available to classes at schools and to individuals (Brooklyn Children’s Museum wins patrons with after-school games in the sciences, 1930, 61). In after-school programs, pupils used laboratories in which they could identify minerals. Curator and pioneer children’s museum work, Anna Billings Gallup commented, “It [the museum] challenges their minds with real things, objects of beauty and great
interest….But, best of all, it develops the child’s latent powers, gives him experiences that cause him to respect his own work” (61). Complementing the Brooklyn Children’s Museum at the same time were the classes at Brooklyn Museum, in which one hundred children used modeling clay, made paper cutouts, and designed costumes for an exhibit (Editor’s notes, 1930). Elsewhere in New York, the American Museum of Natural History boasted circulating nature study collections which reached 1,200,000 pupils in 1921 (The American Museum of Natural History, 1921, p. 8). In 1929 it sponsored an annual children’s fair for kindergarteners to eighteen-year-olds and offered prizes for exceptional gardens, biological specimens, homemade animal cages, chemistry experiments, and park conservation projects. With entries from 250 individuals and 130 groups, the fair drew thousands of viewers (Thousands attend the children’s fair, 1929, p. 26). In the western United States, at the San Diego Museum in California, in 1929, school children in special educational programming ate rabbits that were skinned and cooked before them (School children, 1929).

The advent of the two large open-air museums was an exciting development for experiential learning because in years to come, open-air museums would promote hands-on learning. John Cotton Dana, a great champion of the people becoming involved in the museum, was influential at this time. A historical society encouraging everyday people to participate in activities and the involvement of Scouting in the children’s museums insured the increase of experiential education in the 1920s. It was a time of great hope for museums.

*The Great Depression: 1930-1939*

The 1930s moved in the shadow of the Great Depression and then under the clouds of approaching World War II. A specter of hunger hovered over America as seen in barren fields, long food lines, and the pinched faces of starving children. The Lindbergh baby kidnapping,
President Roosevelt’s fireside chats, and the New Deal social legislation changed America. Prohibition ended as the Dust Bowl devastated the economy of some states. Two sociological events included radio broadcast of Orson Welles about a fictional Martian invasion that panicked some Americans and the refusal of the Daughters of the American Revolution to allow African American singer, Marian Anderson, to perform in Constitution Hall. She performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial instead. Then Hitler’s invasion of Poland in 1939 concerned everyone.

Experiential education in museums continued in spite of reduced funding. For example, Grand Rapids Public Museum’s budget was cut 87% in 1932 (Du Mond, 1941, 10). Despite money problems, the senior staff who remained employed mounted an exhibit based on the lives of the Dutch people in Michigan and sponsored dances and pageants in costume. The events drew 30,000 visitors in 30 days (10). Then these museum professional staff members followed it with a Polish exhibit that was so successful that the local government restored their budget money.

The Works Progress Administration Program helped in some cases. Established in 1933, the agency existed to help boost the lagging national economy. WPA employees in this case were educators who could not find work. Both they and the museums which lacked funds to hire adequate staff benefited from the government’s paying their salaries to work in the museums. The WPA teachers used experiential learning primarily with children, though they employed it with adults as well while concurrently adding elements of cultural inclusion. Another way the WPA helped museums was to build physical plants for them.

Adults had ample opportunities for experiential learning in this decade. For example, it focused on training senior teaching majors from the College of the City of New York. These teacher trainees spent three weeks practicing teaching with collections materials at the American
Museum of Natural History in 1935 (Museum would aid all city children, 1935, p. 27). The year before, in 1934, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago sent an expedition, to the African regions at Senegal, Nigeria, and Angola “to collect birds, make phonographic records of native music, and to study the effect of light on animal life distribution (Field work, 1934, p. 3). Some of the expedition members were local people. The Museum of the City of New York in 1933 chose to focus on places at home, guiding visitors on trips to City Hall, Ellis Island, the Hall of Records, and other sites to experience hands-on activities related to daily life. These excursions paralleled the then-popular nature trail tours the museum likewise offered. (Contemporary life studied in Museum of New York’s educational program, 1933).

A cultural inclusion element may be seen in the welcoming reunion for the Wichita Indian tribe planned by Wichita Public Museum in Kansas in 1939, which would not occur until the next year. The newly opened Wichita Public Museum invited native people to a homecoming for the Wichita Indian tribe, who since the 1860s had lived near Anadarko, Oklahoma (History museum open, 1939).

Examples of children’s participation in museum programs were plentiful during the 1930s. The Children’s Museum of Boston in 1930 offered hands-on games and reflective discussions on motion pictures, as they were becoming increasingly popular both in society and in museums (Editor’s notes, 1930). Two other projects featuring experiential education at the Children’s Museum of Boston were the publication of a hobby magazine by children who attended the museum regularly and the World Friendship Club, in which youthful members kept scrapbooks about other countries and exchanged letters with children of these countries (p. 6). In the Midwest, the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, sent 16 teenaged boys on an eight-day field trip to the Southwest to take measurements, make photographs, keep
notebooks, and collect material for habitats for mounted biological specimens in the exhibit
galleries (children’s museum field party, 1930). The young collectors club was a major focus for
the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, in 1931. To spur interest in pioneer history, the
institution sponsored youth clubs that selected their own subject matter and planned and created
exhibits on these topics in the museum (Editor’s notes, 1931).

A letter from the museum educator to the director at the Brooklyn Museum in 1931 noted
need for soap for 200 children, clay and sketching material, a floor loom for weaving, and metal
work supplies, a press for wood and linoleum block prints, craft materials for nature crafts, and
forty scrapbooks for the children to use (Spinden, H. J. to Mr. Josiah P. Marvel, acting director,
Letter written on October 7, 1931). That same year, the American Museum of Natural History
held a science fair that attracted 400 exhibits or models, such as a pencil balanced by a pendulum
to draw pretty designs on paper made by children to illustrate the scientific principle of the
pendulum (Children’s own exhibit, 1931).

Museum workers led children in many participatory activities. Works Progress
Administration counselors came to Hayden Planetarium, part of the American Museum of
Natural History, in 1936 to help plan before- and after- school curriculum and to escort pupils on
field trips. But some of the best experiential learning took place in the astronomy clubs formed in
the schools as a result of these escorts. The youthful members “make plaques of the surface of
the moon, write and edit a magazine on the subject, and disprove the Egyptian and Chinese
Museum of Boston discussed the experiential learning undertaken in clubs there: a poster contest
by the stamp club, performances by the marionette and drama clubs, and flower and hobby
shows sponsored by the nature and craft clubs, respectively (1937). The Indian Lore Club in
Boston made a figure of a Pueblo Indian, organized a pow wow and cooked an Indian meal. Students helped with exhibits and played games that helped them to learn about items in museum exhibits.

By the end of the decade, radio, motion pictures, and lectures were still popular, though hands-on activities remained in demand despite depression-strained budgets. Field trips and clubs were favored activities. The use of experiential education continued to grow. In spite of hard times, the indomitable American spirit could not be quenched.

*The War Years: 1940-1949*

The decade of the 1940s was dominated by World War II and recovery afterward. The involvement of the United States began after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Another major event was the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, which ended the war. Many voters were surprised that Truman defeated Dewey for President in the 1948 election. Soldiers returning home went to college in mass numbers on the G.I. Bill and fathered many children. These children became known as the baby boomers.

People in the United States generally supported the fight against aggression throughout World War II. After American entry to the conflict in 1941, museum personnel lent their support in many ways. A good instance of this took place at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, which opened the second day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Its mission was to give people spiritual strength, after a pattern set by museums in England, which had been at war since 1939. It is “that very freedom of spirit for which we are fighting,” said director Edgar Schenck (1942, 12). He enumerated three things that had been learned by English people: “that surface details…no longer matter….nothing is important now save the essential spirit of life…and that that spirit…cannot be allowed to ebb away” (12).
One way that museums sought to help the war effort was to serve the soldiers with places for recreation. The Southwest Museum in Los Angeles did this by holding dances for the Navaho Marines stationed in nearby San Diego in 1943 (Museum wartime activity, 1943). The American Museum of Natural History in 1943 sponsored a Gallery Canteen where servicemen could dance, play records on the victrola (and sometimes listen to recordings of family voices), and play pool or ping pong—often the Army vs. the Navy (Service men’s canteen, 1943). One soldier commented, “This is like home” (20). All of these efforts focused on physical activities. The National Park Service went further, moving out of some of its office quarters, to establish 33 army recreation centers and rest camps in 23 states and Washington, D.C. The effort enticed 50,000 American soldiers to visit historic sites at no charge (Park Service constructs rest camps, 1942).

Another way museums helped in war effort was in promoting informal education. In 1942 the American Museum of Natural History prepared for servicemen six experiential “musettes” or portable museum exhibits to teach servicemen how to tell poisonous snakes from a harmless ones, to distinguish edible plants from poisonous ones in the field, to understand the use of camouflage in nature, and to understand signaling in the field (‘Musettes’ to train soldiers, 1942, p. 15). The Newark Museum sought to educate the people at home. In one of its participatory programs, visitors operated nighttime generated army searchlights over the city of Newark (Newark Museum program, 1945). The Newark Museum likewise continued its regular hands-on learning programs for adults throughout the war years in two craft workshops called “Try It Yourself” and “Paint and Clay” (Newark Museum, 1943).

Museums helped the war effort in two other ways. The Historical Society of Berks County in Reading, Pennsylvania, helped collect and preserve war-related materials by
encouraging families to preserve the letters of their servicemen (Miscellaneous, 1942). The Carolina Art Association operated Radio Station TWAM at the Old Dock Theater in Charleston, South Carolina, and playwrights produced 17 radio dramas entitled “People in Defense” (Old Dock Street Theatre, 1942).

Some experiential educational programs included cultural components in the 1940s. In recognition of Hispanic peoples, the Coronado Museum, near Bernalillo, New Mexico, in 1940, staged a reenactment of Vasquez de Coronado’s arrival at the Indian village of Tiguex in 1540. It is likely that this event included townspeople among its participants (Coronado celebration, 1940). The Coronado quartocentennary pageant then traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico; Arizona, and Texas, with a cast of people “duplicating an army of Spanish cavaliers, priests, soldiers, and Indian allies” (2).

After the war, normal programming resumed. In 1946, the Dayton Public Library Museum in Ohio gave adults short walking trips in city and country to help expose them to nature and history (Dearolf, 1946). Cleveland Museum of Natural History sponsored a similar winter out-of-doors program of a tour of trails, on which visitors learned to identify trees and animal tracks (Watlin, 1948). Meanwhile, some museums employed radio while using participatory methods. The Hanby House Museum in Westerville, Ohio, attempted to stir interest by sponsoring a radio historical quiz program with prizes. The museum also organized an old-fashioned singing around a piano on the birthday of composer Ben Hanby (Hanby House Museum, 1947, 19). At the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, visitors were invited to become test-technicians with tasks including determining relationship of design to illumination in lamp shades (Chicago Museum, 1949).

Some examples of postwar experiential education included other cultures. One took place
serendipitously at the Oshkosh Public Museum in Wisconsin. Museum staff members heard unexpected noises in 1949 at an exhibit called “The Famous Dream Dance Drum.” Emanating from the gallery were the sounds of dancing feet and ancient chants as a number of old Menominee Indians circled the exhibit, paying their last respects to past tribal members (Behncke, 1949). A planned cultural event occurred in Holland, Michigan, at the Netherlands Museum when Director Willard Wichers involved many townspeople in a 1946 Tulip Festival and taught 150 high school and college girls Dutch folk dances (1946).

Other experiential adult programs were occurring throughout the country. They included a quilting bee and square dance at Grand Rapids Public Museum in Michigan. This museum drew in additional visitors by providing meeting places for local organizations (Du Mond, 1949). People sixty years of age and older were invited to exhibit hobbies, including singing, monologues, hand-carvings, pottery, crazy quilts and more, at the American Museum of Natural History in 1948. The 1948 Hobby Show drew two thousand displays by one thousand entrants, one of whom, Charles M. Miller, regaled the audience with stories of being born in a covered wagon, driving a stagecoach, and shaking Abraham Lincoln’s hand (Hobbies of the old, 1948). With even wider participation, the Detroit Historical Museum in Michigan sponsored an Old Timers’ Day for all citizens, featuring opportunities to play a baseball game, sing in a barbershop quartet, play in a band concert, or compete in a bathing beauties contest (Pearsall, 1949).

Children’s rooms in museums as well as in general museums continued to advocate experiential education. During the first half of the decade, the children, too, wanted to help in the war effort. The American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of the City of New York, and various New York art museums collaborated with members of senior Girl Scouts troops who volunteered to work as guides, to help with exhibits, to put on marionette shows, and to teach crafts to
children (More wartime activities, 1942). These volunteers made it possible to carry on museum work previously done by staff now enlisted in the military. At the Brooklyn Children’s Museum, the children stepped forward, as they had in 1918, to gather salvage, knit clothing, and raise food (Garrison, 1943). When WPA workers regretfully left the museum after America’s entry to the war, teenagers took jobs as junior docents, keeping attendance records, giving tests, telling stories, caring for toddlers in the Busy Bee Room, and running the printing presses while their mothers helped with typing and field trips. Truly the children felt the museum belonged to them.

Despite the war, normal activities continued as well. The Detroit Children’s Museum sponsored two classes called “Drawing for Fun and Fun in Drawing” and “Vegetable Zoo” with eggplant elephants and squash swans in 1945 (Brayton, 1945, 7). Entertainment was a big part of children’s lives with nature music quizzes based on recordings of birds and animals, as well as after-the-movie discussions for junior high pupils (American Museum of Natural History starts fall, 1944). The Brooklyn Museum offered special Saturday workshops that involved older children in making musical instruments as well as a Young People’s String Orchestra and Chorus (Music in the museum, 1945). The Children’s Museum of Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, in 1946 sponsored a fourth-grade Playmaker’s Club that included acting and making scenery and costumes (Children’s museum, 1946). Earlier, in 1941, the same museum had sponsored game hours as well as Saturday movies and 88 loan exhibits for use by teachers (Children’s museum, 1941). The Children’s Museum of Washington, D. C., involved children in drama, art, music, and dance rhythm, while at the same time allowing observation by future teachers from the Northwestern University School of Speech (Children’s Museum at D.C., 1943).

Hands-on crafts and clubs retained their popularity with children. A new Children’s Museum at Cooperstown, New York, in 1942 provided such activities as reading, games, jigsaw
puzzles, coloring sheets, weaving, clay modeling, and clubs (Children’s museum to open, 1942). Grand Rapids Public Museum in Michigan offered multiple classes in making things with leather, felt and wood, as well as square dancing and rhythm band for children (Greebel, 1948). Clubs became important hands-on attractions for children, as evidenced by the Explorers Club at the Milwaukee Public Museum in Wisconsin with its games of seek and find, whatzit, and hunting for pictures (Brazier, 1948). At the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, from 1940 to 1949, clubs dealing with birds, botany, photography, and mammals attracted many children as members (Cleveland Museum, 1949). The Junior Department at the Museum of Natural History in Springfield, Massachusetts, featured field walks, games, and craft classes with such activities as leaf printing, making weather vanes, and casting animal tracks in plaster. In California, the Palo Alto Junior Museum sponsored a science fair and organized demonstrations by children (Children’s museums, 1946).

Efforts to include other cultures continued in children’s museums during the 1940s. An example in New York City was associated with an exhibit called “The Orient.” It attracted five hundred children daily for one week at special programming at the American Museum of Natural History in which they got to taste the food of China and the Philippines (American Museum stages, 1945). In another program, this time at the Duluth Children’s Museum in Minnesota, an inter-cultural hobby show took place (Wing, 1944). This venue allowed members of diverse ethnic groups in the community to learn more about each other (Wing, 1944).

In the late 1940s, the usual hands-on activities remained prevalent. One traveling trunk, however, was unusual. It was a museum sea chest with interactive activities that Mystic Seaport in Connecticut sent to Colorado, Massachusetts, California, and Vermont (Variable winds, 1948). Typical programs followed. The Detroit Children’s Museum, for example, featured
games, puzzles, handwork, and finger puppets for young patrons (Detroit Children’s Museum, 1947). The Brooklyn Children’s Museum involved the younger visitors in singing and dancing at Friday Music Hours (Daly, 1949). It also provided buttons to push to operate miniature trains and tugboats, and offered handling of live animals.

Teens had their own place in the museum world during the forties. One instance of hands-on activities for them was the 1940 First National High School Salon of Photography at the American Museum of Natural History. Sponsored by Stuyvesant High School, the competitive show was organized, directed, and supervised by high school students for their peers (Brown, 1940). After the judging of 1,000 prints submitted from representatives from thirty-six states, 357 of the best were hung for the general public to view (p. XX13). Another was an exhibit of art work by talented young people at the Grand Rapids Public Museum in 1947, where 19,950 visitors in eight days viewed 1,000 paintings, drawings, and sculptures (DuMond, 1947, 8). The American Museum of Natural History promoted film-making with a competition in which George Washington High School in Manhattan won an award for the best motion picture with a film titled “Animal Antics” (Film prizes, 1950, p. 62). It also sponsored a very special group called New York’s Junior Astronomy Club, giving it five rooms in the basement; this 500-strong group of young people organized and delivered its own lectures, published a monthly journal, and taught classes (Sky the limit, 1950).

By 1945 Americans were tired of war and wanted to resume their peacetime lives. Nevertheless, the effects of war would linger, for once one had changed, he or she could not go back. Museums would continue to respond to their changing public.

The Cold War: 1950-1959

The 1950s, sometimes known as the Cold War Decade, began with North Korea
invading South Korea, a conflict the United States entered. Senator Joe McCarthy hunted Communists and censured many Americans unfairly before he was stopped by the United States Senate. In Brown vs. the Board of Education, the Supreme Court found that racial segregation violates the Fourteenth Amendment to The Constitution. The Civil Rights movement worked to end desegregation in public schools. Alaska became a state. The United States and the United States of the Soviet Republic threatened each other with nuclear destruction. People lived in some fear, buying bomb shelters at home and practicing safety drills at school. Communist leaders Krushchev and Castro caused American leaders some consternation. In 1957, the U.S.S.R. launched the first satellite into space; it was called Sputnik. Most average Americans, however, focused on their families in this era.

The 1950s in the museum world on the surface seemed to be a prosperous, conservative time. Beneath this veneer of stability, however, changes were taking place. An incident happened at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts in Dallas, Texas, shows this ferment. Despite the anti-communist McCarthy Hearings in Congress, the museum trustees held firmly to a well-established policy of exhibiting the works of artists without regard to their “political, religious, or personal credos,” when some patriotic groups challenged their decisions regarding works of certain artists. (Dallas Museum trustees, 1956, p. 1). For most museums, however, the decade was a quiet time.

A number of museums continued and even expanded experiential education for adults. In cooperation with the Newark Defense Counsel and City Department of Health, Newark Museum in New Jersey offered blood-typing in 1951 as a part of its “Public Health in Peace and War” exhibit (The Newark Museum, 1951). Corning Glass Center that told the story of glass in a sophisticated building in Corning, New York, was typical of the industrial museums sponsored at
this time by American companies. This institution viewed its mission in part to provide a setting for local groups to meet there and to create a recreation center where families could bowl and play tennis, basketball, and cards, all hands-on activities (Brown, 1952). It also housed a large library of research on the making of glass. The idea of community as a part of the museum gained favor.

Adults had opportunity to participate in a variety of activities. They could take early Tuesday morning strolls in Central Park to identify birds in 1952 under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History (Science in Central Park, 1952). In 1953 the Museum of Great Lakes History in Paradise, Michigan, urged its visitors to operate exhibits involving lights on ships, blocks and tackle, and lighthouse signals, while other guests could learn to sail a small schooner (Johnston, 1953). Fascination with mechanical items—or perhaps with the idea of radiation—to be seen at Boulder’s University of Colorado Museum in 1957, where visitors operated a Geiger counter in measuring the radioactivity of different objects (University of Colorado Museum, 1957). Visitors could even bring in things from home to test

Master interpreter Freeman Tilden wrote a ground-breaking manual on interpretation for the National Parks Service that same year, *Interpreting Our Heritage*. In it he challenged park rangers to “unfreeze their sites” (1957/1977, p. 36). This seminal work has continued to inform interpretation at history museums as well as parks through 2007. Tilden advocated experiencing the environment as fully as one could by climbing up cliff dwellings or riding a barge down an old canal or grinding corn into meal. His book pictured visitors to the parks weaving at a loom and examining plants on nature trails.

Open-air Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia offered a world of sensory delights in 1959 for visitors of all ages to experience: the sights and smells of evergreens, holly, bayberry,
oranges, and lemons; lights of candles and bonfires; the sounds of carols and folk music; the
taste of wassail and eggnog; the kinesthetic fun of dance (Sircom, 1959). Visitors on holiday in
the 1950s could join in the Yule Log blessing, dancing, drinking, and playing table and card
games.

For children, participatory learning abounded. They could take part in a soap carving
contest with older competitors at the American Museum of Natural History in 1950, which drew
five thousand participants (Soap carvers compete, 1950). The Museum of the City of New York
offered a scavenger hunt for boys and girls in the marine gallery called “Hunt for the Sailor” on
August 24, 1950 (Fun for children, 1950/August 24). This is the first documented scavenger hunt
in the literature. The scavenger hunt remains a favorite activity today. A different type of activity
was the yacht and rowboat races at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut the same year (Yacht races,
1950). In New York, at the American Museum of Natural History, junior astronomy clubs
continued to meet and make telescopes (Flahive, 1951). The museum joined the New York Times
in sponsoring a citywide book fair with Davy Jones’ locker décor and live alligators (Nautical
setting, 1951). Children could appear in the play, Sokar and the Crocodile, vote for favorite
books, test their memories, and learn the code of nautical flags. Teens had the privilege of
quizzing famous authors, poets, athletes, and travelers. Similarly, teens at Colonial
Williamsburg, Virginia, could compete in the 1953 Voice of Democracy Contest in which four
national finalists and all the state winners debated and reflected at roundtable discussions before
visiting the United States capital in Washington, D.C. (Colonial Williamsburg, 1953, p. 2). At
another large open-air museum, Greenfield Village at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn,
Michigan, child visitors attended a recreated country fair that celebrated Detroit’s 250
th
anniversary (Edison Museum, 1951).
All ages of children found interesting participatory programs in museums. Preschool children were included in hands-on activities. At the Fort Worth Children’s Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, the little ones could see, touch, and smell objects and animals ranging from silk worms to rock salt (Kamenitsa, 1957). They also had the opportunity to move in dance-like activities in the Rhythm Rascals class. Meanwhile, Discoverers’ Club at the Chicago Natural History Museum provided four journeys a student visitor could take alone or with a friend to answer questions on an itinerary through the facilities (Wood, 1959). Upon completion he or she could advance through rank of Traveler to become Adventurer, Explorer, and Discoverer. The participatory methods of clubs and of scavenger hunts continued to be popular.

Hands-on learning with other cultures continued to grow. For example, young people from many ethnic groups visited programs of the Children’s Museum of Boston with 130,000 visitors from many states and twenty foreign countries coming in 1959. In 1957 the Kansas City Museum in Missouri presented fourth graders an Eskimo Experience Unit, with opportunities to contribute solutions to problems of food and land ownership from the viewpoints of both the explorers and native people (Howe, 1957). The participants were divided into Explorers, who handled strange objects and discussed what they saw, and Eskimos, who crawled in a mock igloo and petted a real seal. Then they switched roles. Another successful experiential program included “Asia” month in 1956.

In spite of the Korean War at the first of the decade and the Cold War, most people in this decade enjoyed a time of peace and prosperity with opportunity to buy their own homes. Many families moved to the suburbs. Members enjoyed bowling and the advent of rock and roll music. The period of peaceful quiet would not last into the next decade, but experiential education would.
Social Upheaval: 1960-1969

The 1960s were a time of revolutionary social change. A vigorous young man with children, John Kennedy was elected President of the United States. The Berlin Wall divided the city of Berlin, Germany, into a communist area and a non-communist area. The Cuban Missile Crisis brought the United States to the brink of nuclear war. Old values were questioned, as a sexual revolution came, encouraged in part by the advent of the birth control pill and teenage rebellion. Racism continued to be challenged, as the Civil Rights Movement gained ground with Freedom Rides in Alabama in 1961, racial integration at the University of Mississippi in 1963, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963. A Civil Rights Bill was passed in 1964, and in 1967 Thurgood Marshall became the first black Supreme Court Justice. People of color fought and achieved rights, sometimes with extreme measures such as the 1967 riots. Women also fought for more rights, primarily in the marketplace, so feminism had an effect on events.

Three assassinations horrified the nation. They were the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and of presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy in 1968. In addition, the Vietnam War was raging and dividing this country.

Museum education reflected this fluidity in society. Director Thomas Hoving of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York urged fellow museum workers to “consider what manner we’re going to get ourselves wet” in the times of “unreason, dislocation, disunity and moral change” (1968, p. 15). Otto Wittmann, director of the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio and a member of President Johnson’s National Council on the Arts later, said that Americans “thirst for knowledge and lively creative culture is growing” (1965, p. 19). All this was good news for museums, as attendance increased by more than 100 million in 60% of the museums from 1952
to 1965, as perhaps Americans recognized the value of these institutions (p. 19). Old Sturbridge Village, begun at Sturbridge, Massachusetts, in 1946 with 5, 172 visitors, had grown to hosting 575,000 guests in 1968 (Wall, 1969, p. 14). The neighborhood museum was one of the places where educators tried to meet the challenge of a democratizing society as both individuals and groups searched for their identities (Dennis, 1970, p. 16). Some communities demanded that their museums change, as occurred when some members of local ethnic groups boycotted the Oakland Museum in California because of its non-response to their demands (p. 14). Many museums moved to change themselves.

Adults became involved in experiential learning more than ever before. Sensory participation was at the forefront in 1961 at open-air museums such as Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, and Mystic Seaport, each of which strove to recreate authentically historic environments (Alexander, 1961, 64). In such open-air museums, the smell of burning leaves, the taste of old recipes cooked in taverns, or sound of squeaky springs on a carriage ride, or the feel of shouldering a musket helped create memorable experiences (64-65). At Colonial Williamsburg, the largest of the open-air museums, the visitor could play indoor games of chance such as put, loo, lotto, and goose or engage in outdoor games including lawn bowling, pitching pennies, or racing in sacks. In 1962 curious adults could try their hands at spinning and weaving, making candles, or baking in a beehive oven in “The American Frugal Housewife” seminar at the Farmer’s Museum in New York (Jones, 1962, 14). Similarly sophisticated opportunities for adults there included horse-shoeing, cabinetmaking, and plowing with oxen (14). By 1967, the Farmer’s Museum had added two hands-on programs that dealt with other cultures. The programs on “Pre-Columbian Iroquois” and “Migration and the City, 1890-1914,” were placed in kits or trunks to go to schools, and the museum offered training in their use for
teachers (Rath, 1967, 21-22). The kits promoting sensory experience and discovery learning required real artifacts, so the museum asked nearby communities to donate real artifacts for them (21-22)). These programs, however, worked well for adults also. Old Sturbridge Village involved adults throughout the decade with one- and two-day craft workshops that in part conveyed understanding of the skills and stamina required of early workers, like potters, printers, blacksmiths, housewives, by providing tools, raw materials, and hands-on instruction (Wall, 1969, 18).

Indoors at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, visitors pushed buttons and turned cranks on machines to participate in interpretation (Chicago museums, 1966, 27). Museums continued to call on the talent of community groups to come in and do hands-on work on special exhibits for specific groups, such as the senior citizens and their craft show at the Detroit Historical Museum (Brown, 1964, pp. 30-31).

The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Washington, D.C. mounted a 1968 exhibit, “This Is Africa,” in which half of the tools, games, weapons, and masks could be touched and which encouraged drumming and dancing (Marsh, 1968, 11). Diplomats’ wives from Africa cooked authentic foods for visitors to taste in a big food fair. Another cultural inclusion event took place at Newark Museum, which in 1969 presented a three-weekend African festival of fashion, film, music, and dance, not only to focus on the rich culture of Africa but also to recover attendance after the 1967 Newark race riots (Miller, 1969, 26). It worked, for the whole city became involved, including local dance groups, local professors, the Chamber of Commerce, the bus company (distributing posters), and the black clergy (urging congregations to attend). Local stores dressed their windows with African artifacts, the Museum Men’s Council distributed 10,000 flyers, and representatives from African nations to the United Nations came in costume
(26). The event attracted more guests to the Newark Museum than had come in twenty-five years (26).

The events and exhibits at Newark succeeded, but a comparable exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, “Harlem on My Mind,” failed, according to some critics. This occurred because local Blacks felt that the exhibit represented an “imposition of the dominant white community’s image of the minority community (Dennis, 1970, 17).

Some people, such as Topper Carew, who was director of the New Thing Art Architectural Center in Washington, D.C., felt that large cultural institutions, being a part of the problem of racism, could do little for inner-city neighborhoods (p. 17). About the same time the Grand Rapids Museum mounted a successful Mexican Independence Day celebration in an ethnic church. Committees of local people collaborated in research on food, dance, and music, and then executed plans with one thousand participants (Frankforter, 1970, 21). Two years earlier, the museum had organized a similar hands-on celebration of Polish heritage.

Another museum that promoted cultural understanding in 1960 was the Bishop Museum of Honolulu, Hawaii, with its mission of studying “Polynesian and kindred antiquities, ethnology and natural history” (Spoehr, 1960, 16-17). In 1960 the museum staff prepared traveling hands-on exhibits to circulate in schools in Hawaii, and they trained high school students to become guides. Involvement like this continued to be the touchstone of children’s museum programs during the 1960s.

Clubs were still popular. At the Josephine D. Randall Museum in San Francisco, the Junior Naturalist Club took care of animals while older pupils conducted studies on reptiles and geology (Walker, 1961, 31). The oldest children’s museum west of the Rockies, Palo Alto Museum, reported 106, 000 attendees in 1961 involved in the lapidary, stamp, art, and nature
clubs among others (Emery, 1963, 33-35). At the American Museum of Natural History, typical young people’s assignments (to be done with others or alone) were tied to exhibits and prompted viewers to note specific details and think about what they were seeing (Canada, 1963, 364). The Children’s Museum of Boston offered games in the galleries to play, live animals to care for, nature walks to take, animals and plants to identify, and masks to make (Hardenbrook, 1960). Junior high pupils in Boston learned to identify star constellations while older teens became Junior Museum Council member-leaders and learned about professional museum work. The mission in Boston was “to help children understand the past, occupy the present, and trust the future” (29).

Other museum programs for children emphasized the senses. For instance, in the Kansas City Museum, elementary school pupils could lie down on real skins in a replicated Eskimo igloo, taste halite, smell sulfur, and touch a muskrat’s fur or a falcon’s feathers (Reed, 1963, 4). In Detroit Children’s Museum in 1966, children received music instruments to hear and play, meteorites to touch, and costumes to try on (Parsons, 1966). Saturdays meant treasure hunts, sidewalk art, and training for junior high students as aides. Beatrice Parsons from the Detroit Museum said, “While it is not possible for each one of us to experience everything firsthand, nevertheless, there is a real need to have as many of these experiences as possible for they are the basis of our symbolic behavior” (35). Hugo Rodeck, director at the University of Colorado Museum, concurred. The director wrote of man, “He cannot think productively on any of these levels without firm first-hand knowledge of the things he is expected to conceptualize” (Rodeck, 1968, p. 33). In Washington, D. C., children pressed buttons to answer quiz questions and went on walks at the Rock Creek Nature Center (Chick, 1966, 37). In 1969 the Brooklyn Children Museum employed take-home collections with lists of suggested projects to extend the influence
On the other side of the nation in Seattle, the Museum of History and Industry in 1967 sought to help blind and mentally retarded children in small groups to learn using hands-on artifacts in 1967 (Bark, 1967, 33). Staff members saw this as important because one in ten children were born with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities (33). One innovative teacher motivated dropout teens to return to school by borrowing a foot warmer and bed warmer from the museum and then challenging students to identify their use and propose better designs. The Brooklyn Children’s Museum organized an archaeological excavation on Staten Island; nineteen juniors and seniors cut brush, learned how to stake and map a site, recorded and described data and produced valuable results (Dennis, 1967, 13). Soon applicants from other states interviewed, and the program expanded. Teens were a target of museum educators. In the South, the Macon, Georgia, Youth Museum offered an apprentice theater for adolescents (Glossing, 1967). In the North, the Maine State Museum in Augusta offered Maine High School seniors an eight-week course in the summer to learn archiving, researching, text-writing, and exhibit-mounting skills in a hands-on manner (News notes, 1969).

During the sixties museum educators generally agreed that visitors needed to learn things for themselves (Dennis, 1970). Neighborhood museums were on the rise, and they included more cultural groups. Some old-school museum supporters felt too many voices were coming in. Trained psychologist Caryl Marsh, who was the Smithsonian consultant for developing the Anacostia Museum, replied in 1968 that these critics did not understand that “we are struggling to open pathways for the effective expression of many voices that have been blocked or suppressed for centuries” (1968, 16). Museums helped people accept cultural diversity. Otto Wittman, director of the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio, perhaps best summed up the purpose of
the museum in the 1960s: “Let us continue to provide stimulation, instruction, and enjoyment to our community” (1965, 19).

Consciousness-Raising: 1970-1979

The 1970s brought the recognition of the People’s Republic of China by the United States, the Watergate scandal and resulting downfall of President Nixon, the Munich Olympics tragedy, the American Bicentennial celebration, bussing for integration, the Roe vs. Wade court decision granting the right for abortions, and the Iran hostage situation. The 1970s were also a time of “touch-feely” programs and “tree-hugger” patrons, definitely a time of social change (J. Gaynor, personal communication on July 27, 2007). The country found itself divided by a conflict in Vietnam and by a revolt of young people against middle class mores. Each decade shows a growth in experiential learning in the museum through a plethora of activities, as participation becomes more important.

Some critics complained that museums did not meet the needs of most Americans, did not relate the past to serious issues of the day, and did not show respect for minorities (Kinard, 1972). They asserted that museums failed in what they collected, in whom and what they studied, and in whom they employed. Museum boards became concerned, but it is hard to say whether they questioned viability or lofty missions. John Kinard, director at Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, emphasized that the museum should be concerned about “how the power of knowledge…can transform man’s life” (16). The Bicentennial of the United States stirred interest in history, and many communities chose bicentennial projects to fund and carry out. Museums benefited from the occasion.

A good example of a museum meeting the needs of the public was the Museum of the City of New York. Joseph Veach Noble, while interviewing for the directorship of this museum,
stated, “The museum must be more than a mirror to the past” (1971, 12). Mrs. Bennett Cerf, a member of the board, asked him how he would make it more. On the spot, Noble replied that he would mount an exhibit to confront drugs. The result was “Drug Scene,” the first such relevant exhibit in the country. The component of the exhibit that encompassed experiential education was its guides; they were all ex-drug addicts who wore “Ask Me” buttons and who engaged visitors in direct conversation.

Members of minority groups also demanded their rightful places in museums during the 1970s. By the late 1960s, for example, Native Americans had begun fighting institutions for skeletal remains of ancestors, stopping research, and threatening to reclaim religious material, occupying one museum and burning down another (Hanson, 1980, 49). In 1970, the North American Indian Museum Association was formed so Indians could communicate better with each other and with others. The Smithsonian Institution started an archival program as a clearinghouse for Native American papers and offered training for museum officials. Both actions were accepted by Native people who perceived them as good.

Experiential education continued to be offered to adults. The Museum of the City of New York conducted its walking tours (begun in 1957), in which people walked around the city, identified buildings from mimeographed handouts, and conversed with guides (Reed, 1974). Four to five hundred participants might come on any given Sunday and be divided into groups of 25 (21). Some museums offered veritable sensory feasts for adults. In 1975, for instance, one could taste the recipes of historical menus at Colonial Williamsburg or enjoy medieval refreshments to the strains of period music at the Cloisters, a museum housed in a former convent in Manhattan in New York (King, 1975). In 1974 and throughout the decade, at Mystic Seaport, Plimoth Plantation, Old Economy Village in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and Old
Sturbridge Village, adults and children could choose live-in experiences for certain lengths of
time, filled with cooking meals, whittling clothespins, performing chores in the old way, and
comparing then and now (Sidford, 1974). For the casual visitor, carding and spinning wool,
making a small cask, reciting lessons in a one-room schoolhouse and other activities were
offered for guests at Old Sturbridge Village. At Plimoth Plantation, guerrilla theater involved
visitors role-playing and reacting to historic quarrels—over such issues as discipline of children.
In 1976 Colvin Run Mill Park of Virginia offered all visitors the opportunity to use nineteenth
century hand tools and to engage in woodcarving (Spencer, 1976). Occasionally, universities
collaborated with outdoor museums to create formal courses. Such was the case of the
University of Missouri at Kansas City and Missouri Town 1855, which cooperated to provide
thirty students, aged seventeen to sixty-five, one week of life in 1855 (Funk-Place, 1980, 4).
They slept on site, cooked authentic meals, gardened, chopped wood, hauled water, planted
tobacco, worked at a forge, quilted, and did multiple other chores of the period. Many adults
were willing to pursue the dream of living in another time, if a museum would offer the
opportunity.

The issue of including all Americans in interpretation represented another area of concern
during the 1970s. Veteran National Park Service interpreter William Gwaltney gave two
examples from the Frederick Douglass National Monument. One was “Slaves to Soldiers,” in
which visitors during a special event listened to actors portraying a slave owner, an abolitionist, a
slave, and a U.S. Congressman (personal communication on July 3, 2007). They then were led
into through darkness to a recreated Civil War army camp where through all the senses they
experienced what it may have been like for a former slave to become a Union Army soldier (July
3, 2007). The other event was a recreated 1862 abolition rally that focused on Frederick
Douglass and issues of emancipation. The audience members became so stirred emotionally by
the poet, abolitionist, recruiter, historian, and choir that they began yelling and talking back to
the actors (July 3, 2007). Afterwards museum guests were served refreshments of cake with kegs
of peanuts and gingersnaps, based on food served by Mrs. Douglass in 1862 (July 3, 2007).
Gwaltney asserted that the museum is theater and that the museum visitor is an actor who needs
to interrelate with what is presented.

Disabled Americans constituted a group addressed at “The Wizard of Oz” exhibit at the
National Museum of History and Technology in (Buckley, 1978). There the visitors could try on
an artificial arm and manipulate it, learn finger spelling and sign language, and be blindfolded
and try reading in Braille. The exhibit taught general museum guest that disabled people are
humans who need just a little help. By 1980, museum workers such as docents were trained to
interact more empathetically with visitors having special needs. In one training program, docents
went on a scavenger hunt blindfolded or in a wheelchair to retrieve items from the café,
bookstore, and toilet, or get a drink of water (Docents, 1980). These activities did indeed build
empathy.

The 1976 Bicentennial initiated some museum projects with experiential learning. The
decade began with walking tours for adults, but, by 1979, there were guided bicycle tours with
sixteen stops in historic Oakland (Morales, 1979). Another bicycle project that took riders to
historical places was the Ride-On project of history (p. 4). Yet another bicentennial project in
1976 involved the sailing of the historic ship Elissa from Galveston Bay in Texas to New York
City to congregate with other ships.

The National Park Service reprinted Tilden’s Interpreting Our Heritage for a new
generation of park rangers. Tilden had urged the educators in the parks to love the people,
implying that they should get to participate and connect with the objects interpreted (1957/1977, 90). He was a proponent of experiential learning.

Examples of experiential education for children were plentiful. From preschoolers who interacted with Indian vessels, pioneer clothing and live mammals at the Fort Worth Museum of History and Science to teens there who did pure research and built collections, “personal involvement is the key,” said curator Helmuth Naumer (A marketable product, 1971, 15-16). An archaeology excavation for ages thirteen to forty-seven was an intergenerational experience in Fort Worth (16). The Field Museum in Chicago was training student apprentices and then allowing them to build their own exhibits (Taylor, 1972). A collaboration of the Museum of New Mexico and the Southwest Cooperative Education Laboratory resulted in activities for children such as woodcarving and tinwork. The Mount Pleasant School District and Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, used the inquiry method to allow thirteen hundred children and adults to re-live the lifestyle of 19th century industrial workers as much as possible (Ward, 1971, 34-35). On Henry Clay Day, fifth graders could explore gun powder mills at the Hagley Museum and take on the personas of workers. A boy bookkeeper might copy from old ledgers with a quill pen while a girl might use a washboard or braid rugs at Gibbons House on the Henry Clay estate. MUSE, a neighborhood museum in Brooklyn, for which the parent was the venerable Brooklyn Children’s Museum, offered workshops for students on sex and drugs, on making stained glass, and on playing a musical instrument (Hezekiah, 1972). These classes included twenty-four hours per week of free musical instruction (12-13).

In 1974 a survey showed that mobile museums numbered over 40 at this time, with half appearing after 1970, to serve schools and children (Supplee, 1974, 26). Started in 1948, the mobile museum has been called by such names as muse mobile, artmobile, or museumobile. The
Tucson Museum put two forty-foot units on the road, featuring hands-on wool dyeing, bread making, weaving, rope making, folk dancing and origami (Supplee, 1974). The Cincinnati Historical Society taught local history in its mobile using the hand-on activity of an oversized puzzle of the city. The SAMA Van (San Antonio Museum Association Van) offered participatory in-service training for teachers that included role-playing, writing, drawing, music and theater (Solon, 1978).

Role-playing was another trend that grew in popularity during the 1970s. At Old Sturbridge Village pupils used information from 1840s tax lists and other sources to build their own historical identities and then interact with classmates (Sidford, 1974). A similar program at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., especially developed for a predominantly black school audience, was the “Trial of John Brown,” in which students role-played as judges, lawyers, witnesses, and jurors (Endter, 1975, 36).

Teachers of the area planned their own museum trips to Washington, D.C., around four themes (Creative field trip planning, 1973). The first was texture, with gravestone rubbings while the second was reading, with labels scavenger hunt, book jacket designing, greeting cards, and board games. The fourth theme was human spaces with designs children made, and the fourth and final theme was food with tasting, making utensils, eating wild things, and shopping at different types of grocery stores. A very different type of museum experience occurred at the Circus World Museum’s Youth Acrobatic School in Baraboo, Wisconsin, in 1975. Over 400 children took part in juggling, hand balancing, and performing on the unicycle or trapeze, each of them hoping to be allowed to perform in a real circus (Schulz, 1975). Over 2,000 people came to see them perform each day, with parents becoming involved as helpers (41).

In the West, children could participate in the Environmental Living Program, started by
Bill Taylor in 1971 at Fort Point National Historic Site under the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco (Burch and Ulland, 1976). Pupils studied primary materials under the auspices of the California State Park Service and the National Park Service and then moved into the actual historic fort for a week of life as nineteenth-century enlisted soldiers. Eventually a kit—called Soldier’s Footlocker—was developed that contained researched lessons and overnight schedules. Other Environmental Living Programs were developed to teach about pioneers at Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. Others were created to chronicle the life of soldiers at Fort Bowie, of sailors on the *Thayer*, and of miners and lumbermen at Marshall Gold discovery site. Young people participating in these simulations have studied authentic problems. Three different students have published important research on water, a televised play, and independent research on California shipwrecks as direct results of their experiential learning.

Back in the East, children had experiential learning experiences at museums. The Children’s Museum at Boston employed four professional actors to engage students to be young apprentices, with names such as Elkinah and Prudence, to work in the clothing industry by attaching buttons to frock coats and sewing seams of linsey-woolsey shirts under the watchful eyes of Master and Mistress Merriwether (Cole, 1977). The curator, Carol Korty, agreed with Ray Pierotti, assistant to the vice-president of the American Crafts Council, “It is the experience itself that is of prime concern” (1973, 45). In New York, the American Museum of Natural History had created a Discovery Room with three feel and guess boxes, a skull, a match a sound box, an Eskimo box, and costumes to try on, which mainly appealed to five to ten year olds (Arth and Claremon, 1977).

Upon discovering that many students had never been out of their neighborhoods, another project of Boston Children’s Museum in 1979 reached out to teenagers. This effort helped them
plan such trips. Then these travelers, in turn, became “teen-agents” (Interpretations in the built environment: New opportunities for museum education, 1979, 14). This means they encouraged other adolescents to learn how to read maps and go around the city. The Minechang High School class of Wilbraham, Massachusetts, studied viewpoints of young people in 1825 to prepare for a simulation at Old Sturbridge Village (O’Connell and Alexander, 1979). After gaining knowledge of the time period, they traveled to the open-air museum to drill fence posts, cook, spin, weave, and contra-dance; finally they formed some general thoughts about the experience. Still another hands-on collaboration for high school students took place between Concord Center at Walden Street and John Langan’s art class and Andrei Joseph’s U.S. history survey class at Concord-Carlisle High School in Concord, Massachusetts (Pave, 1980/June 8). The Concord Street is just an office building, chosen for study of its distinctive architecture (1830-1860). Students studied history through architecture by viewing, sketching, and then building reliefs, which are moldings carvings or stampings on buildings in which the design is raised, of the fronts of Concord buildings. High school pupils enjoyed the study beyond the classroom.

For children traditional programs continued. Field Museum helped kindergarten through second graders learn about objects in galleries with a “Find Me, Finish Me” worksheet of words and pictures to complete as children found the objects (Requee, 1978). At Brooklyn Museum’s summer classes, an “African Odyssey” in 1978 and “Catching Shadows across the Nile” in 1979 emphasized art and drama with mask-making, ceremonies, and shadow puppets (Aibel-Weiss & Brown, 1979). Both themes interested and involved children and empowered young African Americans with new knowledge about their culture. The Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington, Massachusetts, celebrated Sir Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe with an exhibit named “The Famous Voyage of Sir Francis Drake.” It featured a peephole that showed
Old Sturbridge Village in the late 1970s was presenting workshops for the whole family. They were “Work and Play: Child’s Life” with fireplace cooking and farm work, “Spin and Weave” with these actions plus role-play, and “The Frugal Housewife,” with the opportunity to construct a cornhusk doll or a mallet (Sebolt and Morgan, 1978, 30). Another open-air museum, on the banks of the Brandywine River in Wilmington, the Hagley Museum, joined the Pilot School to present “Jobs and Working Places” at the end of the decade (Pilot School’s pilot program, 1980). Among other activities, students could operate models of water wheels and reenact making gunpowder—pressing cakes of dough [using edible substitutes for explosives]. Near Santa Fe, New Mexico, a new open-air museum appeared in 1972, Rancho de las Golondrinas, which offered visitors opportunities to participate in old-time crafts.

Piaget and Eisner would have approved the use of the senses in many programs in the 1970s. Role-playing and simulations seemed to grow in use. More museum mobiles that took history outside the four walls of the museum, though not new, appeared. Schools partnered with museums to bring experiential learning methods to students. The National Park Service expanded its programs for visitor participation. Different ethnic groups had input for their own programs, and the term “multicultural” was coined. The use of experiential education from 1970 to 1979 was widespread.

Retrenchment on Equity: 1980-1989

The 1980s were a time museums broadened their cultural outreach, used experiential
learning, and searched for private sources of funding. The Nation At-Risk report in education indicated that schools needed to concentrate on basic knowledge. This affected museum programs, as did the decrease in funding. The interest in hands-on education, however, increased. Ronald Reagan was elected President, and, during this conservative era, public funding of the arts was severely cut. This did adversely affect museums, as staff scrambled for grant money. The space shuttle Challenger exploded. The Berlin Wall came down on November 9, 1989. Schools did take children on field trips at this time, and museums benefited from this.

Although there were more African-American neighborhood museums, some scholars objected to this trend, saying Black American history was being left only to neighborhood museums and was not being included in national institutions (Latimer, 1982). For example Anacostia Museum, presenting popular shows such as “Rats: Man’s Invited Affliction,” was helpful in presenting Black history—but simply not enough (p. C3).

In the early 1980s adults celebrated old ways of life. In 1981, for instance, Woodlawn Plantation at Mount Vernon in Virginia sponsored Nelly’s Needlers’ Sixth Needle-In, where people came to learn and practice all types of embroidery (Nelly’s Needlers, 1981). At Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts, guests participated in Shaker-style meals and crafts such as basket making, stonecutting, and making wreaths of herbs (Museum news, 1982). At Sleepy Hollow at Van Cortlandt Manor in Tarrytown, New York, in 1985, a program called “Summerweek” gave all visitors opportunities to forge nails, milk cows, tend sheep, spin, weave, make herbal medicines, and play games (Museum news, 1985). At Strawberry Banke Museum, a 1630 settlement in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, teens to seventy-year-olds volunteered to participate in an archaeological excavation at least four hours per week to discover lives of early settlers (Langer, 1981). They found many small items plus a 1850s stable and a spring house.
Seaside museums similarly offered experiential learning. Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Connecticut, planned two and one-half hour lessons in a historic kitchen in which participants prepared recipes from an 1833 cookbook on a fireplace hearth (Brooks, 1981). The Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, presented an exhibit called “Seasons of Want: Making a Living from the Waters of Paturad” (Hunt, 1984). Older adults of the town planned every exhibit and lesson to teach skills to visitors. The people used their personal knowledge, as they had been netmakers, crabpot makers, woodcarvers, and sea captains.

Adults 60 and over found many programs just for them. One not-for-profit program that adults fifty-five and over can use to plan exciting week-long learning adventures, for an economical price, is Elderhostel. Some museums have partnered with Elderhostel. For instance, in 1983 some older adults took part in cooking on an open fire, reading old diaries, quilting, making barrels, and woodworking at Old Sturbridge Village, in collaboration with Elderhostel (Pitman-Gelles, 1983). The program brought much-needed income to the open-air museum during the winter, as well as met the needs of older adults. In Mendocino County Museum of Willits, California, multiple generations worked on family history projects, recording stories and making family trees; “Family Photo History Workshop,” operating photography equipment and setting up and using a darkroom; and “Tan Bark,” peeling bark from trees (Rawitsch, Metzler-Smith, and Kane, 1982).

For adults wishing a deeper immersion into the past, Livermore, Maine’s Washburn-Norlands Farm offered a live-in experience that recreated 1870s life there (Craig, 1983). Participants in flannel shirts or calico dresses and poke bonnets started with a guessing game on household items such as skirt-lifters. In this orientation leader Billie Gammon prompted participants to think about 19th century attitudes and assigned them characters they would
represent in subsequent days. From that point, everyone was expected to maintain his or her role, to eat authentic meals, to work at appropriate chores, and to join in barn dances or husking bees. The Washburn-Norlands experience was so highly respected at the time that teachers received educational credit from the state authorities participating. The program was good for teachers because they often serve as interpreters of knowledge for pupils and therefore always need serious stimuli and work with authentic materials (Hodgeson, 1986). Another immersion program in 1989 was the Harraseeket Project at Harrington House in Freeport, Maine, in which one could relive the 1850s coastal life weekend (Hawes and Koulouris, 1989). Some of the participatory activities were the Storekeepers Game, based on the Rodick family papers, readings on issues of the time, a dinner of beans and stewed salt fish with apple pie, and winter activities of using oxen, threshing, winnowing, bringing in salt hay, and cooking in a beehive oven. Some programs were meant for individual outings. One such program that appealed to the whole family was Genesee Country Village and Museum’s hands-on program of play that at one time or another involved juggling, cup and ball game, jump rope, tops, stilts, quoits, skittles, and re-created baseball (Jensen, 1989). The museum is in Mumford, New York. Similarly, the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., offered baskets of sample piecework, a quilt template, and quilts with secret codes (Wolff, 1986). Participants could also work together on an activity in which one took one stitch on a quilt square and passed it to another and a quilt puzzle; at the end participants cast votes for the best quilt. Some might consider the Textile Museum an art museum, but, as Professor Morris Vogel of Temple University who directed an institute called “Workshop of the World Industrial Society in Philadelphia, 1890-1980” in conjunction with Atwater Kent Museum, pointed out, “All museums are historical institutions. They record the past by collecting materials that are central to a reconstruction of history” (Hodgson, 1986, 31).
Educator Dorothy Washburn felt that one way to involve more people in a museum and build support is to get them to help behind the scenes, which is what she did at Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum in Rochester, New York (Experts for the day, 1989). For an exhibit in the Strong Museum, she asked women to identify dolls in a case with which they had played and tell how. Then she handed them authentic photographs to sort by likes and dislikes. Finally Washburn asked participants to categorize the dolls, which they did by age or by fantasy play vs. a manikin for sewing. Many elderly women came with their adult daughters, and a richer social context of playing with dolls was added to the exhibit.

Hands-on learning flourished at agricultural museums during the 1980s. For instance, in 1989 the Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run in McLean, Virginia, sponsored an eighteenth day, complete with threshing and winnowing wheat, making yeast cakes, making candles, and singing old carols and chanting an old harvest chant (Museum news, 1989, p. 5).

During the 1980s, children had a plethora of interactive programs from which to choose. In 1980, some museums were trying to reach special populations of children outside the school. The National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. gave programs to sick children at the National Children’s Hospital which let them examine artifacts, try on Indian headdresses, and discuss Native Americans, while the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum of African Art in Washington, D.C. provided objects to touch and enjoy in the lobby (Shhh! 1980). The Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum in Seattle, Washington, sent 42 loan boxes, which contained both word and action games, to hospitalized children (5). At the first of the decade, other children could play games, put together puzzles, and match architectural pattern cards at the Mark Twain Memorial in Hartford, Connecticut (Cheeseman, 1981). The New Hanover County Museum in North Carolina offered Museum Explorers the chance to do rubbings of
gravestones, collect rocks, make sand candles by digging holes in the sand and pouring in hot wax to harden, interview senior citizens, and search for the homes of famous people of their area (Ray, 1981). The Please Touch Museum attracted children in Philadelphia to pet a tarantula, wear African tribal clothing, crawl into a cave, or make human statues in stretchy cloth tubes (Pothier, 1982). The Museum of the City of New York in 1983 gave a similar “touch” program with butter churns, antique clothing, and quill pens in a reproduction seventeenth century Dutch room (Blau, 1983). At the same time the Staten Island Children’s Museum offered musical instruments to play and material with which to create flags. Meanwhile in the Southwest, at the Texas Memorial Museum in Austin, an “Animal-Vegetable-Mineral Workshop” featured hands-on learning (Manaster, 1983). Children identified fossils, played detective to figure out the identity of animal bones, created masks, fashioned clay tokens, painted each other’s faces, and sang folk songs.

Programs were tailored to fit specific purposes. In Wichita, Kansas, children went to the Old Cowtown Museum to “play school” with a 100 year old curriculum, slates, spelling bees, and recitation (Teaching in a one-room school, 1983). At Washburn-Norlands Living History Center, teens camped out in soggy fields, made their own soap, and participated in a simulation of the journey west in the 1850s (Craig, 1983). Near Boston, the Macomber Farm, which was established for the purpose of preventing cruelty to animals, showed children and accompanying adults the world through a pig’s eyes, pig’s footprints in which to walk, and pipes through which to smell as a pig would (Daar, 1983). Similar activities were available to use one’s senses like a horse; for instance, one could try to move objects like a horse. Queens County Farm Museum, just 17 miles from the heart of Manhattan, gave city children the opportunity to care for animals and grow crops, sell produce, and enjoy log splitting and corn husking contests (Farm Museum,
At Hancock Shaker Village, children in 1984 gathered eggs, carded wool, wrote with quill pens, explored woods, and prepared an old recipe (Museum news, 1984). Teen volunteers at Old Economy Village, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, called Young Harmonists, led children in a myriad of activities of role-playing, treasure hunts, object identification and participation in crafts such as woodworking, blacksmithing, calligraphy, and weaving (Same idea, 1985).

In spite of the ideology of conservatism, multicultural programs continued to involve young people of all ages. A high school program that involved role-playing, working with 1722 maps, and creative writing occurred at the Joseph Lloyd Manor House in Lloyd Manor, New York (Aibel-Weiss, 1985). It was called “Uncovering a Forgotten people: Slaves.” Interest in multiculturalism was also evident in the use by the Museum of New Mexico of a Hispanic storyteller to employ the Spanish language in 1984 to teach children heritage and lead them in singing old songs and telling their own stories (Hunt, 1984). The Brooklyn Children’s Museum produced a popular experiential program about Africa that in 1988 featured touching African fabric, acting out emotions such as fear, making masks for the whole body, and creating one’s own rhythm for an “Initiation Journey” (G. Cones, personal communication on July 12, 2007). The Field Museum in Chicago also incorporated multicultural elements as children designed their own family crests or totem poles, created masks and stories, built a Chinese cricket cage and caught a cricket for it, and wrote to Indian reservations to request tribal newspapers (Voris, 1986).

Both large and small museums attempted to attract children with experiential learning. Mystic Seaport in Connecticut in 1986 continued with its long-popular hands-on instruction in basic navigation, piloting, and sailing of small boats (Carr, 1986). The Children’s Museum of
Indianapolis had a “Mysteries in History” hands-on exhibition that focused on archaeology, primary source documents, photography, and oral interviews as historical evidence (Gonis, 1986).

Everywhere seemingly children’s museums flourished. In 1986 festivals with children making brooms, rakes and frames, and role-playing took place at Sleepy Hollow at Van Cortlandt Manor in New York (Ambach, 1986). Alabama Department of Archives and History provided discovery boxes for children (A lifetime of learning, 1989). The Arizona Museum for Youth focused on activities about dogs; they invited students to enter a dog art show, to “race dogs” on a peg board track, to draw pets, and to read in a doghouse. Families could work together to make one patch each for a community quilt at the California Bay Area Discovery Museum.

Many methods of experiential learning were used with youth in this decade. Museum mobiles were still on the road, with the example of the Adirondack Museum Parkmobile of New York, which let students undertake lab experiments as part of an “Acid Rain” exhibit and identify objects in a “Women’s Work” exhibit (Bond, 1987, 27-28). Traveling trunks shows continued to be popular with the University of Mississippi Museum, for instance, reaching eleven thousand children in 1988 with thirty trunks; the trunks contained a variety of objects, from replicas of ancient Greek pots to modern kitchen gadgets to masks (Ray, 1989). The Homestead Museum in California featured a costume trunk and the opportunity for children to become an 1840 cook, vaquero, Chinese farmer, Anglo merchant, or 1920s teen through role-play in “A Journey through Time” (Wade, 1989). In Pueblo, Colorado, the PAWS Children Museum offered ethnic food, dress up clothes, and dance, while the Children’s Museum of Boca Raton and Miami Youth Museum, both in Florida, followed with the same type of programs (a
lifetime of learning, 1989). In Chicago, students could take part in a mock excavation, make pots, do gravestone rubbings, and make seals with stamps of wax at the Rosenbaum Artifact Center. The Children’s Museum of Manhattan offered children opportunities to give a mock newscast in a television studio, to bind a book in a book bindery, and to navigate a miniature sailboat in Wavy Water World, while the Staten Island Children’s Museum let children lay out news stories for newspapers or television programs (Yarrow, 1989). Brooklyn Children’s Museum had a math club called “Dr. Dimension and the Rulers of the Universe” in which they learned measurements.

But there was a serious side in young people’s programs by 1989. The Capital Children’s Museum had children paint their feelings on tiles after viewing “Remember the Children,” a Holocaust exhibit (Camerekian, 1988). The tiles were placed on a Wall of Remembrance at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. The Harrison Gray Otis House in Boston presented “Unknown Hands” (Levy and Curtis, 1989). In it eighth graders took character cards to “become” actual Boston residents of all ethnicities and social classes in the early 1800s, exploring Beacon Hill neighborhoods through the eyes of servants, for example, and playing the game Hill of Fortune. It was so popular that the program became a part of general tours. Finally, the Family Ties program at Josiah Quincy House is an exemplary museum program of experiential education in which students learn how to document family history (Levy and Marshall, 1990). Modeling himself or herself on one of the early residents of the Quincy House, each student prepares an inventory of one of the rooms and then compares and contrasts it with others (Levy and Marshall, 1990). After that he or she is ready to interview relatives, make drawings of the home and neighborhood and of the family treasures, and make a family tree. Immigrants were especially urged to write down memories.
The 1980s were a good time for museum guests to immerse themselves in the past by choosing simulations and learning old craft skills. Many people participated in archaeological digs. In spite of retrenchment, some museums continued to expand their multicultural activities. For children, both games and role-play were used extensively. People learned how to document their own family histories, recognizing that the history of each person is important to preserve. And experiential learning is an excellent way to stir interest in national, regional, local, and personal history.

*The Internet Explosion: 1990-1999*

The 1990s were a time that prosperity reigned and a time the Internet began to influence lives around the world. Electronic mail and cell phones enhanced communication in some ways, but social capital in the form of club membership and volunteerism sharply declined, according to Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*. Some lonely people played computer games while others paid an Internet dating service to find them a mate. Major public events included Desert Storm, the Oklahoma City bombing, the Atlanta Olympic Park bomb, the impeachment of President Clinton, and the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. But the Internet would impact every area of life, and the museum was not exempt from this impact.

Jay Gaynor, in charge of 22 trades at Colonial Williamsburg, has seen many changes in 25 years; he noted that in the past everyone performed life-skill, hands-on activities such as cooking, sewing, mechanic work, or gas station attending, and people understood hands-on work and working conditions (J. Gaynor, personal communication on July 27, 2007). But by the 1990s, they had more trouble relating to every day hot, dirty work (Gaynor). Dr. Lorraine Garcia-Nakata, director of the Mexican Museum of San Francisco, an American institution devoted to Mexican art and culture, said, “In retrospect, the 1990s very much mirrored what was
happening in the United States. It was a time of losing and gaining important ground, a period when the community had to ask itself a fundamental question: How important is the museum and what are we each willing to contribute in order that it may continue?” (Zamora, 2002, 39). One of the hallmarks of museum education of the 1990s was to train the teachers in order to get the kids, meaning that teachers enthusiastic about museums would pass that interest on to their charges (Osborn, 1994). Families also became very involved in museums. In spite of a change of lifestyle from being a laboring economy working with one’s hands to a service economy working with intangibles such as the Internet, a resurgence of interest in hands-on farming, building and everyday living became evident.

People were eager to know more about the places they lived. For adults in New York in 1991, there were 51 possible walking tours sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York from an ethnic “Peddler’s Pack” (Jewish) to “Gramercy Park,” focusing on writers and reformers (Tours, 1991). People were eager to see where famous people resided or notorious events had occurred. Novelist John Dos Passos perhaps explained this obsession with pilgrimages when he wrote, “We need to know what kind of firm ground other men, belonging to generations before us, have found to stand on…how they managed to meet situations as difficult as those we have to face…we need to know how they did it” (1991, 3). The Chicago Historical Society mounted the “A City Comes of Age” exhibit, which invited each visitor to become a particular person in the opening mural and to view the exhibit through that person’s eyes (Danzer, 1991, 13). After watching a simulated railroad car orientation film, opening trunks to explore, and answering questions about Chicago’s present problems and a vision for her future, the visitor left his or her questionnaire and exited by a mural with mirror set into it (Danzer, 1991). The visitor had the opportunity to engage in reflection about the great city.
Exhibits became even more interactive, directly engaging museum guests. A Shakespearean exhibit in Washington, D.C. at the august Folger’s Shakespearean Library featured Elizabethan food for visitors to eat and Renaissance sports and games for visitors to play in 1993 (Friedman, 1993). At about the same time, the Tsongas Industrial History Center of Lowell, Massachusetts, the first successful industrial museum, allowed visitors to weave (Marcinkowski, personal communication on July 10, 2007). The Minnesota Historical Society successfully revamped a gallery in its History Center with items from A to Z, where one could turn a squeaky wheel and touch everything from a birch bark canoe to a woolen bathing suit (Franco, 1993). Educator Barbara Franco said, “It is a social experience. It contains ‘real stuff.’ It is a multi-sensory experience…where visitors look for history in everyday things” (21-22).

Open-air museums and historical houses offered chances to participate. In 1990 Van Cortlandt Manor had a hands-on Community Day with strawberry picking, textile activities, and games for children (Historic home, 1990). That same year in Corwin Point, Indiana, the Buckley Homestead involved visitors in buggy races, basket making, threshing, vegetable tasting, and play-in-the-attic for children (Museum news, 1990). Adults could dress up for a fund-raising gala to witness and solve a historical murder at the Carlyle House in Alexandria, Virginia (Information received, 1990). At the Jamestown Settlement, guests could enter a smoky longhouse, sound the watch on the deck of the Susan Constant, or try on armor of long ago in the guardhouse (Haas, 1993). On the West Coast at Rancho de Los Alamitos, visitors could choose to play horseshoes, churn butter, or make soap during California Ranch Days (Museum notes, 1990).

Several museums recognized that many cultures make up America, and they reflected this approach in their activities. The Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton,
Virginia, invited people to learn building technology of the seventeenth century as staff restored a farm house that depicted the melding of English, Irish, and German archaeological features (Museum notes, 1991). In 1992 the Jewish Museum in New York sought to begin a dialogue between Jews and African Americans in mock town meetings in preparation for a difficult exhibit about the two cultures called “Bridges and Boundaries” (Museum notes, 1992). Dr. Deborah Mack, an exhibit developer, took great pride in “Africa” at the Field Museum. Throughout the exhibit, visitors were forced to think and compare their lives with the lives of enslaved people as they walked through the reconstructed hold a slave ship and came out to stand on an auction block (D. Mack, personal communication on August 2, 2007). The design was meant to help visitors make the experience their own. Historian Thomas Holt asserted this theory, saying, “We make the world as we know it; we know it by how we make it. The knowing and the making are, in the words of one of the protest songs of the American Civil Rights Movement, ‘a constant struggle’ (1993, 108).

A traditional observance across the nation in 1992 was the Columbus Quincentenary with many activities for people, such as the opportunity to board one of the three reproduction boats in Galveston, Texas. Many Native Americans opposed the Columbus observance, since it marked the subjugation of their people. In fact, one Native American celebrated the fact that the Columbus Quincentenary was not very successful—in fact, “a bust” according to him (Marshall, 1993, 39). John Marshall III of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota wanted the dominant European culture to realize that Native Americans had lived in North America long before 1492 with valid societies and languages. The traditional observance became explosive as “perspective” and “authentic views” brought the issue to a head. The Jamestown exhibition on the subject, “Discovering America,” which opened June 15, 1992, was a sensitive display which presented
the evidence of those Europeans who may have preceded Columbus to the New World and challenged visitors to think and discuss what they thought about who discovered America and how Native peoples were treated in a safe forum (Museum notes, 1991).

Multiculturalism and experiential learning were joined in museums in the 1990s. In Mississippi, the Museum of Southern Jewish Experience decided to offer area instructors a workshop called “Teaching Multiculturalism in Mississippi” (Cohen, 1994, p. 23). Forty teachers participated in such activities as a six course Chinese meal, Choctaw dance, group gospel sing, curry dinner from India, and rituals from Lebanon, China, Africa, England, and Russia (pp. 23-24). At the Museum of New Mexico and Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, a state history educational program began with a letter from a fictional boy named Felipe in 1790 asking about life in New Mexico (Gomez, 2002, pp. 10-11). The letter prompted seventh graders to answer questions by exploring a lock and key, a spindle and *chispa*, a 1800s map, a 1784 inventory of a ranch, and an 1800s painting (pp. 10-11). The students worked on exhibit-based tasks also and ate bread that had been baked in an adobe oven (p. 12). The National Park Service recognized changing ethnic sensibilities, for in 1991 Congress passed a law renaming its 1876 Custer Battlefield the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument (Pitcaithly, 2004). More locations that have recognized minority cultures include the Manzanar National Historic Site (for Japanese-Americans), the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site (for African-Americans), and the Montgomery National Historic Site (for African-Americans).

Traditional experiential programs that explore the past remained popular during the 1990s. At the Mahaffie Farmstead and Stagecoach stop in Olathe, Kansas, an archaeological excavation was held—staffed by volunteers and supervised by professional people (Museum news: Mahaffie Farmstead, 1990). At the Littleton Historical Museum in Littleton, Colorado, citizens
raised a barn for a 1890s farm, reconstructed an 1865 schoolhouse, and then put together a 1900 ice house (ALHFAM spotlight, 1995). Attendance grew as local supporters began to feel pride in their own handiwork. In Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, staff members changed the General Store so that visitors could interact with seven role-playing customers in period dress, handle merchandise in the store, and actually shop (Braden, 1995).

Another method of engaging visitors in a thoughtful way was through the use of memory books, which were installed in every exhibit from 1993 to 1995 at the Shelby Cullom Museum of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (Straytner, 1995, p. 7). A memory book is a blank book in which visitors may write comments about an exhibit or answer specific questions from museum staff; visitors may write or not write, as it is their choice. For example, in a “Jazz” exhibit, visitors could answer such questions as: “When did you first hear jazz?” or “Did jazz define or change your life?” (p. 7). Often visitors not only wrote their own responses but also read those of others, enriching the exhibit (p. 7). Memory books of stories and responses were likewise elicited for the exhibit “When Barbie Dated GI Joe: America’s Romance with Cold War Toys” (McLellan, 1995, p. 154). One viewer wrote of the bomb shelters and talk of nuclear disaster, “It scared the Hell out of me. I expected the world to end at any time” (p. 154).

During the 1990s emotion-evoking experiences seemed to be the order of the day. As John Dewey wrote, all true experiential learning has an emotional aspect (1913/1970, p. 16). In Colonial Williamsburg, for example, during the reenactment of a scene from the American Revolution that took place in the streets of the open-air museum, one of the actors whipped up the emotions of the crowd, urging them to take up sticks and beat Lord North’s effigy, and they did (Tyler-McGraw, 1998). Another emotion-provoking experience was the 1996 exhibit “Help Wanted” about a strike and Minnesota workers at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul,
Minnesota, in 1996 (Roe, Weiland, and Thiel, 1998). Visitors could step into one of four jobs and, for example, pack simulated pigs’ feet in the meatpackers’ section or operate a cream separator in the farmers’ section (1998). Then after reading handouts, visitors could step into the shoes of a striker, be literally bombarded by messages of the times, and then, as a union member, vote for or against a strike (1998). In 1999, the First Infantry Division Museum in Wheaton, Illinois, provided a memorable sensory experience with the simulation of walking through a battlefield of vintage tanks and equipment from two world wars, seeing “soldiers” lying in pain, and listening to the sounds of “travail and suffering” (Kotler, 1999, 34). Other hands-on experiences for adults included operating inventions at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia and doing the Hoop Dance at the Heard Museum in Phoenix (1999). Such activities are important, for as Neil Kotler, program specialist at the Smithsonian Institution, reminds one, “Experience connotes active engagement, immediacy, inclusion, and intense, memorable, or unusual encounters” (32).

During the decade of the 1990s, children participated in a number of family and school experiential programs. In 1990 third graders in Concord, Massachusetts, visited the Louisa May Alcott House to take part in activities led by three educators (L. Marcinkowski, personal communication on July 10, 2007). The three young women portrayed the Alcott sisters but used names from the novel, Little Women, by Louisa Alcott (July 10, 2007). Children enjoyed such hands-on activities as playing the game of virtues Mansions of Happiness, writing a story, and, while blindfolded, touching an object in a basket and then drawing it (July 10, 2007). At the Tsongas Industrial History Center, in 1992 and 1993, a child visitor entered a history room with a passport for one of six immigrant groups. He or she would find the appropriate chest and unpack it (July 10, 2007).
The open-air museums had much to offer children in 1991. Heritage Museum of Independence, Missouri, took children aged 6 to 12 on sundown overnight camps in a frontier fort or 1850s village with fire-starting and outdoor cooking activities (Museum news, 1991). Meadow Farm Museum in Richmond, Virginia, featured wheat weaving, games, chores, fireplace cooking, wool dyeing, and making catsup and ice cream (Museum news, 1991). Old Sturbridge Village invited school children for two consecutive visits, to assume historical roles of people found in census and tax records, diaries, letters, and portraits (Piatt and Schweerdtfeger, 1991). In the Village, pupils could learn to build fence, spin or weave or cook.

The ever-popular archaeological excavation called “Diaries in the Dirt” occurred at Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1992 for grades four through twelve (Lavin, Graves, Percoco, & Mullahey, 1992). Young people used clues such as artifacts and oral history interviews to discover that the site being studied was the privy. Other experiential activities at Drayton Hall included “Plantation Game Days” “Preservation Workshop” and “Plantation Excavation.”

In 1993, museums from the North to the South planned children’s experiential programs. In Philadelphia, the Atwater Kent Museum featured a pre-visit for children, in which they were to excavate their class’s trash can and identify, list, and sketch each object to reconstruct activities that had taken place in the classroom (Sheppard, ed., 1993). At the same time at Brandywine Battlefield in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, children in grades kindergarten through two set up a camp of the Revolutionary Soldier, drilled with reproduction muskets, and played with simulated colonial toys. Those in grades three through five had the option of becoming a soldier or a Quaker girl and could dress in period clothing and match objects of the time with uses. The Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, New York, which is a history, art, and science
museum, partnered with Public School 25, a magnet school, and sent groups of sixth graders on a walking tour (Adamchick, 1993). Pupils in each group assumed the roles of photographer, collector, interviewer, and map-reader; they viewed different ethnic groceries to study different types of food (1993). In the South, Old City Park of Dallas, Texas, presented “Discovery Days” with special tours for the visually impaired and a sensory potpourri of sound of bellows, air on face, smell of burning woods, and touch of hands churning butter or forming pottery (Field notes, 1993). An advanced placement high school history course at West Springfield High School in Springfield, Virginia, partnered with 29 museum sponsors to explore battlefields, state parks and cemeteries (Percoco, 1993). There the pupils cleaned and sorted artifacts as well as made inventories and built databases for the artifacts. One student, Joe Tilton, praised the experience, “I was able to see history in physical form. We were allowed to walk on it, move through it, and let it run through our fingers” (8).

Young people had even more opportunities in 1994-1996. The National Park Service offered chances for families to do hands-on work, which included everything from doing laboratory work to stabilizing decaying adobe structures (Osborn, 1994). At the state park, George Ranch Historical Park in Fort Bend County, in 1995, over 21,000 school children came to learn about frontier life in Texas and to churn butter, grind corn, make rope, build cabins, card and spin wool, and learn cowboy skills (ALHFAM spotlight, 1995, 5). In 1996, the Hagley Museum of Wilmington offered similar pioneer crafts at their four-hour school programs (Marcinkowski, personal communication on July 10, 2007). These crafts included cooking on a wood stove, ciphering and writing with quill pens, sewing punch paper, making jeehaws, which are tiny figures of men made to jump by pulling a string, and playing music and parlor games (July 10, 2007). The same year college students signed up at the University of Oregon for
Preservation Field School at the Pete French Round Barn, under the National Park Service (Pinyerd, 1996). They replaced juniper posts and excavated some artifacts during their studies. Museums exposed school children to different ethnic groups which had settled the West. The National Expansion Memorial Museum of Westward Expansion, a National Parks Service site in St. Louis, Missouri, included some African-American themes in its school programming since one of every five cowboys on the long cattle drives was African American (Moore, 1997). Young people constructed a town and government and then decided whether or not the town would be segregated. At the Buffalo Bill History Center in Wyoming, in 1997, students studied the Plains Indians, designing and making parfleches and little tipis (Connor, 1997). Such activities foster understanding and respect for different cultures.

The end of the decade brought a number of activities for children. The American Museum of Natural History in New York in 1998 asked school children to cut out 25,000 green leaves for an exhibit (Pollak, 1998, p. B7). At Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum in Michigan, teachers used museum animals and science equipment in a partnership to allow children to learn principles through experimenting (Transforming practice, 1999). The Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, Connecticut, offered a change of pace with opportunities for children aged eight to thirteen to create circus posters, work on an assembly line, and match historic with modern photographs of their community (Oallo, 1999). Ameri-corps workers, young people who donated their time to the nation for a small stipend by the government, helped at the Barnum Museum. The Missouri Historical Society sponsored an outstanding program called “Exploring the ‘Hood”’ (Jordan, 1999). In this program participants defined the physical space in “Mental Mapping,” went on a scavenger hunt for architectural clues in “Reading Soulard,” and learned elements of what makes up a town in “Come Build a Community.” Children enjoyed the many
opportunities to be active.

The 1990s were full of changes in museums. Computer technology not only affected lives in society but also entered the museum. It is not discussed here because it seems antithetical to experiential education. Interactive exhibits, multicultural programs, sensory experiences, and old-time craft classes made perfect experiential learning situations. Almost everyone was looking forward to the new millennium. What would the next one hundred years bring?

"Hot" Interpretations: 2000-2007

The opening decade of the 21st century was a paradox for museums, or as president of Monticello’s Thomas Jefferson Foundation Dan Jordan said, “We are all in trouble, but history is red hot” (Brackett, 2005, 14). Interest in cultural heritage had increased 13% between 1996 and 2000, and 81% of American travelers included culture on 2002 trips, yet visitation was down at the “keepers of America’s past”—Monticello, Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon 15-16). Some suggestions for this were the attack on September 11, 2001, the Iraq War, the struggling economy, extreme weather, and competition from other sources for visitors’ time, as well as a need to reach out to a more diverse market. Yet Dr. Deborah Mack commented that with so much impersonal Internet information, people trust the museum more today, for they want the power of the object and the power of place (personal communication on August 2, 2007). For example, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is Ground Zero for the Civil Rights Movement, and people want to see it (August 2, 2007). Another place of power was The Experience Music Project in Seattle, which served as an example of the way museums can change to meet people’s needs—to celebrate a feeling and not a collection (Shogren, 2001). Everything in it is to be touched and used.

Typical society issues that Brooklyn Children’s Museum chose to address at this time
were schools cutting their art programs due to lack of funds, the emphasis on being environment-
friendly, and the need for good after-school care for children of working families. Educator Delia
Meza mentioned Brooklyn Children’s Museum partnering with Public School 289 to create a
bug sculpture in the science garden project because Brooklyn’s fourth graders no longer had art
(personal communication on July 12, 2007). Many schools had cut their arts programs due to
budgetary problems, and the museums might come in to help. Another Brooklyn Children’s
Museum educator, Roslyn Smith, talked about the importance of a museum being “green” in
2007, at one with its environment, which in their case is a very nice park (personal
communication on July 12, 2007). Many museums were protecting the environment, for this fit
the missions of science and history museums. She also noted the importance of after-school care,
for most families now needed two wage-earners or, if a single parent, the wage-earner must work
long hours. That is why children may come to their museum without an adult.

Museums recognized their mission to meet the needs of the people—all the people. The
Lower East Side Tenement Museum opened its arms metaphorically and doors literally on
September 11, 2001, to survivors fleeing the wreckage of the Twin Towers attack (Abram,
2002). They responded to needs by making sandwiches, offering first aid, setting out chairs,
making available restrooms, water and telephones, and comforting the dazed and weeping
refugees. Program director Phil Cohen organized the effort, although some people could hardly
believe museum staff would be so kind. Some people would return for programming there which
offered opportunities to touch authentic photographs and legal documents and to participate in a
dialogue about two immigrant families who lived in the building, one in the 1870s and the other
in the 1930s. This multicultural museum flourished as did others in the early 2000s, but
controversies sometimes raged about activities. For example, a Fiesta in Santa Fe—touted as the
“oldest community celebration in the United States”—in which Hispano Santa Feans took the role of conquistador and promoted ethnic unity among Latinos (Horton, 2001, 47-54). This offended the subjugated Pueblo Indians; in spite of recent efforts of the organizers to soften the conquering aspect and changing the brandished sword for a crucifix, the Pueblos continue to hate the festival.

Small museums, large open-air museums, and sophisticated city museums all offered experiential education for adults in 2001. At the Littleton Historical Museum, all artifacts, some of them just very good reproductions, could be touched or used (Cheyney, 2001). The permanent collection held the more fragile artifacts in a separate center not open the public. A common visitor activity at Colonial Williamsburg concerned a medical history center, where visitors could engage in “rolling bandages, tying slings and splints, weighing powders or pills with balance scales, and grinding with a mortar and pestle” (Cottrell, 2001, 13-14). Experiential learning also occurred in Ashburton, Massachusetts, at the Frederick Historic Piano collection (Tammasini, 2001). Its founders, a husband and wife, collected historic pianos for students, scholars, pianists, and the curious to come and play. Their diligence has afforded serious musicians the pleasure of playing on pianos for which 18th and 19th century composers created their music.

Other types of adult involvement were available. In 2002, the Museum of the Rockies took adults on explorers Lewis and Clark’s path down the Missouri River from Fort Union to its headwaters; guests observed and shared ideas as they traveled (Sachatello-Sawyer, 2002). San Diego Museum of Natural History sponsored a group of adults to go to La Mision, Mexico, to study the birds and plants of Tijuana. They gave the data to that community so it could prepare a request for Federal Reserve status. In Seattle, just for pleasure, the Experience Music Project
afforded adults the chance of playing guitars, drums, pianos and many other instruments, both as an individual or as a band (Shogren, 2001). In 2003, adult living history students matriculating in the McMurry University Public History Program arrived at Fort Phantom Hill (in Texas) to be outfitted with uniforms, weapons, tents, and 1853 camps (Wettemann, 2003). They studied manuals, drilled, loaded and fired muskets, and helped with an interpretive station (as a guard, for instance, challenging each tour group as to its business there). Still another participatory project that the Director of the National Constitutional Center promoted was response books, in which visitors could tell how they felt or what they thought about the exhibit. The center asked visitors questions about justice and various controversial issues such as gun control or the U.S. Patriot Act and then asked them to sign the Constitution or sign a dissenters’ book and give reasons if not signing it (Kamien, 2003).

One of the phenomena in experiential learning of this first seven years of the new millennium was people’s desire to be immersed totally for a three-or four-month period in another simulated era and Public Broadcasting Service’s wish to film and air such projects on television (Lodge, 2004, p. 7). Some of these programs included “The 1900 House” (2000), “The 1940s House (2001), “Frontier House” (2003), and “Manor House” (2003) (p. 7). These are too detailed to take up here, but they are the acme of experiential education. In any case, after “Colonial House” in 2002, the staff at Plimoth Plantation began to dismantle the structures in the fall of 2003 to reuse in building a youth center. Visitors to Plimoth Plantation could work alongside staff in rebuilding the Voorhees and Wyers houses by raising frames, adding clapboard and thatch, daubing, riving, hewing, and starting fires with flint. Aside from the work, visitors could also learn to row a shallop, which is a small open boat, knit a seventeenth century stocking, and sing. Many of the skills have remained useful.
The activities of living historical farms are almost entirely experiential in nature, and the staff must have extensive training in hands-on work. An Association of Living History Farms and Agricultural Museums meeting offered learning how to plant, collect, dry and store seeds; how to roast coffee beans; and how to do basic treatments on farm machinery, with ample time for participants to practice (Sunday programs, 2004). Further programs at the annual 2004 meeting were practicing ladling curd into a mold while making cheese, making bread, and playing an 1867 Rules Baseball match with the Greenfield Village Lah-De-Dahs. The breadth of opportunities in the country’s living farms could be seen in hands-on programs such as a day of farming with milking, mowing, and plowing. Other classes were a snowshoe lacing workshop with only 233 feet of lace and three easy knots and making “five different sausages from five different countries across five centuries” by mincing, grinding, mixing, filling, cooking, and eating them (6). Such places appealed to both children and adults.

Multicultural programs were also prevalent in adult opportunities. Since 1993, Conner Prairie had teamed with the Delaware Lenape Indian Tribe to present “Woodland Indians” (Willaert and Bubp, 2004, 16). Visitors could dry meat, learn words and songs in the Lenape’s language, play flutes, stretch deer hide, make a canoe or coil-pot or a cattail mat, and daub a cabin (2004). When the National Park Service decided to address slavery at its many Civil War sites, the Sons of the Confederate Veterans bitterly opposed the decision (Pitcaithley, 2004). However, the park rangers used primary sources to present conflicting historical perspectives and sharpen vision, and no one has complained. Robin Winks, a member of the National Park Service Board, perhaps expressed their philosophy best, “Education is best done with experiences. These experiences must include that which we regret, that which is to be avoided, as well as that for which we strive” (p. 7).
Other cultural inclusion activities were occurring. Student teachers attended the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute to look at places and documents and explore in groups (Leinhart & Gregg, 2002, p. 139). A webbing exercise before and after the institute showed that their learning about Civil Rights activities had increased significantly. This was one of the few visitors’ studies that attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of experiential learning. With Latinos making up the second largest minority in the United States, four Latino art museums were set to “communicate the primacy of Latino self-definition and interpretation”; art they may be, but they nevertheless interpreted and transmitted history (Zamora, 2002, 37-39). The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago worked with Mexican-American veterans to create for them a national memorial plaza (39).

Besides multicultural activities, museums presented pioneer activities. In 2005, Trena Bagnel described a totally hands-on historic home, the Bradley Home Museum in Midland, Michigan, which was created that way because she said people remember up to 90% of what they do (2005, 19-20). Senior citizens loved to sit on the furniture and listen to old phonograph records, while other visitors might enjoy lying on a straw tick mattress or pumping a drink of water. At the Farmer’s Museum in Cooperstown, New York, adults and families could experience a horse-drawn carriage ride, caroling, and sipping hot cider on the holidays (Miner, 2005). College students could take American studies classes at Lindenwood University and the Boonefield Village in Missouri, where they could work with artisans or sit in a nineteenth century house or on a dam and read Emerson (Tillinger, 2005). Students also performed physical work such as splitting logs, restoring buildings, and feeding animals, as well as mental work as interpreters and archivists in the Price-Loyles Collection.

In 2006 the American Association of Museums celebrated 100 years of its organization,
for it started in May 1906 at the American Museum of Natural History with a group in which only two women were present, one museum west of the Mississippi River was there, and no minorities or history museums were in attendance (MacDonald, 2006, 30). Today things have changed, in a positive manner; for example, history museums are the largest group in the AAM. In 2006 some exhibits were felt to have been mounted to shock or meet social needs, rather than teach, and this needed to be remedied. Museums should serve diverse populations, as 28.5 million immigrants resided in America in 2006, meaning one in ten was not born here (Russell-Ciardi, 2006, 73). The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York, which was home to seven thousand immigrants from 1864 to 1935, recreated apartments of families there for “Shared Journeys,” a program to promote tolerance (74). The museum offered interactive free workshops to ESOL, English speaking other languages, classes after hours, which focus on real issues of housing, health care, making a living and others. This helped immigrants overcome the barriers to coming to a museum, such as fees, short hours, and no trace of their cultures. In the classes, the adults could compare and contrast themselves with the Levine family of 1897 and do some work with an artist, which would be displayed for one month; students could even become guides.

Many participatory activities for adults existed in 2007. William Gwaltney, an Assistant Regional Director of Workforce Enhancement for the National Park Service, still enjoyed his hands-on work. His 2007 project was recruiting and equipping a company of Civil War soldiers who were Spanish-speaking from Fort Union Monument in Watoros, New Mexico (W.W. Gwaltney, personal communication on July 3, 2007). He, an African American with Irish heritage who works in Colorado, was memorizing the commands in Spanish and was quite excited about the project (July 3, 2007). He believes people are more willing to be interested in
history today and to explore their cultural identity.

Dr. Deborah Mack, an exhibit developer mentioned earlier, was proud of “The Race Exhibit,” now traveling, which located “race” in science, history and public policy (personal communication on August 2, 2007). It also gave the visitor opportunity to interact, for, in the exhibit, the visitor witnesses a scene in three environments and then casts a vote for a solution; the visitor may also compare his or her vote with those of others (August 2, 2007). Jay Gaynor, at Colonial Williamsburg, listed the gun shop as an interactive place where craftsmen engage visitors in conversation and tell them to pick up the guns (July 27, 2007). This provoked interesting conversation and actions because people have such varied experiences with guns and differing opinions on guns (personal communication on July 27, 2007). Adults at Colonial Williamsburg could also enjoy a two-hour play in the street, in which a guest could shoulder a real (but unloaded) musket to march in an honor guard for George Washington, or, if male, serve as a judge, lawyer, or jury in a mock trial (K. Spivey, personal communication on July 30, 2007). At another open-air museum, Conner Prairie, two staff members listed four hands-on adult programs: “Follow the North Star” (role-playing slaves who meet people along the way who help or hinder); “Mystery on the Prairie” (solve an 1836 murder); “Hearthside” (cook in a fireplace and eat), and “Weekend on the Farm” (assume a historical identity for a 30 hour period) (D. Allison and N. Stark, personal communication on August 2, 2007). Yet another open-air museum, Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, had rope beds for adults to try, kitchens to cook in, top quality antique reproductions to touch, and historic games to play (E. Hood, personal communication on July 27, 2007). Director of Education Ed Hood liked experiential programs but still wanted them “to be historically appropriate and to demonstrate authentic feeling” to the 160,000 regular visitors and 70,000 school children they have every year (July 27,
Open-air museums continued to be leaders in experiential learning.

Other museums provided experiential learning programs for adults in 2007. The Virginia Living Museum presented a “survive as a settler” game in honor of the four hundredth founding of Jamestown (K. Spivey, personal communication on July 30, 2007). The visitor was confronted with six situations in which she or he must make a decision (July 30, 2007). Losing or gaining points for the decision on health, wealth, and mental acuity, the visitor found out if she or he could have survived in Jamestown in 1607 (July 30, 2007). In another program at the Brooklyn Museum, for teachers of art and history, participants formed a tableaux like the painting Embarkation of the Pilgrims by Robert Weir and then spoke through the characters portrayed, exploring the time period and art (A. Fairchild, personal communication on July 27, 2007). Lisa Marcinkowski, director of education at Mystic Seaport, was working to bring in more multicultural activities to Mystic Seaport. Interpreters have always emphasized the diversity of whaling ship crews. The museum showed two inclusive art exhibits, “Women and the Sea” and “Black Hands, Blue Seas,” plus an African-American Teacher Institute with hands-on activities was given in July 2007 (L. Marcinkowski, personal communication on July 10, 2007). Nearby Stonington, with its Portuguese inhabitants, had helped the museum with a participatory multicultural program (July 10, 2007).

The year 2000 for children in museums opened with children harvesting ice and making up stories about the experience at the Early American Museum in Illinois (Osborne, 2007). Another icy experience occurred at Living Legacy where young people helped carve 1500 pounds of ice, making the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem; children also took home a poster and candles they had made—after enjoying ice-skating (Graeber, 2000, p. E51).

Children’s programs in the 2000s had been driven in many places by mandatory
standards and testing of school districts. New York began testing students with document-based questions and thus changed John Jay Homestead’s school programs profoundly (Ferris, 2003). Since students must give evidence on tests, the museum showed teachers how to use archaeology or paintings as evidence also. For the same reason, the Philips Manor Hall in Yonkers offered Mill River walking tours with map-based exercise for Yonkers and handling of a musket and documents for children (2003). The National Park Service offered online lessons to help teachers and students study places or multicultural subjects such as the “New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School: From Freedom of Choice to Integration” (Learning from history, 2003). In it the student analyzed photos from yearbooks, mapped the county, read excerpts from the court decision, interviewed some key players, and then researched their own school to write from the perspective of one who lived in the period of time of integration (2003). Charles White of Boston University explained the rationale of the online history lessons, “We want children to be active in their learning….One way to get them to do that is to get them to ‘do history’” (11). The Early American Museum presented “Prairie Adventures” in a four and one-half hour long program with three parts (Osborne, 2003, 10). The three parts are 1) horticulture—hands-on plant identification and the Prairie Chicken Stomp, 2) history—corn shock building, corn shelling, making corn husk dolls, and identifying farm implements, and 3) environment-role-playing various animals, making a food web, and insect scavenger hunt (2003).

An interview with expert on experience economy Joseph Pine at this time revealed that while museums are primarily educational and esthetic, Pine felt that they should try to add some entertainment and escapism to programs (Museums and the experience economy, 2001). He gave the example of a children’s program at Fort Worth Museum of Science and History called “Whodunit? The Science of Solving Crime” because it had an entertaining show by actors who
set up the mystery and an escapist activity of guests becoming detectives (2001). Another children’s program, at Fort Frederica National Monument in Georgia, directed students to study four families and their lives, color and label a town map, measure a town lot, and draw things the family may have owned (Moore, 2001). Participants could also examine and discuss real artifacts, and clean, count and classify them. The Brooklyn Children’s Museum offered another type of hands-on—that is, a comforting hands-on one’s spirit, as staff was there for the children on September 11, 2001, keeping the museum open and welcoming, and on a later occasion at the passing of a staff member, working through grief with the children (Cones, personal communication on July 12, 2007).

Some multicultural activities for children took place at museums in 2000-2001. First, the Museum of Jewish Heritage emphasized the holiday of Hannukah with bingo-like “Heritage Hoopla” based on items in the museum, “Take Your Dreidel for a Spin” on physics, an interactive concert, and the play The Odd Potato plus a story (Graeber, 2000, p. E51). In 2001, the Solomon Schechter High School met at the Jewish Museum in front of the Marc Chagall Exhibit and led Jewish prayers, ate a traditional Russian breakfast, viewed Chagall’s work, and discussed immigration issues (Rosenbloom, 2001). In the Southwest, the Museum of New Mexico presented the Santa Fe Fiesta and invited one young Hispanic boy in each school to be crowned (with the conquistador’s helmet) as Conqueror de Vargas for a day (Horton, 2001). Then teachers asked students to write stories and draw pictures for the fiesta. But, on the other side, the All Indian Pueblo Council had boycotted the fiesta since the 1970s because it was insulting to their people. The Mexican Museum in San Francisco arranged for students aged five through eighteen to have hands-on workshops called “Street SmArt” (Zamora, 2002). The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago presented a three-part experiential program with
the schools: 1) MAPS, an acronym for museums and parks, schools, 2) Park Voyagers who study in the parks, and 3) Partnership with a sister museum in Mexico (2002). Multicultural programs would stay in place at museums.

The programs at this time embraced ethnic groups and others, striving to add some affect to the programs. The Museum of New Mexico implemented a participatory program for seventh graders to study Jewish pioneers in New Mexico by using artifacts, primary documents, Santa Fe Trail maps, and practicing exhibit building (Gomez, 2002). The Boulders Art Commission sponsored a project called “Querida Madre” so children could make a mural and in doing so, “see their own mothers as real people with their own hopes and dreams” (Semmel, 2002, 29). The Women of the West Museum, originally in Boulder, Colorado, featured “Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: A Neighborhood Women’s History Trail” activity for fourth and fifth graders (28). The history detectives interviewed interpreters representing the women, studied the records, charted a trail for the residences, and ended with making placards and brochures for each stop at a residence on the trail.

Extraordinary Learning Environments at Ft. Worth Museum of Science and History deserve a place in a study of experiential learning for they make a museum learner-driven and fun—a connected “stimulating, multi-dimensional, immersive place” (Walter, 2002, 279). Staff claimed that short-term effects of an ELE were “laugh, eyes light up, curious, emotionally stimulating, out of the ordinary experience, gain confidence/competence” (279). Long-term effects might include “gain confidence/competence, a deeper relationship with their world, develop perspective, experience personal growth” (279). Staff in Fort Worth, Texas, worked every day to be assured that this took place.

Experiential learning for adolescents was also available in 2004. High school students
had an opportunity to form groups of seven advisors and the President of the United States, after intense preparation, at the Truman Presidential Museum and Library (Hackman & Geselbracht, 2004). Then the students would grapple with three problems of Truman’s era: desegregation of the military, the blockade of Berlin by the United States of the Soviet Republic, and the invasion of South Korea by North Korea (pp. 7-8). The students role-played such positions as press secretary and Secretary of Defense, and the $24 million Classroom for Democracy in its third year by 2004 seemed quite successful (8). Another issue museums brought to young people was a program asking them to consider “What is the right to vote worth?” (Edwards, 2004, 3). Students and teachers held forums and conducted voter registration drives with the slogan “Turn 18…Don’t Defer the Dreams” (3). This was partly in preparation for the fortieth anniversary of the Voting Rights March, for the National Park Service had declared the fifty-four mile route from Selma to Montgomery a National Historic Trail and had announced that a visitor center would open in 2005 (p. 3). On March 7, 2004, the students in the program marched across in the Annual Bridge Crossing to commemorate Bloody Sunday. Older pupils were considering authentic issues.

In 2004, younger pupils had numerous opportunities for experiential learning. They could go to the Henry Clay home of Ashland to work under an archaeologist with trowels, screens and labeled bags and rotate to wash, sort, and categorize artifacts (Henderson and Levstik, 2004). Even after students write field notes, some critics questioned the efficacy of such programs, yet the quality and depth of experience probably lay within each child. On the other side of the United States, in the city of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Conservancy prepared a 2004 interactive, bilingual guide to buildings of the early 1900s to 1930s on six blocks downtown (McNamara and Sandmeir, 2004). Students or families could follow The Kids’ Guide
to Broadway to find “ghosts” of structures and signs. They explored buildings (for example, a
walk inside the Bradbury Building was quite a surprise), and went on a scavenger hunt for items
on Broadway (2004). The explorers could also use follow up web resources. Why was this
important? Southwest folklorist J. Frank Dobie may have the answer, “I want not only to know
about my home land, I want to live intelligently on it” (Gomez, 2002, 13).

Schools and families allied themselves with museums for participatory learning in 2005.
School groups at the Bradley Home Museum in Michigan were allowed to tighten ropes for the
beds, dress mannequins in period clothes, and sing “You’re a Grand Old Flag” (Bagnall, 2005).
The Henry Ford Museum and Ford Motor Company created a charter school, and, after initial
adjustments, educators pack a trunk with real artifacts such as an 1809 Boston newspaper, a
Farmer’s Almanac, a 1960s Jet, a scrapbook of a just married young woman, movie star
magazines, photographs, and other ephemera for students to use (Bryk, 2005). Bryk, the educator
at the museum, said it was good to have the collection in active use, for “our ‘end’ is education!”
(307). In Connecticut, Windsor Historical Society and Burr Elementary School partnered for
experiential learning. Students studied, kept portfolios, and made an artifact of an arrow,
wooden spoon, or miniature hut after visiting the Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Hartford,
Connecticut (Goode, 2005). While at the museum, children could put on replica clothing and a
tri-colored hat, milk a model cow, and churn butter. Finally, one of the most alluring and
rewarding museum programs that year was the multi-sensory five-day sailing camp at South
Street Seaport Museum in New York (Allam, 2005). Blind children learned to sail alongside
sighted children.

In the next year, 2006, more experiential programs took place. Children at Farmer’s
Museum in Cooperstown could go to “From the Medicine Cabinet Workshop” to prepare and
take home tinctures and a salve (MacGregor, 2006). Other children might enjoy learning to make rope and butter, flint-knap, quilt, form clay pinch pots, or work with beads at the Fifth Annual Archaeological and Heritage Fair by the Texarkana Museum Systems in Texarkana, Texas (Richardson, 2006). At the Highlander Folk School, now called Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tennessee, children could interact with an exhibit called “Face-Value,” in which four artists painted themselves and each other (Quinn, 2006). Viewers were asked to photograph their shoes (one way to tell someone’s class), draw a self-portrait, and describe oneself on a questionnaire, illustrating three ways to “see”. Quinn, author of the article, felt an exhibit should “push”.

Children had many opportunities for experiential learning in 2007. Veteran educator Kristen Spivey told of children cutting the sprue off spoons, making paper, and trying on a mask burn victims used to wear at Colonial Williamsburg (personal communication on July 27, 2007). The young apprentice program allows children to choose three trades to try (July 27, 2007). Children also had an opportunity to create folk art or design seals much like the one of the State of Virginia (July 27, 2007). At the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, which entered temporary quarters in August for the next twenty-four months during a building program, all of the programs were experiential. One example was the dinosaur excavation, while another program for children was “Stories from the Attic,” in which students moved through the journey of history, doing things along the way (C. Barthelemy, personal communication on August 15, 2007). The museum was proud to be the arm for the Exploratorium in San Francisco, serving as a center for an Inquiry Institute because the museum does so much staff development (August 15, 2007).

Children could try hands-on activities on the sea as well as on land. At Mystic Seaport in
Mystic, Connecticut, the director of education said 90% of the children’s programming in 2007 was experiential; it often involved watercraft, such as sailing or making a canoe (L. Marcinkowski, personal communication on July 10, 2007). Other programs included “Girls of Long Ago,” with cooking on an open hearth and decorating a hat and the Art Spot, where one can arrange a scene or sketch a wave (July 10, 2007). Elementary children go to the Discovery Barn to climb rigging, tie knots, learn flag signals, and identify sea shells, while preschoolers go to the Children’s Museum to dress up, build a boat, or put together puzzles (July 10, 2007). Adults were also often seen in the Art Spot, drawing.

Other museums attracted children with experiential learning. Conner Prairie featured a new Discovery Station with a chance to dress up and role-play a storekeeper, farm hand, engineer, or Victorian Lady (D. Allison and N. Stark, personal communication on August 2, 2000). Delia Meza emphasized the importance of teaching preschoolers; one participatory program she led in 2007 at Brooklyn Children’s Museum was “Sound Journeys” (personal communication on July 12, 2007). In it young children handled collection instruments such as maracas, used their bodies as instruments, and then performed in a show (July 12, 2007). Educator Alexa Fairchild at nearby Brooklyn Museum cited a typical hands-on program there, “African Masks and Masquerades” (personal communication on July 27, 2007). This program gave children the opportunity to create their own movements, take on a persona of a character, and look at art from the character’s point of view (July 27, 2007).

The 40 to 50 teens who regularly go to Brooklyn Children’s Museum enjoyed a wealth of helpful hands-on activities in 2007. Educator Aieszha Turman not only provided regular engaging programs but also tutoring, SAT testing preparation, and college visits (personal communication on July 12, 2007). New director Kayla Dove was excited about the fact that for the last five
years, every museum senior has gone to college (July 12, 2007). A typical program Turman gave this past year for Black History Month was “Civil Rights by the Decades” (July 12, 2007). The 1940-1950 decade was about the Tuskegee Airmen, so in dyads, students played the parts of a military recruiter and a young black and then switched the roles, with critiquing afterwards (July 12, 2007). Teens there also performed a vital function as helpers in such areas as handling the animals (July 12, 2007).

Children’s museums presented programs to meet needs of certain groups. At Brooklyn Children’s Museum educator Gloria Cones spoke of two programs that reached out to special groups of children: 1) “Life of a Cowboy” (with making butter and handkerchiefs) for special needs children and 2) “Parents as Art Partners” for Asian parents and grandparents and children (featuring a Chinese Red Ribbon Dance, calligraphy and Japanese fish prints) (July 12, 2007). At the Children’s Museum of Boston, through an exhibit called “Boston Black,” children explored the community of Boston and used their map skills, shopped at a grocery store of another culture, and learned a dance (D. Mack, personal communication on August 2, 2007). These educators are building a firm base for future multicultural education.

These were the experiential learning programs through the summer of 2007.

The American Association of Museums said there are some challenges to meet during this decade, such as overcoming the charge of elitism and deciding just what the role of the museum is (MacDonald, 2006). Furthermore, author of the article, MacDonald, said controversy is to be embraced, so “Rock the boat. Stir the pot. Fan the flames” (2). On a calmer note, experience expert Joseph Pine restated the definition of experiences: “Experiences are memorable events, revealed over a period of time that engages individuals in an inherently personal way” (Museum and the experience economy, 2001, 8). He said that first come goods,
then services, and then an “experience” (8). The next level of economic value is “transformation” on top of the experience; *transformation* will guide the individual to change in some way (10). With deliberate designing, *transformation* is the next frontier for those who believe in experiential education (10).

**Discussion of Results**

This section will discuss the above evidence gathered for the major research question and the four ancillary questions. The major research question was: How has experiential learning evolved over time as an educational component in the American history museum? The four minor questions include these: What are the antecedents to experiential learning in the history museum? Why should the museum invest in experiential learning? How have experiential learning and the history museum been influenced by multiculturalism? How has social context played a part in experiential learning? The major research question can be answered through the following trends or patterns emerging through the decades in the history museum.

**Sensory Experiences**

Fostering experiential learning through the creation of sensory experiences has been important in history museums from 1787 through August 2007. There was a progression of using the senses as first museum workers realized that “gazing” at an object was not enough (sight). Lecture series and readings drew visitors as they used the sense of hearing. Next came touching the object. Then the open-air museums appealed to smell and taste to create a totality of human experience. Guests themselves could cook on an open hearth, as staff felt more involvement goes farther.

Sensory experience has to be one of the first methods of experiential learning. The first documented example of sensory perception coupled with action was a visitor’s opportunity to
play an organ at Peale’s Philadelphia Museum in 1787. In the early twentieth century, blind patrons were encouraged to touch objects in museums. Although the National Park Service was surely providing sensory experiences in the outdoors, the next specific references occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. Preschoolers in Texas had the opportunity to touch silkworms, to taste rock salt, and to move their bodies in a class called Rhythm Rascals. The large open-air museums offered a plethora of sights, sounds, smells, and tastes. From Christmas at Colonial Williamsburg in the 1950s with its pungent evergreens, twinkling white lights, carols, and wassail and eggnog to the smell of burning leaves, feel of a musket on one’s shoulder, squeaky carriage springs, and horehound drops at Old Sturbridge Village in 1961 to the smoky longhouse, feel of armor, and sounding the watch on the *Susan Constant* at Jamestown in 1993, the visitor could “feel” the past. At the Smithsonian Institution, Director S. Dillon Ripley added chocolate smells and elephant roars to exhibits (Lardner, 1982, p. H1).

In the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, children had many opportunities for sensory experiences; for example, in 1963, they could touch a muskrat’s fur or falcon’s feathers or smell sulfur in the Kansas City Museum. In the 1980s they could crawl in a cave or pet a tarantula at Philadelphia’s Please Touch Museum or see through a pig’s eyes and walk in its tracks or pull a horse’s load at Macomber Farm near Boston. For adults, there were extensive walking tours of cities and historic places, for example, fifty-one possible tours to suit every interest with stops along the way for tasting and smelling in the 1990s in New York City alone, and an expedition which traced the path of Lewis and Clark in 2002.

By the 1990s exhibits in major museums included food, sound, and games to enhance sensually the experience, from places such as the venerable Folger’s Shakespearean Library to the more rural Minnesota Historical Society’s History Center. Some exhibits were built around a
more serious purpose in using the senses to create learning. “Africa” at the Field Museum featured a walk through the hold of a slave ship. Repeated exposure to such multicultural perspectives eventually leads to critical thinking. “Help Wanted” at the Minnesota History Center focused on making visitors feel a part of a strike of workers, and the activity of the First Division Museum was a walk through a battlefield of sounds of war and cries of pain and “dead bodies.” All were designed to affect the senses while evoking emotion. The sounds and sights can add depth of feeling to the experience that will linger long after the visit. They can affect one’s visceral reaction to war and conflict, opening new ways to view issues in the present. The exhibit was not formed to be a sensation but to provoke thought and perhaps social change. In the first decade of the twentieth-first century, Seattle’s Experience Music Project sought to create a total sensory experience for adults as they played instruments, while Brooklyn Children’s Museum offered children the same experience in handling collection instruments and using their bodies as instruments.

Rationale for using this method is interaction with the environment and use of the senses in that interaction. People such as Freeman Tilden felt strongly that children especially experience the world through their senses. Vygotsky (1926/1997) believed a person’s experience is completely determined by interaction with the surrounding world. Piaget (1954) concurred, saying intelligence is shaped by interaction with a concrete environment. Kurt Lewin (1999) further said that one’s behavior depended on everything that surrounded a person plus his or her individuality. The way a person perceives the environment is through the senses. Dewey said that people are most alive when “sensuous materials and relationships are most completely merged” (1934, 103). Finally, curator Ray Pierotti spoke of the senses when he wrote, “What may first appear as a commonplace event can, with the right set of mind and directives, turn into a larger-
than-life revelation about one’s self and surroundings” (1973, 45). Museums can help visitors achieve a right set of mind by creating a sensory experience.

Action as Diversion and Performance

Action as diversion and performance appears in museum literature frequently as a method of experiential learning. The two are other early forms of experiential learning. The performance art of dancing alone can be traced from an 1893 fandango at a California Exposition to 1940s Dutch dances and square dances to 1960s African dances set to the sound of drums. Action as diversion in the form of games of chance, including roulette, monte and faro, may be found at the same exposition, while loo, lotto, and goose were offered at an open-air museum in 1961 and gambling, at the Museum of Our National Heritage in 1979. More innocuous diversions and puzzles were mentioned from the 1940s to 2007. Old-fashioned games, often played at open-air museums, included bowling on the green, pitching pennies, racing in sacks, pitching horseshoes, bobbing for apples, playing the “Graces” with hoops, and others. Action as diversion and performance also manifested itself in the scavenger hunt or treasure hunt, whether it was “Seek and Find” in the Milwaukee Public Museum in the 1940s, “Hunt for the Sailor” in a 1950s gallery of the Museum of the City of New York, a treasure hunt at the Detroit Children’s Museum in the 1960s, or “ghosts of streets and signs” hunt for The Kid’s Guide to Broadway in Los Angeles in 2004. Examples of specialized diversions and performance included the 1975 trapeze-flying and juggling at Circus World Museum and the 2007 “Survive as a Settler” game at Virginia Living Museum. Both action and performance remain popular forms of experiential learning.

The physical action and social relations involved in action as diversion and performance help people learn. Vygotsky said the process is stimulation, processing of stimulation, and
responding action. Piaget (1978) concurred, stating that all knowledge proceeds from many interactions between a person and objects or other persons. Also, action and performance give participants an opportunity to interact socially. Social relations are another important element of experiential learning. Vygotsky called the social environment the “lever” of the educational process (1926/1997, 49). All individuals seek connections with others. So the aspects of physical action and social interaction with other people make action as diversion and performance a highly effective method of experiential learning.

Crafts as Handwork

Crafts as a method of experiential learning may be divided into two kinds: 1) handwork and 2) skills or old ways of living or making things. The first type, handwork, relates primarily to children and often seems to be art work. Sometimes it is known as “make and take.” As early as 1911, children were drawing animals and modeling with clay at New York museums. This extended into the 1930s with the addition of making costumes, wood and linoleum prints, and scrapbooks. In the 1940s a vegetable zoo, leaf prints, animal prints, leather craft, and instrument making were added. In the 1970s from New Mexico to New York, a plethora of crafts appeared for children: woodcarving, stained glass work, masks, and shadow puppets. Older children drilled fence posts and built reliefs of architectural features, raised designs, of old buildings. Teachers used some handwork to enhance learning on field trips to museums in Washington, D.C.; they included gravestone rubbings, book jacket designs, greeting cards, and utensil making. In the 1980s children made Guatemalan worry dolls and clay tokens in Austin, Texas, and brooms and rakes in Sleepy Hollow, New York, at the behest of the museums. In 2007 Brooklyn Children’s Museum used handwork of Japanese fish prints and calligraphy to draw Asian children and parents and grandparents into the museum. Handwork was available for
adults, also, as linoleum workers copied art designs at Newark Museum in the 1920s, and, in 1981, New Hanover County Museum in North Carolina offered adults opportunities to make gravestone rubbings and sand candles.

Once again, the effectiveness of handwork in experiential learning lies in its physicality, that is, hands touching materials. Kurt Lewin, founder of American social psychology, emphasized subjective experience and personal involvement. Not only is the person engaged in the craft with his or her hands, but, as in all art, there is an opportunity to shape the object creatively, to one’s own liking.

Crafts as Skills

Old crafts, which may mean skills or actions, whether from Europe or early America, have been an enduring method of experiential learning, as they foster a more thorough understanding of a former way of life. Living history enthusiasts have embraced them, but so have some traditional history museums. In the first decade or the twentieth century, a description of the use of old tools and crafts by immigrant visitors is found in the Labor Museum at Jane Addams’ Hull House. Old-time crafts next appear in the 1960s with spinning, weaving, candle-making, cooking in a fireplace, cabinet-making, and working with oxen. While these crafts were being performed earlier by demonstrators at open-air museums, only in the 1960s were visitors offered opportunities to perform them. For example, Old Sturbridge Village offered participatory workshops complete with tools, raw materials, and technology for a potter, printer, blacksmith, and housewife. These crafts are repeated in the 1970s with an emphasis on farm work for the whole family. Reciting lessons and making cornhusk dolls or wooden mallets, as well as making gunpowder cakes (with some substitutions), were added for children. In the 1980s Mystic Seaport in Connecticut added to their longtime sailing program piloting, navigating, and boat...
making, as well as “Preparing the Thanksgiving Feast,” and Calvert Marine Museum taught visitors to make nets and crab pots and to carve wood. Other old crafts or lost arts were rediscovered by modern visitors at various museums in the form of needlework, basket-making, stone-cutting, quilting, barrel-making, nail-forging, and herbal medicine-mixing. Adolescents were also welcomed to learn crafts.

By the end of the 1980s, common farming activities, such as milking cows and threshing wheat, with exciting buggy races, were in vogue. In the 1990s the old crafts on the farm were performed in far-flung places; there were churning butter and making soap at Rancho de los Alametos in California, wheat weaving and catsup- and ice cream-making at Meadows Farm Museum in Virginia, roping and cowboy skills at George’s Ranch Historical Park in Texas, and writing with a quill pen and making jeehaws at Hagley Museum in Delaware. In the early 1990s Dr. Jay Anderson, sometimes referred to as the “father of living history,” directed Utah’s Jensen Living Historical Farm, which interpreted family farm life in 1917. He mentioned gardening, plowing, harvesting, butchering, making sausage, and quilting as some of the hands-on activities, typical of many such farms (personal communication on August 25, 2007). Crafts at other places such as making tipis and parfleches, related to Native Americans.

In the early 21st century old-time crafts continued to be popular. An unusual one was available in 2001 at the Frederick Historic Piano Collection in Massachusetts, where musicians could come to play on antique pianos in the old way. The open-air museum offered everything for the visitor to try from daubing, riving, hewing, and framing a dwelling place at Plimoth Plantation to entering a mock apprentice program at Colonial Williamsburg, in which one could make paper, cut sprue off a spoon, try on burn masks, or design seals, using the model of the state seal. Other adventures might include building a corn shock or attending Association of
Living Historical farms and Agricultural Museums workshops to roast coffee beans, lace snowshoes with 233 feet of laces, make cheese, or play an 1867 rules baseball game. At Farmer’s Museum in Cooperstown, one could make salves while the Texarkana Museums System offered flint-knapping and pinch pot making at a fair. In the Southwest Rancho de las Golondrinas and the Palace of Governors, the oldest continually occupied building in the United States, offered hide tanning, corn grinding, and other activities to children during Spanish Colonial Days while adults baked in outdoor hornos (ovens), cobbled, and made adobe in 2007. All of these opportunities to work in the old ways have added to understanding of the past. David Kolb (1984), who has studied experiential learning extensively, said a learner needs concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation to benefit totally from an experience. If a tension and integration between concrete and abstract and between “active experimentation and reflective observation” occur, the learner will be empowered (30). As Jerome Bruner (1960) stated, people want to participate, and if they are to retain new learning, they must have opportunities to practice new skills. Experiential learning advocates such as George Hein would also praise the opportunity for social interaction that many of these crafts or skills, such as farming, afford one.

Outreach though Traveling Trunks

An early method of providing experiential education to the public outside the museum was the outreach method of the traveling trunk, also called case, kit, discovery box, and, at one point, “musette.” The first mention of the trunk occurs in 1905 with cases of four birds for school children to touch, draw, and write about provided by the American Museum of Natural History. In Newark Museum, Dana documented 9,000 shipments to schools per year, while making the school district pay for transportation. Through the 1920s, museums in the East were offering
thousands of natural specimens, sculptures, dolls in costumes of other countries, and other items
to over a million school children. Brooklyn Children’s Museum alone was noted for lending
items to individual children. In the 1940s, children’s museums loaned many exhibits, and one
large museum developed “musettes” for military training, which taught servicemen valuable
skills such as distinguishing poisonous snakes from non-poisonous ones.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the traveling trunk circulated in schools from New York to
Hawaii with hands-on exhibits. New York’s Farmer’s Museum even asked the community to
help find and donate real artifacts for kits, while Brooklyn Children’s Museum provided lists of
suggested projects with collections to extend learning. In the 1970s, the Environmental Learning
Project in California put forth such travelers as a “Soldier’s Footlocker,” not only with artifacts
but also researched lessons and fundraiser ideas. The 1980s saw an expansion of the loan trunks
to hospitals with an array of everything from action games to Greek pots to modern kitchen
gadgets to Boy Scout artifacts. From Seattle, Washington, to Oxford, Mississippi, museums were
putting together traveling trunks. As late as 2005, the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn,
Michigan, was using a trunk with such items as a Farmer’s Almanac and a movie star magazine
in it for its charter school (Bryk, 2005). The trunk can be rather expensive, not only because of
content, which must be refurbished or replaced often when usage is heavy, but also because of
time, effort, and transportation issues.

The rationale for using traveling trunks as an outreach component of experiential learning
is that they allow the student to use his or her physical senses and to interact with objects in the
trunks. One grasps reality through the physical senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and
tasting, so sensory perception of objects can be a great boon to learning. Jean Piaget stated that a
person both perceives and adjusts to the world through the senses, and other theorists such as
Dewey concurred. Most museums support object-based education. Perhaps noted librarian and curator of the early 20th century, John Dana, had the last word on encouraging traveling trunks: “A full third of all that our museums have collected would be worth more to the world were they lent for educational purposes; if lost or broken, they would at least have died in a good cause” (Dobbs, 1971, 39).

Outreach through Organized Activity

In the 1930s through the 1960s, experiential learning continued to evolve through organized activity, formed primarily around hobbies in groupings called clubs. These attracted children. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts might be included in this category also, as a focus of many of the children’s museums. Scouts regularly planted trees, mounted collections from nature for their own cigar box “museums,” and served as guides in the museums. The 1930s brought a variety of interests as exhibited in the formation of different clubs: stamp club, marionette and drama club, Pueblo Indian Club, astronomy club, nature clubs, and young collectors clubs. The Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, in 1931, encouraged children to select whatever they wished to collect and study and then allowed them to help arrange exhibits. The Children’s Museum of Boston extended the club’s influence through a hobby magazine, which children published, and a World Friendship Club, in which children corresponded with children of other countries. In the 1940s, other clubs formed to study birds, mammals, botany, and photography, all of which offered experiential learning to members. The Duluth Children’s Museum even sponsored an intercultural hobby show. Perhaps no club demonstrated experiential learning better than that of the elite New York Junior Astronomy Club, as the members, many of whom were academically gifted, delivered their own programs, wrote and published their own monthly journal, and taught adult classes in 1950. During the 1960s, new clubs mentioned included
Rationale for the use of experiential learning through organized activity in the form of hobbies and clubs may lie in prior experience, action, and emotion. David Kolb, John Dewey, and Elliot Eisner agreed that a person views any subject through personal meaning and values from prior experience, and certainly participants chose their own learning in types of clubs joined. What draws one person to drama and another to stamp collecting is “rooted in our experience,” according to Eisner (1994, 17). Dewey further recommended that activities should be moved from authority to the student and from a structured discipline to unstructured learning, for which the club is perfect (1938). Finally, emotion enters in wherever people take an interest in a subject and become concerned about outcomes or determining those outcomes (Dewey, 1913/1970). The hobby club as an organized activity was a viable and important part of experiential learning in the past; it still survives in some places.

*Role-playing*

Yet another way visitor participation or experiential learning has evolved in the American history museum is role-playing. Professional educator David Welton defined role-playing as an opportunity to experience and “analyze a problem situation”; this implied that the participants need some preparation and must think about, and discuss solutions to, the problem (Welton, 2002, 293). Sometimes this does occur at the museum, especially in school programs. However, much of what the museum calls role-playing may be dramatic play, according to Welton, which is to structure and experience in such a way that visitors will get a “vicarious feel for that
experience and raise questions that lead to further research” (293). This is more likely to occur in visits to museums by the casual visitor who is drawn into an experience, with little preparation, or young children. Since museums do not distinguish between role-play and dramatic play, the term role-play will be used here.

For children, role-playing appeared in the 1970s with roles at the Henry Clay Estate of the Hagley Museum; children acted as apprentices in the clothing industry in Boston, working under a master and mistress while sewing on buttons or sewing up seams. In the same years, adults, too, found opportunities to role-play at Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, Plimoth Plantation, and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery. The latter featured controversial subjects such as “Trial of John Brown” and a play about civil rights and women’s rights, “I Too Am America.” In the 1980s, children could role-play students in an earlier time with slates and spelling bees or choose a grown up role of a 1840s cook, vaquero [Spanish for cowboy], Chinese farmer, Anglo merchant, or 1920s teen. Older students took character cards to “become” a variety of people in the city of Boston. The 1990s offered young ones the option of assuming the identity of a Revolutionary soldier or a Quaker girl at Brandywine Battlefield. Opportunities to role-play abounded in the 1990s for adults, also, who could solve a historical murder in Virginia or take on historical roles through primary sources at Old Sturbridge Village or interact with customers in a period store of Greenfield Village. Adults could also play a serious role in interactive exhibits—such as one of four jobs and eventually a striker in “Help Wanted” at the Minnesota History Center. By the 2000s, one could assume the role of storekeeper, farm hand, engineer, or Victorian lady at Conner Prairie; by 2007, the role of a slave. Through such multicultural activities the institution could communicate real world issues and open dialogue about current social problems. Colonial Williamsburg mounted a two-hour
play in the streets, inviting visitors to be part of an honor guard for General Washington or to take part in a trial. Teens found themselves holding the powerful positions of President and presidential advisors, grappling with 1950s problems at Truman Presidential Museum and Library. Other teens, in dyads, played a military recruiter and young black student, while studying the Tuskegee Airmen at Brooklyn Children’s Museum in 2007.

The rationale for using role-playing is interaction with the environment, emotion, and social relations, three telling traits of experiential learning. Dewey showed his passion for this type of participation when he said, “The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment” (1934, 103). Vygotsky (1926/1997) insisted that emotion is necessary for fantasy, for the ability to imagine is essential for role-playing. Social relations also are prominent in role-playing, for both children and adults like to engage with others, according to Dewey. Finally, Tilden (1957/1977) averred that role-playing helps an individual to find personal meaning by seeking answers to why people acted in a certain way at a certain time in the past.

**Simulation**

An extreme version of role-playing is the simulation. Welton defined simulations as “instructional activities in which elements from the real world are re-created” (2002, p. 297). A more complex design and a commitment of a longer period of time were required for a simulation in the museum. In the 1970s at the larger open-air museums, such as Mystic Seaport or Missouri town 1855, people of all ages could come for a short period of time (no more than a week) to live in the old ways. The National Park Service featured such opportunities at parks for people who wanted to see what it was like to be a 1800s soldier, sailor, miner, or lumberman. One of the much-praised experiences one could have was that of a long weekend of 1870s life as
a member of the Pray or Waters family at Washburn-Norlands Farm in Maine; it appeared first in the 1980s. The first decade of the 21st century brought a new opportunity for a three- or four-month simulation of another time with participants immersing themselves in the time period and the historical characters through a project by the Public Broadcasting System. Ordinary Americans vied for the opportunity to live in the old ways in one of these programs, later televised: 1900s House, 1940s House, Colonial House, Frontier House, and Manor House.

The rationale for the role-play also applies to the simulation. Surely participants would agree with master interpreter Freeman Tilden that “The fullest appreciation of unspoiled nature is found by those who are willing to imitate in some degree the experience of the pioneers” (1957/1977, 68). Once again, the “doing” is the important thing according to Dewey.

**Hands-on museum work**

The idea of hands-on museum work has appeared time and again from John Cotton Dana’s workshops for professionals to Scouts learning to make their own museum exhibits in cigar boxes in the early twentieth century to exemplary programs in the 1990s. The Josiah Quincy House’s “Family Ties” taught children how to document one’s own family history by doing an inventory of a room, making a family tree, drawing one’s home and neighborhood, and interviewing relatives. For graduate college students in the History and Folklore Department, Utah State University and the Jensen Living Historical farm offered a year-round program of running a 150 acre farm just as though the year were 1917 (Anderson, personal communication on August 25, 2007). Many other opportunities to help with authentic projects and exhibits were discussed.

**Mobile museums, archaeological digs, response books and other actions**

Four minor patterns of experiential learning include mobile museums, archaeological
digs, response books, and other actions, usually mechanical in some way. Although the first mobile museums, called by the various names of “muse mobile,” “art mobile,” and “museumobile,” were on the road in 1948, out of Illinois, most of the forty or fifty mobiles appeared after 1970. They seemed to be a phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, with a mission of serving school children, primarily. They offered such experiential learning opportunities as puzzles, bread-making, laboratory experiments, rope dancing, and origami. The archaeological excavation appealed to all ages. Teens were invited to one on Staten Island in 1967 and continued the effort through 2007. Some excavations are real, such as the one above, and a 1980s dig at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which revealed a 1850s stable and a spring house. Others, such as the children’s “Dino Dig” at Fort Worth, Texas, Science and History Museum and “Diaries in the Dirt” and “Plantation Excavation” at Drayton Hall in South Carolina were contrived activities for education and fun. Perceptive students in the program “Diaries in the Dirt” soon discovered that that site is a privy. Response or memory books, noted in the 1990s and the first decade of the twentieth century, allowed visitors to write a response to an exhibit, read responses of others, and write back to them. Two exhibits that evoked emotional responses included “Jazz” and “When Barbie Dated G.I. Joe.” At the National Constitution Center, guests were asked to answer questions about justice and controversial issues in books and then were invited to “sign” The Constitution or, if not in agreement with it, sign the dissenters’ book. Other actions in museums often involved machines of some kind and appeared as early as 1905 with polishing minerals and building a wireless radio at Brooklyn Children’s Museums. Knobs and levers, opportunity to operate lights or signals on ships and lighthouses, and a Geiger counter are examples of these other actions.

All of the above involve physical action, the touchstone for experiential learning. Dewey
(1934) had long advocated learning through experience rather than texts and teachers. Famous cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner also approved the use of manipulative items in all subjects and wanted teachers to fill the environment with stimuli. These are the patterns of experiential learning that occurred in the history museum.

The first minor question was: What are the antecedents to experiential learning in the history museum? Peale’s opportunities for visitors to play an organ and have a profile drawn in 1787 were early examples. Another prominent antecedent to experiential learning in the history museum was the contest in the 19th century museums, such as Barnum Museum, not yet designated history or art or science. In 1855 three very different contests were offered at three museums for patrons’ participation: a playwriting contest with a $500 prize for the best of show; a baby contest with the unusual categories of twins, triplets, and fat children; and a beauty contest in which gentlemen could submit daguerreotype photographs of beautiful lady friends. Others followed, such as athletic contests at an 1893 California exposition. In succeeding years, the contest became a vital part of hands-on education at history museums. Events ranged from flower shows and photograph contests in the 1920s to a science fair in 1931 to youth and senior talent and hobby shows in the 1940s. The 1950s featured an old-time soap carving contest, as well as modern speech and film-making competitions. The contest fits in very well with the heart of experiential education—action. John Dewey asserted, “What counts is what we do, not what we receive” (1934, 102).

The second minor research question was: Why should the museum invest in experiential learning? The answer to this query lies in the work of the learning theorists. John Dewey (1934) and David Kolb (1984) both put forth the idea that a visitor to a museum observes everything through personal meanings and values from prior experience. Lev Vygotsky (1926/1997) further
stated that prior events in life are the only teacher that can transform an individual. Again, Dewey said that all education is “an affair of action” (1933, 278). Jean Piaget (1978) felt that one learned from multiple interactions with an object. More recently, Kolb emphasized concrete experience and active experimentation. Vygotsky believed that experience was biosocial in nature. Piaget agreed, saying intelligence was shaped by interaction with a concrete environment, and Kurt Lewin said that behavior is a combination of individuality and surroundings. Freeman Tilden (1957/1977) and Elliot Eisner (1994) both noted the influence of the senses on experience. Dewey defined the senses as “organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him” (1934, 22). Emotion is the foundation of the educational process, according to Vygotsky. Further, museum education evaluator George Hein (1998) said social relations are important in experience. Both Tilden and Dewey concurred that all activity must have meaning. Finally, Kolb said that if experience stirs the learner, then he or she can grasp and transform the experience. And transformation is the next step on the ladder after experiential learning, according to Joseph Pine. In addition, other commercial and public entities are marketing “experiences” to the public. Museums must do whatever it takes to claim their fair share of the audience.

The third ancillary question was: How have experiential education and the history museum been influenced by multiculturalism, a term not used until the 1970s? Most of the time, the museum has reflected society’s response to immigrants. Instead of assimilation, they were supposed to be “Americanized” (and those were the European immigrants). Americanization required the immigrant to cast off his heritage and language and to replace them with “American” traits. Somewhat better, cultural pluralism treated immigrants as separate groups, celebrating the gifts and accomplishments of the groups. It did not invite them to assume a place
of power in America. People of color, however, were virtually ignored as “members of inassimilable and inferior ‘races’,” according to Tyack (2003, p. 82). Multicultural education, on the other hand, values all cultural differences and challenges discrimination as it demands equity for all. At the turn of the twentieth century, cultural pluralism dominated the museum world. Well-known reformer Jane Addams, with her Labor Museum at Hull House, made possible the first example of the combination of experiential learning and immigrants in the literature in 1900. She invited older immigrants of European ancestry to display, demonstrate, and help their children learn old-world crafts in the Labor Museum, so that their children would feel pride in their heritage and parents. Labels in many languages and events such as Jewish Day were prevalent in New York in the early 1900s. In the 1920s, Chinese kite-flying and a foreign born “inter-racial” (words used at the time) concert indicated cultural pluralism. John Dana of Newark included the Chinese. A Dutch and a Polish exhibit were mounted. One new museum out West invited Indians who had been moved by the government to a homecoming. Dances and celebrations of the Netherlands, the Orient, and Coronado’s arrival in the New World all expanded inclusion. Some attempts were made by museums to introduce children to other cultures—such as a World Friendship Club and an experience with Eskimos and explorers in the 1950s. The 1970s brought a spate of celebrations of many cultures, including those of people of color. Multiculturalism, which teaches valuing all cultures and recognizing and refuting inequities, was a new movement that influenced all major American institutions, including museums. Museums mounted elaborate African exhibits and African American festivals, at which visitors could touch objects, taste authentic dishes, and dance. Similar celebrations of Mexican Independence Day, the Polish culture, and the Polynesian culture were offered. Rachel DuBois would have been pleased that educators continue the ethnic studies she started. Thought-
provoking multicultural exhibits at the nation’s museum invited guests to role-play and learn; for example, at the National Portrait Gallery, guests could play a role of witness, judge or juror in “Trial of John Brown” and “I Too Am America.” Yet what most museums offer is cultural pluralism, as they do not address controversial racial subjects and inequities.

By the 1980s Chicago’s Field Museum gave children opportunity to explore their cultural roots by making family crests or totem poles or Chinese cricket cages. In California, children could role-play vaqueros (Spanish cowboys) or Chinese farmers, while in Boston they could assume the ethnic roles of immigrant residents in the 1800s. Children also prepared solemn tiles for the National Holocaust Museum in memory of the children who died in the Holocaust.

In the 1990s the Field Museum mounted an excellent interactive exhibit, “Africa,” in which one walked through the hold of a slave ship and came, surprisingly, out on a slave auction block. The controversial Columbus Quincentenary took place in 1992 with replicas of Columbus’s three boats and protests by Native Americans. Finally, Jamestown celebrated its five hundredth anniversary in 2007. Each of these efforts featured experiential learning and provoked dialogue, primarily with Native Americans in the latter two instances. In Mississippi, teachers were brought together by a Southern Jewish museum to promote understanding of cultures through role-play, food, and ritual. In the 1960s controversial Director of the Smithsonian Institution, S. Dillon Ripley, sponsored a Folklife Festival to welcome all peoples into the nation’s museum. A master at touching all types of cultures, Ripley calmed and successfully brought in 57,000 antiwar protestors to view the History and Technology Buildings in the 1970s. The Museum of New Mexico provided young people with firsthand material to explore Hispano heritage in the 1970s but moved to include other cultures by the 1990s. Other 1990s programs for students featured ethnic grocery stores in the East, construction of a model town and voting
for or against segregation of it in the West, and all the languages, skills, and way of living of Indians from Wyoming at Conner Prairie in the Midwest (Indiana).

The advent of the 21st century brought a new emphasis on Hispanic people in Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Francisco, California; Colorado, and New York with everything from art to fiestas to ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) classes. African American museums, four major Hispanic art museums (which include history), and Jewish holocaust museums formed and expanded. In addition, women found their own place in museums. Besides this formation of new multicultural museums and exhibits, a few museum studies researched how people from different cultures perceived museum interpretation. A good example is Sarah Griffith’s research on how the Chinese immigrant felt in the Chinese Underground Tunnel Tour in Oregon. It is difficult to assess the relationship of experiential learning to multiculturalism in the museum. Museum personnel, whether enlightened and welcoming of all peoples or simply realizing that they must expand audience appeal to many cultures to survive, have found that experiential learning is a good way to attract people of all ethnicities, who perhaps were not museum-goers in the past because they did not see any part of themselves in the museums. Sensory experiences, such as smell and taste of ethnic foods, music, and dance, can entice people into the museum. Opportunities for arts and crafts can engage families in museum learning. Piaget and Dewey would laud both as excellent ways of learning. Certainly museums such as the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, which interprets the immigrant experience, were offering hands-on learning in 2007 and including newcomers from other shores by holding English language classes. Whether the experience is cultural pluralism (with assimilation as a goal) or multiculturalism is open to question. “The Race Exhibit,” traveling in 2007, has opened discourse on the topic of “race” in history, science, and public policy. Some
museums, such as Mystic Seaport, are actively trying to bring multiculturalism into their policies, staff hiring, and programs. The progression of multiculturalism in the museum appears to have been social reform and inclusiveness around the turn of the twentieth century with such reformers as Jane Addams and John Dana. Inclusiveness was expanded for European immigrants through the 1940s. The consciousness-raising of the 1960s and 1970s brought people of color into the museum and brought forth the need for reinterpretation in some exhibits, programs, and entire historic sites to reflect events in history, heretofore avoided (slavery, for example). Special neighborhood museums and ethnic museums were formed to meet the need for information about neglected areas of history and to foster ethnic pride. The American Indians became more active, for example. Democracy broadened against this background of social injustice, and the museum was there to help. The need for active participation and reflection by all cultures forms a link between multiculturalism and experiential learning in museums.

The fourth and final ancillary question was: How has social context played a part in experiential learning? Social conditions from the 1800s to the 2000s have definitely influenced the work of history museums. Political events, worldwide conflicts, and technology have all played a part in the transformation of the museum. Whether they have affected the use of experiential learning is not as clear. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a museum mounted an immigrant exhibit that stirred much talk because immigration, then as in 2007, was a controversial issue. Jane Addams of Hull House answered it in part with her own championing of immigrants and of African American club women. The blind seemed to be a big concern of society; a dance was held at one museum to benefit people who were sightless. In the 1930s, Works Progress Administration workers helped in museums, making participatory programs feasible in children’s museums, for instance. Many interactive programs were built around
efforts for the two world wars—a program about whale meat as a meat substitute, victory
gardens, safety radio programs and dances for servicemen, as well as recreational opportunities
and free admission to sites administered by the National Park Service. Exhibits on the much-
feared disease of tuberculosis and blood typing were offered. Revolutionary social change in the
1960s led to neighborhood museums. A more open society in the 1970s saw a major museum
address the drug scene, with the hands-on component being ex-addicts wearing “Ask Me”
buttons, while another museum featured an interactive exhibit on people with disabilities, in
which a visitor could try on prosthetic limbs among other activities. This continued into the
2000s. When the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, occurred, the museum was there to open
its doors to refugees. When a call for buildings to go “green,” that is environment-friendly, the
museum volunteered to comply. When women and ethnic groups have asked for—or
demanded—their rightful places in the museum, the museum has brought them and their stories
in. And when the public, hungry for new experiences, has demanded a chance to choose their
own learning and to participate in that learning, the museum has created excellent experiential
programs. Much like a mirror, the museum has always reflected society.

Experiential learning has been a large part of the life and learning in American history
museums from conception to 2007, as the multitude of examples at many sites, listed above,
prove. It has no doubt added richness to the visitor’s experience that would otherwise be missing.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This chapter summarizes the study and includes conclusions and recommendations for museums of history and recommendations for further study. The researcher started out to look at historical museums, which encompass a variety of types of institutions including shelves of objects in small town halls, large open-air museums such as Plimoth Plantation, historical houses that were created to “save” American identity, and battlefields or other historical land sites, as well as the traditional buildings exhibiting objects. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of experiential education in history museums in America from the beginning in 1787 to employment in the present. The study is needed since none exists. According to two recent studies by the National Endowment for the Arts, attendance is down at historic sites and museums. Museums must work to employ the best methods of education to draw audiences to them. Experiential education is one of those best practices. Tracing the evolution of this hands-on learning in museums can help educators better use it today.

The definitions of museum and experiential learning are critical to the study. A museum is a nonprofit organization that owns and cares for objects and exhibits them to the public on a regular basis for educational or aesthetic purposes. Experiential learning is a philosophy and method engaging learners in direct experience and reflection in order to increase knowledge. The visitor does things, like sawing wood or weaving cloth, or more subtly he or she assumes the role of a historical character.

The major research question is: How has experiential learning evolved over time as an educational component in the history museum in the United States? The four ancillary questions include the following. What were the antecedents to experiential learning? Why should the
museum invest in experiential learning? What is the social context of the times and how did it affect experiential education? How have experiential education and the museum been influenced by multiculturalism? The word *multiculturalism* was not coined until the 1970s; therefore, the terms *cultural pluralism* and *inter-racial* are used at first.

Next there is a review of the literature on theories on experience and experiential learning by educators and educational psychologists. The theorists are John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Kurt Lewin, Jerome Bruner, Elliot Eisner, George E. Hein, David Kolb, and Freeman Tilden, master interpreter of the National Parks Service.

Experiential learning has seven characteristics: prior experience, physical action, interaction with the environment, use of the senses, emotion, social relationships, and personal meaning. These are all undergirded by the learning theories of the thinkers A discussion follows. Museums and educators have the responsibility of interpreting the past to reflect modern re-examination of history. The Commission on Museums for a New Century recommended that museum educators reexamine practice and evaluate exhibits from the point of view of the community, explore ways to learn, and take responsibility for educating adults (Bloom, J., Powell, E., III, Hicks, E. & Munley, M. (Eds.), 1984, 60).

Museums have changed to meet the needs of their audiences. Open-air museums came into existence in America during the 1920s and in time flourished. In 1970 the Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums was established. Urban museums transformed themselves in attempting to reach changing neighborhoods and to address current social issues. They added the heritage of many cultural groups to their exhibits and programs. So did the National Park Service.

Museum educators have the responsibility to change narratives and texts for inclusion of
all ethnic groups. In this area, the museum has mirrored society. It has taken steps to reconsider and change both exhibits and programming to reflect all cultures of a society, but the process has been slow. In early days, it tried cultural pluralism, that is, adding exhibits or festivals about European immigrants’ cultures and Native American cultures, often with no discourse by the respective cultures. People of color, such as Asians, blacks, and Hispanics, were virtually ignored and excluded. In the 1970s multiculturalism appeared, affirming “the strength and value of cultural differences”, working for social justice and equality for all, making available knowledge for the redistribution of power, and advocating the creation of an environment supportive of its goals (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002, 29). The museum has welcomed all people, regardless of race and color, but it struggles with becoming truly multicultural. The museum, for the most part, neither wants to raise controversial issues nor question injustices. It continues to follow a policy of cultural pluralism.

This research project is qualitative in nature with a descriptive research design. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it is “rich in description of people, places and conversations and not easily handled by statistical procedures” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982/2007, p. 2). Multiple sources contributed data to this study, including the University of North Texas Library, Tarleton State University Library, the Library of the Department of Museum Studies at Baylor University, the Cleburne Public Library, The New York Public Library, the Newark Museum Research Library and Archives, and the Brooklyn Museum Research Library and Archives.

Sixteen professional journals, most of them peer-reviewed, were used. Other sources included newspapers and oral interviews, primarily on the telephone, with 15 educators presently involved in experiential learning. I reviewed The New York Times from 1851 to the present and
traveled to New York City in July of 2007 to visit archives and key museums.

The data collection process was document analysis of primary and secondary sources and the structured interview. The researcher worked to develop an effective definition of experiential learning, search for definitions, theories, and history and founders of American history museums, locate reputable journals to use to document examples of experiential learning, conduct a computer search for newspapers, and identify and interview practitioners of experiential learning. Both the interview questions and the interviews are in the appendices.

After the initial 120 years, I reported the extensive findings by decade in their social context. Then the findings were recast into patterns or methods of delivery in a discussion.

The major research question is: How has experiential learning evolved in the American history museum? It can be answered through the many examples of the findings and discussion. Sensory experience, action as diversion and performance, crafts as handwork, crafts as skills, outreach of traveling trunks, outreach as organized activity, role-playing, simulation, and hands-on museum work were all methods of delivery of experiential learning. Both adults and children have participated in such museum activities. Museum visitors enjoyed the smells, sights, sounds, textures, and food recreating other times and places at large open-air museums. From early days, they danced and played games of chance and, later, scavenger hunts. Traveling trunks meant children could touch, play, and learn with authentic objects outside the museum. Both children and adults expanded their knowledge in hobby clubs there. Whether crafts meant painting in art class or learning to thresh wheat in a field, all ages of people found them interesting. Visitors to museums also participated by assuming the persona of historical characters. Simulation was an extreme form of role-playing, in which participants immersed themselves for a longer period of time from one week to four months. Minor patterns of experiential learning included mobile
museums, archaeological excavations, response books (in which people write their feelings about an exhibit), and operation of some type of machinery or gadget. These methods continue to be used today. All the findings explain how experiential learning evolved over time and have expanded in each decade. They also answer the four ancillary questions.

The first ancillary research question is: What are the antecedents to experiential learning? The forerunners of present-day experiential learning in museums were Peale’s opportunity for visitors to play an organ and contests of babies, beauty, play-writing, and photography.

The second ancillary research question is: Why should the museum invest in experiential learning? Dewey and Kolb emphasized personal meanings and values from prior experience, and, with Piaget, felt that education is an affair of action. Tilden and Eisner noted the influence of the senses on experiences. Emotion is the foundation of the educational process, according to Vygotsky. He and museum education evaluator George Hein spoke of the importance of social relationships. Tilden and Dewey agreed that activity must have meaning. Finally, Kolb said if experience stirs the learners, they can grasp or transform the experience. And transformation is the next step of learning.

The third ancillary research question is: How have experiential education and the history museum been influenced by multiculturalism? The museum reflected the views of society in almost every decade. It supported Americanization of immigrants, which asked the newcomers to cast off their cultural identity to become “good” Americans. The museum also tried cultural pluralism, which meant celebrating the gifts of each European immigrant group but not allowing them a voice or addressing inequities. People of color, with the exception of some Native American groups, were virtually ignored. The 1970s brought multiculturalism, which teaches valuing all cultures and recognizing and refuting inequities. Some groups formed neighborhood
museums to reflect the culture of ethnic groups in the community, while some mainstream exhibits addressed racial conflict. Most museums, however, have followed a policy of cultural pluralism celebrating all cultures now but making little attempt to assimilate them or to address injustices.

The final ancillary questions is: How has social context played a role in experiential learning? World wars, immigration, health concerns, the use of drugs, environmental issues, the place of minorities in museums, and the hunger for new experiences by the public have all influenced the work of museums.

And that was the state of experiential learning in museums by August 2007.

Conclusions

Museums are the most basic of cultural institutions. Culture is most often expressed through art, but this study focused on the historical museum. Fortunately, many communities have a history museum, but it is sometimes overlooked for more exciting entertainment or in-home technological activities.

First, the decline of involvement of citizens in the civic and cultural life of the community has adversely affected the history museum in both attendance and volunteers. While museums should be the heart of the cultural life of a community, they have to struggle for a sizable audience at any program, regardless of its excellence. Although this decline is well-documented in mainstream literature, museum staff members will seldom voice concerns about specific attendance issues. Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone* gives declining figures for participation in civic and social organizations in the twentieth century. The *2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, shows a decline in literary reading that correlates with a parallel decline in both art museum attendance
and performing arts attendance. This can apply as well to the history museum. In the first decade of the 21st century, visitation was down at some of the premier “keepers of America’s past,” such as Mount Vernon (Brackett, 2005). Experiential learning has been one answer to this problem. In many cases, it has served as a successful marketing tool. Families can have an entertaining “experience” at the museum as well as at Disney World.

Second, obviously experiential learning as defined here is the antithesis of technology. Purists believe in the power of the object, particularly in the history museum. Some curators, however, have realized that people need to do something other than gaze at it. Experiential learning seeks to involve the participant in doing something with hands on physical materials and using all the senses to interact with the environment. Experiential learning also has an element of emotion and socialization. The learner should “feel” something, especially in the context of the re-creation or simulation of historical events. Yet American society seems fascinated with technology. Museum personnel realize they must include technology, such as tours on individual cell phones and Pod-casts at this writing, in the museum, or they will never engage a young audience and there will be no future for the museum. No museum feels it can survive without a website. For example, one museum off the beaten path was getting 1,000 virtual visitors per day on the website it had resisted, when it had never had more than 15 visitors physically in a day. While some lament the loss of their first-love [the object], others have moved to incorporate technology into exhibits while continuing to have hands-on experiences. Exhibit developers like those who designed “Help Wanted” about the strike in Minnesota hope their use of technological components will encourage thought and further action on the part of visitors. Experiential learning proponents will have to find a way to incorporate technology into their methods.

Third, open-air museums, which are the acme of the history museums, have transformed
themselves with experiential learning, though it has not been easy. No more is a visitor expected to watch passively the living history demonstrations or reenactments. The norm now is for the visitor to take stage with living history interpreters to perform or learn a craft. A visitor may enter a house at Colonial Williamsburg and lie down for a nap on the rope bed. Refreshed, he or she can eat historic recipes in the tavern, drill with a musket on the green, or compare colonial and contemporary views on guns in the gun shop. If he or she wants in-depth instruction in blacksmithing or printing, a class is available. This is also good for the museum as a way to fund other endeavors, such as the constant and expensive maintaining of historical structures, or to keep the museum solvent. A relevant example is the introduction of hands-on mastery of ship-building skills at Mystic Seaport during the winter when visitation is down.

Next, role-playing and simulation have become the most prominent features of experiential learning, for preschoolers, children, adolescents, and adults. Some educators might call this dramatic play, but museums prefer the term role-play. It may be as simple as playing a juror at a mock trial of John Brown at the Smithsonian Institution for one hour, or as detailed as total immersion in the role of a colonist in a simulated pioneer community for four months in one of the Public Broadcasting System’s ambitious projects, Colonial House. Plimoth Plantation served as a resource for the project and benefited from receiving two of the structures, which they rebuilt with the experiential learning help of museum visitors. Washburn-Norlands Farm offers visitors such an excellent program of role-playing for a weekend, that the state of Maine grants teachers in-service credit for it. Role-playing has also been incorporated into some important exhibits, such as “The Race Exhibit” at the Science Museum of Minnesota, set to travel to history museums, also. The builder spoke of visitors witnessing a racial scenario in three different environments. Afterwards, they think about what should be done and cast a vote
for that solution. Since the exhibit is community-based, actual scenarios can even come from the community and be implemented without the physical exhibit. Both action and reflection are important in experiential learning.

These conclusions are based on the history museums. One might not expect it, but the National Park Service manages many historical sites such as battlefields, historic homes, and places such as Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, which is a civil rights movement historic site. Rangers and interpreters fully believe in the power of place. Anyone who has visited the Grand Canyon can hardly disagree. But the service needed a way to attract visitors to sites and then to engage them so that they would love the places. Hoping to inculcate love of the land in young people, one focus became families. The service changed much of its program to incorporate experiential learning to draw them. This trend may stem from Freeman Tilden’s seminal work in 1957, *Interpreting Our Heritage*. His examples included photographs of rangers and visitors participating by touching and smelling plants, climbing ruins, and manipulating a loom. The National Parks Service continues to award an annual Freeman Tilden Award for excellence in interpretation to employees, and the book continues to inform workers at history museums. In the 1970s it began a plan of including ethnic groups and by 1991 had begun recognizing Civil Rights movement historic sites. In 2004 the National Parks Service addressed slavery at Civil War sites, despite opposition from formidable groups. Veteran interpreter William Gwaltney, whose ancestry is a mixture of African-American, Irish, and Native American, exemplifies the commitment of the organization as he helps others explore cultural identities and the American West. He expects to continue using experiential learning to involve people.

Also, one may note that museum education is an emerging profession. Before 1970, and
indeed in many small museums today, anyone available—be it the professional director or an unlicensed volunteer—planned educational programs at the museum. Most of these were for school children or involved lengthy texts or lectures for exhibits that had been designed for adults. Slowly the educators in museums formed an organization, Association of Museum Educators that through a newsletter and meetings reported on activities and concerns. Begun as an informal roundtable discussion of ideas, the *Roundtable Report* evolved into a journal, and the job, a recognized profession. Because it is young (inception in the 1970s), not much formal evaluation has occurred. Mainly attendance figures, repeat visits by school teachers and classes, and anecdotal evidence comprise evaluation. All the educators covet regular school classes as patrons, sometimes for attendance boosts, at other times, for revenue. One of the ways these professional educators have drawn in schools is by tying programs specifically to standards of each state, such as TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] of Texas or D-B-Q’s [Document-Based Questions] of New York State. Many of the social studies standards require manipulation of first-hand materials and documents. The museum is in the perfect position to deliver the lessons through collection materials and experiential education. The Museum of New Mexico has been doing this for a long time. Docents might also be drawn into the fold of museum educators as paraprofessionals. There are limited summative reports to prove the efficacy of experiential learning. Experiential learning has not been tested as a major learning theory, in spite of the extensive work of John Dewey and the other theorists in Chapter 2, who advocated learning by experience. Present-day theorist David Kolb at Case Reserve University has applied his experiential learning theory primarily to business organizations. Experiential learning needs to be tested.

Museum educators face other dilemmas with experiential learning, which does take much
time and effort. It is easier and less expensive to deliver a lecture or show a film than to engage
strangers of different backgrounds, various degrees of motivation and a short amount of time in
hands-on learning. This type of learning must occur in small groups with sufficient staff. In
addition engagement of a group of strangers in a physical and intellectual activity is a risk, for it
may or may not work. Perhaps the experience economy that Joseph Pine, marketing expert on
organizations that deliver “an experience,” speaks of is driving the inclusion of the method.

Another conclusion relates to the key position of the museum in addressing inequities for
minority groups. As an instrument of informal education, it can offer experiential learning that
recognizes and brings in views from many cultures. Although ethnic festivals are associated with
all museums, the history museum can continue to draw people of various cultures in, but it will
need to make visitors feel welcome and give them a voice in programs and exhibits. In this way,
it can retain them. Experiential learning has been used to involve diverse groups. No place is
better at this than Brooklyn Children’s Museum. Their open-minded staff includes African
-Americans, Hasidic Jews, Hispanic children, and anyone who comes to the museum. Now it is
time to let the people themselves give their perspective. Cultural pluralism, that is, celebrating
gifts of different ethnic groups but not expecting them to assimilate, has been the dominant
philosophy in the museum world. Originally only European and some Native American cultures
were welcome, but by 2007 museum programs, exhibits, policies, and hiring staff practices
encompassed cultures of color as well. In fact some museums know that they must have more
diverse audiences as society changes, in order to continue to exist. Still the museum is not
addressing the difficult issues of injustice. With immigration as a relevant social issue, a small
Texas museum planned a program on immigrants. The only way it could discuss the issue
without great controversy was to remove the program in time to the 1930s. At some point, the
museum will have to face controversial issues and take a stand.

From the continued and expanded use of hands-on learning, one may conclude that experiential learning has proved effective in many history museums and that it is well worth the effort and expense it requires. But it also necessitates more careful evaluation.

Recommendations for History Museums

The following recommendations will help American history museums appeal to broader, perhaps more diverse, audiences and will help them to remain relevant and alive.

The larger museums such as the Field Museum in Chicago and the large open-air museums have led out in experiential learning, but the method should be expanded to more adult education and to smaller institutions. Adults are as eager as children to sail a boat at Mystic Seaport or learn how to shoe a horse at Colonial Williamsburg. Adults have participated in interactive exhibits such as the “Help Wanted” exhibit in Minnesota about the workers striking, while children have enjoyed making masks and dancing at Brooklyn Children’s Museum. Still, experiential learning has not trickled down to small museums. Smaller communities, with fewer resources for culture, could find a revitalized civic and cultural life in a museum that asked them to become involved.

To make experiential learning more effective, museum educators who practice it could find ways to share lesson plans and resources through electronic devices. The National Parks Service already offers online history lessons, free of charge. This would conserve energy and cut expenses. Such action would especially benefit the small isolated museum with one educator. Networking on the local, state, regional, and national level would benefit all.

Museums and schools might form partnerships to use experiential learning. Classroom teachers may find themselves adopting experiential methods from museum educators because
these methods enhance learning and help students meet state-mandated standards. Often the museum has rich resources in the form of legal documents, maps, and artifacts that are never used. These could help their future visitors, the young people. In turn school children and teacher-colleagues may revitalize the museum.

History museums have an opportunity to offer a link to a vital civic life to families. Even small museums can offer a cultural experience in a pleasant way. Families who have enjoyed “doing” art and “doing” science may find that “doing” history through experiential learning is just as exciting. Helping families work together and learn together is a worthy goal of experiential learning, for social interaction is an important part of participatory learning.

The history museum is an excellent medium for including all cultures. It has a long tradition of sponsoring celebratory festivals that feature experiential learning through sensory experiences with ethnic food and music and through games such as dancing. It is also a good place for people to meet and enter into a dialogue about social issues. They can do so through exhibits such as the one Dr. Deborah Mack of Georgia developed, “The Race Exhibit,” which allows one to work for solutions in racial encounters, and the simulation at Conner Prairie Museum of “Follow the North Star,” in which one acts as a runaway slave meeting people who will help or hinder one’s progress.

The history museum might look at what other types of museums are doing to draw audiences to experiential learning. For instance, many art museums feature free evenings of participatory activities and special family nights.

Recommendations for Further Research

A study of how the history museum may incorporate technology in experiential learning activities is needed. Technology is powerful and it is here to stay. Using it and experiential
learning should not be seen as a dilemma. Young people and people of the future will require the institution to use the media to which they are accustomed. In the past the museum has used technology well, and it needs ideas about what to do now.

Further research is needed on finances required by a viable museum, as just the cost of maintaining historical structures and artifacts is exorbitant. Ways of financing experiential education ventures would be helpful, also, for they are costly in money and in staff.

A study on small museums and their educational needs as it relates to experiential learning may also be in order. The literature is replete with examples from the large successful museums. Seldom does a small museum with its limited staff make such news.

A study of experiential learning and brain research might intersect at some point to reveal the effect that experience has on the brain, particularly in the area of gender.

A study of John Cotton Dana as an experiential educator might also be in order. He is one of the early leaders who did involve people in experiences. He also trained many museum directors of the 1920s. His empathy for the common man, activities that involved the citizens of Newark, and creativity in using objects and space continue to inspire museums everywhere.

The limitations of the study mainly concern the lack of evaluation of experiential learning programs. Although some visitor studies have been published, they are not directly related to experiential learning in exhibits or programs. If a study is attempted, normally it is anecdotal in nature. The museum worker hands the visitor a short questionnaire or asks three questions at the exit of the museum. Studies could be designed and controlled most easily for classes of school children.

Another dimension of evaluation is that patterns of delivery of participation, whether crafts or role-play or sensory experiences, seem to have just sprung up. These patterns could be
evaluated by participants to determine best practices, that is, which method is best for which situation. The results of such study could help all museum educators.

This study has traced the evolution of experiential learning in American history museums from their beginnings through the summer of 2007. The evidence cited from professional museum workers and professional and historical literature may prove helpful to museum educators in their work. As Kristen Spivey, veteran educator at Colonial Williamsburg, said, “Experiential learning is the way to go” (personal communication on July 27, 2007).
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
Interview on Experiential Education

Interviewer: Bettye Cook, for dissertation Research at University of North Texas

Interviewee: _______________________ Position: _______________________

Date: _______________________ Museum: _______________________

Topic: Experiential Education in the American History Museum

Definition of Experiential Education: learning with a physical dimension; learner must participate, rather than just observe—most obviously in doing something such as sawing wood, or, more subtly, in assuming a role of a historical character, for example.

1. Are you providing experiential education in your museum programming at this time?

2. If yes, please give examples of experiential education in children’s programming.

3. What is the number of programs for children with experiential learning in the past twelve months? What percentage of the total is this?

4. If adult programs have included experiential education, please give examples of these.

5. What is the number of programs for adults with experiential learning in the past twelve months? What percentage of the total is this?

6. What ethnicities and different cultures have taken part in such programs? How effective was this educational method?

7. Does experiential education fit in with the social context of your institution? Why or why not?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. I will send you a copy of the interview for your approval before it is used.
Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose and benefits of the study and how it will be conducted.

*Title of Study*: A Chronological Study of Experiential Education in the American History Museum

*Principal investigator*: Bettye Alexander Cook, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Education, Curriculum & Instruction

*Purpose of the Study*: You are being asked to participate in a research study that involves tracing the evolution of experiential learning over time as an educational component in the history museums of the United States. This may help museums have more effective programs.

*Study Procedures*: You will be asked to answer 7 questions about the use of experiential education in your museum by telephone or in person that will take about one to two hours of your time.

*Foreseeable Risks*: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study. You will look at the transcript of the interview to verify the facts before any of them will be used.

*Benefits to the Subjects or Others*: We expect the project to benefit you by favorable publicity of the work of your museum and/or the satisfaction you derive from helping to add to the body of museum knowledge in education. Museum educators and their audiences may benefit from learning from your practice of experiential education.
Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study, if you so desire. Since you will review the transcript of the interview, you have the right to ask that it (or any part thereof) not be used or not be attributed to you.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Bettye Alexander Cook or the faculty advisor, Dr. Gloria Contreras, UNT Department of Teacher Education and Administration, at 940-565-2826.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at 940-565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants’ Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

• Bettye Alexander Cook has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.

• You convey to Bettye Alexander Cook the rights to the words in this interview.

• You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.

• You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.

• You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate.
• You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

________________________________     __________________
Signature of Participant        Date

For the Principal Investigator or Designee: I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the participant signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

______________________________________      ________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee        Date
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS
Dr. Jay Anderson has been called the Father of Living History; two of his books, *Living History Reader* and *Time Machines: The World of Living History*, are seminal works in the field. An idealist and pacifist, he worked in the Civil Rights Movement and went to Uganda. Throughout his career, he has been involved in teaching and in creating educational programs at numerous living history sites, including the Ronald V. Jensen Living Historical Farm (1985-1993), Iowa’s Living History Farms (1977-1980), and Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation (1973-1977). At present he teaches at Utah State University. For this interview on hands-on learning, he chose to talk about 1992-1993 at Jensen Living Historical Farm, a restored 1917 Cache Valley (Utah) family farm, where he was Director and Professor of Graduate Studies in Museum Studies.

Dr. Anderson affirmed that experiential learning was used at Jensen Living Historical Farm, as the site interpreted the year 1917, unusual in that early twentieth century is not typically studied. It was special because it was in memory of the people of the time who remembered the terrible influenza and World War I. He also picked this period because the agricultural equipment of the time was still around, so farming could be accurately done. He created and administered a program for graduate students at Utah State, who learned everything by doing. From 1985-1992, about 80 students overall ran the farm. They took care of all aspects of the 150 acre outdoor agricultural museum. The men farmed while the women cooked, gardened, and did
household chores. The ten graduate students also cared for horses, cows (milking them), sheep, and pigs.Performing typical seasonal farm chores such as butchering pigs or harvesting wheat or picking corn, for example, was another part of their year-round learning experience. The students who wished a Master’s degree in Museum Work or in History and Folklore had to work for four quarters there. This was the only such program, fully experiential, in the United States and Canada.

Students were taught indoor classroom work and theory by Anderson and other professors. The rest of the program, 75% of it, was experiential. Besides farm work, they cooked meals every day for all those who worked and led programs for school children and the community. Volunteers were also accepted on the farm. In fact, helping on the farm was a part of history and folklore courses for undergraduates at Utah State. Students often worked on the weekends.

Dr. Anderson’s students were trained to lead school programs for 8,000 children per year, primarily fourth and fifth graders. The children helped in the garden and in the kitchen. They fed the cows, chickens, and other animals. In the fields, they could try plowing, picking corn, or harvesting wheat, depending on the season. The school programs were 100% experiential learning.

For the community, ten special programs were offered on weekends, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Animal Day—Spring, Harvest-Threshing, Butchering, Quilting, and others. Each graduate student was in charge of one of them. Visitors were invited to become involved in quilting or making sausage, for example. The Oral History program alone involved interviews with over one hundred people in their 70s and 80s in 1992.

In 1917, Cache Valley was very much like a little Europe, with people from Germany,
Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Scotland, and Wales. Some people of Japanese descent were also there. They spoke their native languages and kept folk cultures until the 1930s. Not Americanized yet, they were divided into ethnicities by wards. Dr. Anderson and students interviewed many of the residents, asking, “What was it like to come to Cache Valley?” They focused on different folk cultures.

The university was responsible for the historical farm. Dr. Anderson made it clear to the university that Jensen Farm would be a multicultural museum, interpreted in that way, because of the many cultures that made up the valley population and because this time period (1917) was before the Americanization of Cache Valley and also before the influence of the Mormon Church there. Utah State agreed with him. This was good for the students, who came from everywhere. The whole basis of education at Jensen Living Historical Farm was to experience life on a farm in 1917, and it was a total success.
Cathy Barthelemy went to Texas Tech as an undergraduate and received her B.S. in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Science plus a teaching certificate from Texas Women’s University, Texas Tech University undergraduate degree B.S. Human Sciences emphasis on Early Childhood, K-6 teaching certification in Elementary Education and Early childhood Education from Texas Women’s University.  She was also at the National Science Foundation with an Einstein Fellowship, Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and an Einstein Fellow for the Triangle Coalition at the National Science Foundation. She has been able to bring the classroom to that entity. At present, she is Director of School Services at Fort Worth Museum of Science and History.

Barthelemy said that a very conscious effort to focus on interactive learning is made by her and staff at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History; not only programs but exhibits are hands-on. The mission of the Museum is to bring extraordinary learning experiences to our audience. Our exhibits are interactive and our educational programs reflect inquiry-based approaches to learning. The inquiry-based Discovery Labs are experiential and on wheels to be
taken to classrooms. The Distance-learning classes have objects and activities sent to do ahead of time; then students may ask questions about the experience of experts during class. In a twelve-month period, there were 95 distance learning classes, 48 Discovery Labs, and 75 Discovery Labs on wheels.

She and The School Services staff also presented 54 free Family Science Nights after hours, a two hour program, one for each school. The students and families participate in activities.

Some examples of children’s programs include inquiry around Properties of Matter, in which children see examples and set up models; Digging for Dinosaurs, in which children dig for “dinosaur bones,” Explorazone, where they interact with many science concepts, and Stories from the Attic, in which they interact with items. Barthelemy says, “The more they can do, the better it is to build their understanding.”

Adult programs revolve primarily around professional development for teachers with 12 Saturday Educator Workshops, 2 educator breakfasts, 4 professional development sessions, and 5 Inquiry Institutes (with a limit of 24 in each). The week-long Inquiry Institutes are an arm of the Exploratorium in San Francisco. The Dana Center in Austin wanted to bring inquiry-based professional development opportunities to Texas, so the FWMSH and Exxon Mobile partnered to bring the much-respected program to educators in Texas and outside of Texas. While workshops feature speakers, the teachers have opportunity to experience a paradigm shift, as they see how powerful it is for students to be able to question. The teachers are immersed in a week-long institute engaging in interactive lessons and a personal experience with inquiry.

The Fort Worth Museum’s mission is to bring rich and engaging experiences to children and adults alike. Their audience includes people of all ethnic backgrounds—African-American,
Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and Caucasian. Barthelemy affirms that experiential learning is “an important piece of anyone’s learning process.”
Interview at Brooklyn Children’s Museum on July 12, 2007

Dir. of Education Kayla Dove, Roslyn Smith (general outreach),
Gloria Cones (school), Delia Meza (preschool/k), Aiesha Turman (after-school/teens)

Interviewer: Bettye Cook

Consent form signed/ e mailed copy 7/20/07

rsmith@brooklynkids.org

145 Brooklyn Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11213

718-735-4400

99% of the children’s programs are hands-on.

EXAMPLES:

Roslyn Smith talked about using the accredited collection objects as basis for programs. To study color, the children made colored wands and performed to the music of Prince. They expressed themselves in dance. Their visitors are of diverse cultures, including orthodox Jews.

Gloria Cones, a longtime veteran teacher at Brooklyn Children’s, told of teaching about Africa after borrowing plants and putting up African fabric on a screen in a series program in 1988. The introduction included an affect game in which the children were whispered an emotion to act out for guessing. Another activity was mask-making for the whole body. The third activity involved going on an initiation journey and creating one’s own rhythm while moving through the gallery.

She said space is a problem. They comply with standards. They involved high school students in the mid 1980s and early 1990s. There is more competition for some of the crowds today.
Delia Meza, who came in 2005, spoke of her favorite program for PreK-1, which “riles” up the group: Sound Journeys. She uses collection items such as moroccas and drums from around the world, the history of instruments, and the science of music. Finally, she has the children use their bodies as instruments with imagination. The grand finale is to have the children give a show on the Main Stage Gallery. She tells them, “You’re rock stars!” Still she uses traditional songs, even when the children request songs like Beyonce’s “To the Left.” Meza also works with bilingual classes.

Aiesha Turman’s specialty is the after-school program. She works from daily lesson plans and is constantly changing in her classes for grades 9-12. Performance programs seem to work best. For example, for Black History Month this year, she chose specific events with related activities for the 10 decades of the 20th century and Civil Rights. For 1940-1950, for instance, the Tuskegee Airmen were studied. In dyads, students represented a military recruiter and a young black person. Then they switched roles and followed up with a critique. They were encouraged to bring in their own experiences.

Kayla Dove, new to the staff, talked about the effectiveness of games from around the world for intergenerational interaction. For example, a visiting father taught everyone an Italian game.

Other Programming:

Roslyn Smith talked about community events: the 20 year June Balloon Event with performances and outside educational programs from 1980-2000, which drew 30,000 to 50,000 in one day and was great for public relations. A drop-in Halloween Harvest is a current family program with make-and-take items; about 3,000 people come in 2-3 hours.

Kayla Dove talked about the 27 different suitcases which serve as newly designed,
accredited collection kits for the schools. Also, children can think about collections and curate an exhibit themselves in Collection Central. A camp group used the kachina dolls as inspiration to create their own.

Gloria Cones mentioned up-to-date exhibited collections such as the Spiderman one.

Aiesha Turman said teens can check out objects such as a Native American bowl, for example. The summer program starts in July, for school goes through June. After-school programs for Grades 2-8 and Grades 9-12 are free to participants, fully funded.

Gloria Cones outlined the special needs workshops in which staff visit an institution, plan and go to a school, and then invite a group. Families come in for Joshua’s Journey. A good example of a recent multi-sensory program is Life of a Cowboy. Children learn to make butter and a handkerchief. They put on the clothing of a cowboy and learn about associated objects. 99% of the Family Programs are experiential in nature.

EXAMPLES:

Delia Meza gave the example of the Tots program with films for the parents/tots and interaction with an Elmo and exercise.

Aiesha Turman gathers 40 to 50 teens by word of mouth and going to community events and career days at schools [20 in gr. 9/10 in each grade of 10, 11, 12]. Besides units of study, students are also offered tutoring and SAT preparation, and then field trips and information about college for Grade 11. The director mentioned that in the last five years, every Museum senior has gone to college.

Gloria Cones described Parents as Art Partners on weekends and of working with multicultural groups. For example, grandparents, parents and children (and a principal and a teacher) participated in the Chinese Red Ribbon Dance. A presenter taught Chinese calligraphy
and Japanese fish printing. All of it was hands on, though some spoke no English. Programs with slides and cultural arts and dances and items pulled from collections were participated in by Mexican Americans and Polish Americans.

Roslyn Smith said most of the programs are intergenerational, and 70% of the visitors are repeats. Staff attempts to speak to who the audience is. The live animal collection, while popular, is probably the least hands-on. Teens act as handlers. A new thematic exhibit will be World Brooklyn, in which they attempt to get the community to do a program—food, performance, craft—and interpret their own culture.

Delia Meza talked of the monthly, inquiry-based Early Learner Program on Sundays. An example is a winter celebration in Mexico; a father and daughters of Hasidic Jews came to learn about another culture.

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

Kayla Dove said they are dedicated to Brooklyn—“to create a safe haven here” and a “respite from the rest of the world.” Here parents can learn to be better parents. Roslyn Smith called it a “community museum.” It is important to the neighborhood and important to be “green”—one with the park and surroundings.

Neighbors like it. 40% of the children are 5 and younger. After school care is most important as it serves the community in a meaningful way. They wish to create an informal learning environment.

Kayla Dove stated their desire to always consider the needs of community in designing programs, to understand urban environment and nature, to understand the diversity of the community of Brooklyn.

Delia Meza described the Project with School PS289, a grant to work with the school and
to bring students to work on a bug sculpture in the sculpture garden project. This occurred because fourth graders do not receive school art any more.

Gloria Cones praised the program for their reaction on 9/11. They accessed information and kept the museum open and welcoming for people. The museum is sensitive to contemporary events. Police kept the staff informed. In another example, she talked about working with children on grief as one of the staff members passed.

The group of educators obviously enjoys working with children in a purposeful way. They gave many examples of hands-on learning activities, and a quick walk through the museum revealed a plethora of experiential learning opportunities.
Ms. Alexa Fairchild is the School Programs Manager at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York.

She said the museum is providing experiential education. Her staff consists of 11 full-time educators and 7 interns whose 10 months of training include studying the first month and then teaching guided gallery visits the other 9 months. The internship program is itself hands-on. The gallery visits incorporate such participatory components as movement, drawing, and role-playing to meet a diverse range of learning styles.

Actually, 100% of the children’s programs include experiential learning. For example, in African Mask and Masquerades, students watch a video of ceremonies to honor an elder and then create their own movements to express their respect for an elder in their own lives. Based on the American history collection is a Civil War program. Students read Paul Fleischman’s *Bull Run* and take on the persona of a character [Union soldier, Confederate soldier, escaped slave, wife left behind]. At this point, they look at a work of art from the character’s point of view and talk about it. The work of art may be one such as Eastman Johnson’s *A Ride for Liberty*, which
depicts a man, woman, boy and baby fleeing on one horse. Movement is also a part of many of the programs through a collaboration of a dance studio, elementary school and Brooklyn Museum.

Also, 100% of the teacher programs have a hands-on component. First Saturdays are opportunities for the general public to participate, although it doesn’t happen every time. For instance, there is still the classic gallery talk, but it is extended with discussion. Reflection is a part of the experience. What is harder is having kids do reflection. Sometimes, after a program, guests have participated in a dance.

The teacher institutes also feature physical participation and reflection. For example, in a drawing activity, the teacher may be asked “What was challenging about that activity?” or “What was successful?” Teachers have worked in groups to arrange postcards of art in groups according to themes. This helps them to become aware, to use descriptive ability, and to learn to listen to others who disagree but still to be able to articulate one’s choice. Still another activity was an examination of Robert Weir’s painting *Embarkation of the Pilgrims*, in which a ship leaves Amsterdam but only gets to England because it springs a leak. Teachers make a tableau like the painting and speak through the characters portrayed: “How would I feel going on this journey…about the future…about leaving everything behind?”

Brooklyn is comprised of a diverse community of people from the Caribbean, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, South America, Asia, some Orthodox Jews, and others. The museum makes accommodations for all and draws them in.

Experiential education does fit in with the social context of Brooklyn Museum. The museum’s mission allows staff to act as a bridge between the museum with its collections and the community. Experiences are combined with interpretation.
Jay Gaynor is in charge of 22 trades at Colonial Williamsburg. He has been at Colonial Williamsburg for 25 years.

Mr. Gaynor says that Colonial Williamsburg provides many opportunities for visitors to participate but that these vary tremendously. He gave some examples of children physically participating in the trades areas. Young kids and their parents have a choice of three, with these varying on any given day. Children (and parents) have the opportunity to tread clay in the brickyard or saw boards with the carpenters or assemble buckets with the coopers, for example. In almost any trades shop, visitors may handle objects and tools while they smell the rich odors. There is not a big distinction between adults and children in opportunities to interact.

As for multiculturalism, the audience at Colonial Williamsburg comes from all over the world, so it is safe to say that everyone is included. There are no preconceived programs for multicultural programs, except that the institution has included women working in the trades areas. This was not so in the eighteenth century. There is striking progress on black history (in other areas).
Experiential education does fit in with the social context of Colonial Williamsburg. Today interpreters talk about crafts/trades extensively, explaining more even with the hands-on. Today is quite unlike 20 years ago, when everyone did life-skill, hands-on activities such as cooking, sewing, and working as a mechanic or gas station attendant or factory worker. People were surrounded by hands-on work activities. It is more difficult for visitors to relate today, for there is not that mutual understanding. They ask how presenters can stand getting dirty and hot (no air conditioning). Also, they ask about not wearing gloves (a product of safety-awareness today).

He has seen a lot of changes in 25 years; interpretation has changed. During the 1950s with the cold war, programs were very patriotic. In the 1970s, there were a lot of tree huggers and programs were “touchy-feely.” Recently the emphasis has been on social history. One will hear about 18th century consumer goods and economics, for instance.

Mr. Gaynor feels involving people in a concrete, tactile experience and engaging their minds are very important. If they do something, they will remember it. Another example involves the gun shop. It is interesting because people bring many different attitudes toward guns from their prior experiences, which could be the extremes of no experience with guns to a lifetime of hunting with guns. The shop makes reproductions of guns from the 18th century, and craftsmen engage people in conversation. This can be startling, difficult, or “maybe easy.” People take away tidbits of something.

Another innovation at Williamsburg is street theater with two day events: 1. experiences running up to the Revolution 2. experiences during the revolution. History museums are always standing back and questioning. The nice thing about Colonial Williamsburg is that they have the money to experiment with, and implement, programs and ideas.
Telephone Interview with William W. Gwaltney on July 3, 2007

Topic: Experiential Education in American History Museums
Interviewer: Bettye Cook

Consent form e mailed at 5 p.m.

Office: 303-969-2708

Mr. Gwaltney, formerly a chief park interpreter at Rocky Mountain National Park, at Fort Laramie National Historic Site in Wyoming, and at Frederick Douglass House, currently serves as Assistant Regional Director of Workforce Enhancement for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service and as vice-president of the Association of African American Museums, Estes Park. Although his position now involves supervision, he is still involved in experiential education.

He says he works in an annual teaching event and is presently recruiting and equipping a company of Civil War soldiers who are Spanish-speaking and from Fort Union Monument in Watoros, New Mexico. He is learning the commands in Spanish and helping the men with hands-on activities in drill, gear, clothing, and safety.

As for children, he helped found Old Stories, New Voices 13 years ago. It is a six day camp for the under-served children in Fort Garland, Colorado. It teaches both rural and urban children that historically each one has a place [whether one is Ute people, Espano people or of African American descent]. A day in Great Sandy Dunes National Park and Preserve sponsors an anti-gang, anti-drug program. This is a collaboration of the National Park Service and the Colorado Historical Society.

His job now is to recruit and create relevance for the under-served. He recommended contacting Dr. Lonnie Bunch, Director of the African American Museum at the Smithsonian-
202-633-4751; Dr. John W. Franklin-202-275-1905; and Dr. Debra Mack, in Savannah, 912-443-3032. Further, he recommended John Luzader of Loveland, CO, John Hunner of Las Cruces, NM, and Dwight Pittaithley, retired NPS Chief Historian and teacher at New Mexico State University.

A very serious living history interpreter, he feels experiential education goes up and down. Sometimes living history interpreters include audience participation. Gwaltney talked about learning from William Brown III of Civil War Reenacting in Virginia at the U.S. Army Museum. An Emancipation Dance included African-American people; the dance was hands-on. There is a resurgence of interest in the Civil War with outstanding historians and thus authenticity; the fur trade and cowboy “shootings” have not been as authentic as resources are sparser in the West. Gwaltney was in a Hollywood movie named *Glory*. He went to the 125th anniversary of Gettysburg.

He gave two examples of experiential education from his time at the Frederick Douglass National Monument. Douglass wanted to join the Co. A, 5th Massachusetts Colored Calvary, but he was too old, so he became a powerhouse for recruiting. His two sons were in the 54th of Massachusetts. Douglass said, “When the war is over, good things will come to the colored man in three boxes: first, the cartridge box; then, the ballot box, and then the jury box.” This became a good base for experiential programs.

One program was Slaves to Soldiers. In Anacostia and in Harper’s Ferry, West Virginia, visitors were ushered into the auditorium to listen to four actors talking about events up to 1862: a slave owner, an abolitionist, a slave, and a U. S. Congressman. The visitors thought they were through; then visitors were led out back into pitch black darkness with tents, slaves, and soldiers and bacon frying. A sergeant took them from station to station. A white officer read an authentic
letter to the black soldiers. This was followed by a roll call of the dead and taps. Certainly, the visitors could interact, feel through their senses, and experience the spirit of the occasion.

Another adult program was an 1862 Abolition Rally, which focused on Douglas and issues of the time. An actor portrayed Douglass while re-enactors were interspersed throughout the crowd under a big tent. A poem, abolitionist, recruiter, historian, and songs by an A.M.E. gospel choir and a brass band so stirred the crowd, that by the time the actor portraying Douglass spoke, people talked and yelled for him, waving flags, totally caught up in the spirit of the occasion. Afterwards, they were served wedding cake and a keg of peanuts and a keg of gingersnaps, based on food Douglass’s wife had served at an anniversary party.

One other example is a program for park visitors in which a group of African-American soldiers are on burial detail, who find a letter on the dead man and ask a visitor to read it. It is a letter from the slave wife to the escaped soldier-husband, lying dead and with his death, the death of hope for her. The soldiers act angry. One says, “Give me that letter back! When this war is over the black man will demand his freedom.” This tends to “engage folks.” He also suggested Jim Loewe’s book, *Lies across America: Lies My Teacher Told Me* and looking at the African-American family at the 1904 World’s Fair.

Final thoughts for today included these. People seem more willing to be interested in history today, perhaps because of media such as the History Channel. But it takes a lot more time to engage people in hands-on activities. Also, it is not cost-effective and there are safety issues. Gwaltney wants to help others explore cultural identities (many have expressed their appreciation) and the American West. His own ancestry is mixed—African-American, Irish, and Native American. William Gwaltney continues to impact museum programming, including all cultures that make up the West—and America.
Mr. Ed Hood is Director of Museum Programs at Old Sturbridge Village, an open-air museum. He has previously director of the collections and research department for 3 years and, prior to that, a curator for 10 years.

He states that Old Sturbridge Village does provide experiential education in programming, but it is by no means the primary way. In the last several years, the staff has been trying to identify ways to bring experiential education into “what we do, a transformation for what we’re known for: living history.” They wish to make, as much as possible, everything doable and transform program methods while striking a balance and keeping the overall ambiance.

Of the school programs for children, approximately 25% are hands-on. For example, they have been known for their studios in the Education Building that offer classes in weaving, painting, and cooking. They try to incorporate these into general education programs. Hands-on activities for the general audience might be 15% of total programming. This is a gut estimate. This is due partially to the high volume of visitors; for example, on a weekday in July,
visitors may number 500-1,000. But this could go up to 2,500 per day.

Examples of experiential education may be found in the Fitch House “Child’s Life” Exhibit, created in 2003 and focusing on the life of children in the 19th century. The exhibit contains a rope bed for children or adults to try out (even adults have been known to lie on it), games for everyone to play, a kitchen, and, for young children, dress up clothes to try on. They had to pull out some of the antiques and use top quality reproductive artifacts. This is a commitment to a different way of exhibiting with some negative consequences. Mr. Hood looks at this from a curator’s and an educator’s viewpoints.

As for ethnic and diverse cultures, he says there is a wide range of people coming: a regional audience, a national audience, and an international audience; staff offer a variety of languages and tours for the latter. The audience is still primarily middle class, educated, white people from the United States. The time period interpreted is 1790-1840—the Early Republic. Socially, there is a demand for more experiential education. The staff wants the public to have a choice on the way they receive content and manipulate it. They are trying to bring greater use of this method and give people the opportunity to interact with each other. Annually, 70,000 individuals will be part of formal school groups, and school programs must be linked to Educational Standards. 160,000 regular visitors come through the front gate. It may be more appropriate to work on experiential education with them, giving them the opportunities to engage, interact, and participate rather than just read labels or observe. But Old Sturbridge staff does want to keep the core experience intact with programs that are historically appropriate and demonstrate authentic feeling.
Telephone Interview with Mike King on August 24, 2007

Topic: Experiential Education in the American History Museum

Interviewer: Bettye Cook

Consent form e mailed

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Michael King is Curator of Education and Interpretation at Rancho de las Golondrinas. He has held this position since 1994. He also mentioned that he had volunteered with New Mexico State Museum known as the Palace of Governors in Santa Fe. Dating from the 1600s, it is the oldest continually occupied building in the United States with historical artifacts and documents as its cornerstone. King has also done consulting work with Colonial Williamsburg, Mission Gardens in Tucson, Arizona, and the City of Santa Fe regarding its 400th anniversary coming up in 2010.

King said that much of the work at Las Golondrinas involves experiential learning. The children’s programs are ongoing with four experience programs in May and four in October. These are called Spanish Colonial Days, and allow young people to recreate daily life from 1710 to 1912. Children from all over New Mexico attend. Children may take part in chores such as baking, rope-making, and corn grinding, and activities such as game of hoops, schoolhouse, herb gathering, and hide-tanning. Spanish Colonial Days have been offered from the early 1990s to the present.
In addition, six special fee weekends are available. Hands-on activities include trying on period clothing and weaving. Guided tours are given for 12,000 to 15,000 children per year. King estimated that 60% of the children’s programs are experiential in nature.

For adults, practical application skills from the colonial period are taught. These might be baking in outdoor ovens called hornos, adobe making, tin making, cobble making, or art seminars. The museum and the Santa Fe art community enjoy a close connection. Every weekend that it is open, the museum offers some hands-on activities. King also estimated that 60% of the adult programs are experiential in nature.

Ethnicities interpreted are Hispano (a New Mexican term), Native American, African American, and European/Anglo. Individual and joint programs are given in Spanish. The Spring Festival celebrates the planting of crops—for this is a working ranch—and Catholic Mass. The coexistence of native people and the Spanish is also explored through programs and film such as Public Broadcasting Service’s Surviving Columbus.

The museum’s contribution to society is to help preserve the culture, heritage, and daily practices of the early Spanish settlers. Las Golondrinas interprets the Spanish role played in the Southwest, the Spanish relationship with other peoples, and other cultures in the United States after the 1820s and 1840s. Its staff wants to show what life was like in another period of time and how we can live with one another today. We can build on the knowledge.
Dr. Mack is the principle of Deborah Mack Museum Consulting. he has a Ph.D. and M.A., both in anthropology from Northwestern University. Her professional background includes curator at the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University, project director (exhibit builder) for Chicago’s Field Museum’s AFRICA, and Manager of Exhibits and Education Programs at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. er major work is as an exhibit developer and strategic planner.

Dr. Mack has worked on children’s exhibits that feature multiple opportunities for experiential learning. One example she cited was the exhibit “Boston Black” at the Children’s Museum of Boston, which opened in 2003 and remains a permanent feature. About diverse heritage, it includes cultures of African-Americans from the South, African-Americans from the North, Dominicans, and Cape Verdians. Accompanied by family, children are asked to explore the communities of Boston using map skills and going on a walking tour of a neighborhood. They may shop at a grocery store featuring items that are perhaps not in their own milieu. They
can learn a dance of one of the cultures. A specific example Dr. Mack gave was that the children were invited into a Dominican Beauty Shop. There they could look at the hairstyles in magazines and at the hair products and tools.

Another place that is being designed for children [also for adults but primarily for school groups] and promotes experiences in history and geography [figuring out Manhattan, for example] and science is the African Burial Grounds in New York, a national monument administered by the National Park Service, which features an indoor interpretive center. Using forensic and archaeological evidence, students will address different time periods. They will ask questions about skeletons [426 individual remains] to find answers, for instance, about nutrition. Children will also bring their own information, so that they may tell their stories. The first phase opens in Fall 2007; the second, Fall 2008.

To engage adults, she described her work in “The Race Exhibit” from the Science Museum of Minnesota, now traveling. In it, visitors may explore the concept of “race” in science, history, public policy, and cultural implication, perhaps to come to terms with it. Usable language helps facilitate this. A specific example of experiential learning involves visitors witnessing a scenario in three different environments. Afterwards, guests think about what should be done and cast a vote for that solution. Then they may compare their votes with those of other visitors. This exhibit is community-based, so that ideas and programs from “The Race Exhibit” may be implemented without the physical exhibit; such programs will take place in Birmingham, Alabama, for example.

A favorite exhibit/project of Dr. Mack’s, and one of which she is justifiably proud, is AFRICA, the permanent 1993 Africa installation at Chicago’s Field Museum. She worked on the project both as an individual and as a team member. The team wanted to find out what the
visitors didn’t know and then let them interact with the exhibit to find out. For instance, most people did not realize how large Africa is, so the part set in the Sahara Desert featured sliding transparent maps; in this way, visitors could compare Africa to the United States and find out how much larger Africa is. Another part of the exhibit was the hold of a slave ship, in which visitors walked from one scenario to another. They walked into the hold of the ship, invited to use all their senses in simulating the experience of being a slave in the 1800s and then walked out onto an auction block. This was the first exhibit to address the issue of slavery and opened in 1993 at the Field. Key elements were highlighted, so that visitors may see what was left behind and what enslaved peoples brought with them. In addition, the animals of Africa were also emphasized. These exhibits included interaction; for instance, a pinball machine game involved facts about the giraffe, its neck, its eating habits, and its digestion.

The last question was “How does experiential education fit into the present social context?” Dr. Mack replied that because there is so much computer-based and Internet-based information, people show more trust in museums today, which have real objects. They want the power of the object and the power of the place. That is why some people have always made pilgrimages. To cite an example, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is Ground Zero for the Civil Rights Movement. Visitors understand that and journey there to experience and remember. No virtual tour could ever substitute for the power of real things. Also, teachers have expressed the desire to have enough space inside an exhibit for a group of children to be surrounded by it and to interact with it. Exhibit builders are accommodating them and other groups.

International visitors also wish to see real places where real things happened in the United States. Disney is okay, but they wish for more. A lot of material is African-American, which is seminal for the American experience. Visitors from other nations do not see African-American
history as a separate entity but as a part of the total American experience.

For all visitors of museums, it is important to have choice. Each person wishes to access information in his/her own way. This is even more important than it was a decade ago.
Ms. Marcinkowski is director of the Department of Education at Mystic Seaport, overseeing 8 fulltime staff members and some part-time in the areas of administrative assistant, tour reservations, outreach to schools, Elder Hostel, planetarium, Children’s Museum, and overnight staff.

The percentage of children’s programs which are hands-on are estimated at 90% [the Planetarium’s programs are by nature observation, with some telescope manipulation in stargazing]. Examples include Girls of Long Ago, which includes participation in open-hearth cooking, butter-making, and decorating a hat. Boys engage in sailing. The school field trips are linked to educational objectives. All children can engage in crafts and watercraft, including sailing and making a canoe.

An estimated 50% of the family or adult programs are hands-on. Marcinkowski deliberately incorporates experiential learning into the curriculum. Of course, adults may learn watercraft, such as sailing. The Elder Hostel’s Silver Sneakers is subcontracted through Trinity College, and often the targeted population of seniors prefers lectures and tours. However, grandparents often interact with grandchildren in visits through dressing up, cooking, and doing
crafts such as making lanyards.

Marcinkowski showed the interviewer such ongoing activities at the Children’s Museum [puzzles, build-a-boat, knot-tying, dress up chest, and other interactive games], the Discovery Barn [rigging, knots, learning flag signals, maze, and shell identification], and the Art Spot [creating a scene for drawing, thinking about the story boat, and learning thematic drawing skills]. Both adults and children take advantage of learning to draw at the last one.

Special events include Sea Music Festival in the spring, Night of Nightmares at Halloween, and Manor Lights at Christmas. Visitors can become part of the story and sing and dance. Dance workshops by Kojo have been incorporated. Visitors may participate in reading works of author Herman Melville in a marathon “read” on his birthday.

At present, Mystic Seaport wishes to attract a larger, more diverse audience. It is misperceived as a destination for middle-class white people. The audience is seasonal: summer-families and children, fall-adult groups, spring-school groups, and winter-nobody [exhibits are open/village is closed]. The staff is pulling together the story of American Seagoing with a new exhibit using technology.

In 1876 multiculturalism didn’t exist, but sailors came from all countries and cultures to work on the whaling ships, so interpreters for the Charles W. Morgan naturally talk about the diversity of the crews. In addition, nearby Stonington was founded by Portuguese fishers, and they have been included in planning programs. Mystic Seaport could also reach out to some Hispanics in New London and Norwich, nearby towns. They have featured a Women and the Sea exhibit and [currently] a Black Hands, Blue Seas exhibit this year. During Black History Month, educators worked with Amstad America on Western African Culture presentations. At the time of the interviewer’s visit, a teacher’s institute focusing on African Americans and the sea was
being held at Mystic Seaport.

Ms. Marcinkowski shared experiential activities at three other places she has worked. In 1990, at the Louisa May Alcott House in Concord, Massachusetts, she portrayed one of the Alcott sisters at Orchard House for third graders. Anna (Meg in *Little Women*) would lead children to play Mansions of Happiness, a virtues game. Louisa (Jo in *Little Women*) would lead the children to write a story. May (Amy in *Little Women*) would ask children to feel something in a basket while blindfolded and then draw what they felt. Every activity was hands-on.

At Tsongas Industrial History Center of Lowell, Massachusetts, [one of the first successful industrial museums], in 1992-93, she invited visitors to participate in weaving and hooking pipes together. She invited each child to enter the history room with a passport for one of six immigrant groups and to go to the chest and unpack it to see what the immigrants brought and to learn about that culture.

At the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware in 1996, the most popular school program was four hours in length and booked all year. Children could cook on a wood stove, do ciphering and write with quill pens for school, sew punch paper, make things such as jeehaws, and play music and parlor games. Younger children were invited to dress up in reproductions of period clothing. Marcinkowski is committed to using experiential learning and to attracting a diverse audience.
Telephone Interview with Kristen Spivey on July 27, 2007

Topic: Experiential Education in the American History Museum

Interviewer: Bettye Cook

Consent form e mailed 7-30-07

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Ms. Kristen Spivey is a Manager in Public History Development at Colonial Williamsburg, an open-air museum. She has worked there for 27 years.

Yes, the staff does provide experiential education for visitors. It is most prevalent in the children’s area. For example, in the summer a tour called The Apprentice is offered in which a child accompanied by an adult may become an “apprentice” at three 18th century trade shops (three of the 22 delay their opening to the general public so this can occur and they rotate). For example, a child could see spoons poured in the Foundry and then cut the sprue off and polish on; they also can pump the bellows. Second, in the Bindery, children learn to make paste paper by putting color into it, designing it by pulling little combs through heavy paint/paste and returning later to get it. Third, they might go to the Apothecary to learn about treatment (one became a doctor through an apprenticeship in early days) and try on a mask for burn victims or receive a receipt for making a cough syrup of turnips and sugar used during the Revolution; of course, children would make this at home with a parent.
Although it may be simple, 100% of the children’s programs contain an experiential component. Some examples include a former program on spies in which students write a secret code and the “See the Artist and Be the Artist” program in which students create folk art. One of the simplest and most popular takes place at the George Wythe House, home of a signer of the Declaration of Independence who designed the State Seal of Virginia. After hearing about the meaning of the symbols of the seal, children are invited to design their own personal seals, free-hand or with stencils.

As for adult hands-on, adults may come in and interact with the reproductive artifacts in original buildings; for example, in the Benjamin Powell House, some come in to lie in the bed and pull up the covers. The new Revolution City is a two hour play in the street that moves from place to place. Guests can learn how to should a real musket (not loaded!) and march or become part of an honor guard for Gen. George Washington. They can also serve as judges in the afternoon in the court at mock trials of perhaps a complaint by an apprentice against a master, for instance. Guests may have parts to read or be selected as part of the bench by their qualifications, one of which is being male. They have an opportunity to invest themselves physically and mentally.

In considering ethnicity of the audience, Ms. Spivey says the audience is as varied as it can get; people come from everywhere: Europe, Asia, South America, the whole world. Recently, someone from Poland inquired about their programming. Colonial Williamsburg is open to hiring anyone qualified. They are limited by historical record in presenting multicultural programs; however, the Indians were very much present. One thing they have done is have characters who taught in the Brafferton School for the “edification and Christianization of braves.” In recent years, there has been a push to include the Cherokee Nation (due to the treaty-
making) and local tribes; reenactments have taken place. It is problematic to interpret correctly, for tribes are sensitive, but there are enough instances from the colonial point of view.

All of the museums in their area celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown this year. She gave an example from a sister museum she has visited. A hands-on activity from the Virginia Living Museum is about trying to survive as a settler. The visitor is given an abacus-like placard to keep up with his/her score. A problem is presented and the visitor must make a decision; s/he will gain or lose points in terms of health, wealth, mental well-being, etc., according to decision made. The adult or child wanders through the maze with six problems or items to make a judgment on. S/he will be asked the question each time: Are you still alive at this time?

Ms. Spivey said, “Experiential education is the only way to go today.” One can be as sophisticated as one wishes to be. A guest can choose to learn or to be above it. As a designer and an “experiencer,” she approaches something as though she doesn’t know anything about it OR as though she knows everything about it. She will continue to promote hands-on education.
Internet Interview with Nancy Stark and David Allison on August 2, 2007

Topic: Experiential Education in the American History Museum

Interviewer: Bettye Cook

Consent forms faxed

Conner Prairie
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Fishers, IN 46038
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Nancy Stark is the School Experience Manager, and David Allison is the Museum Experience Manager at Conner Prairie, a large well known open-air museum.

Yes, we are providing experiential education.

We recently (July 20, 2007) opened a new hands-on play and learning area for children and their families called Discovery Station. It addresses a need that we identified for providing daily opportunities for role-playing and experiential learning in an indoor setting. Discovery Station encourages children to try on clothes and take on the roles of a turn-of-the-century storekeeper, farm hand, Victorian lady, or engineer in themed play spaces. We used early Fishers, IN history as our link to the past through pictures and signage that make reference to what Fishers was like in the early 20th century.

We feature 90-minute programs called Prairie Tykes for pre-school and kindergarten-aged children that are themed around animals, pioneer life, farming, etc.

We have an Adventure Camp for school-aged children in which the culmination of the experience is a chance for them to dress in historic clothing and interact with guests on our
We offer a variety of classes that involve an experiential approach such as pottery, weaving, and spinning.

Our school programming emphasizes hands-on activity. Evaluations have shown that teachers appreciate how we can make history come to life for their students. Those coming on self-guided tours and for staff-led programs have plenty of opportunities to take part in daily life activities such as chores or games. Activities include candle dipping, churning butter, hearth cooking, grinding corn, feeding farm animals, and trying out stilts or other period toys. Special themed programs have students taking on the role of fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad or pretending to be new settlers starting a farm. Our outreach programs that have staff visiting schools personally or through videoconferencing include hands-on activities or role play. All of our children’s programs include experiential learning.

We offer many adult-geared experiential learning opportunities. As adults tour the grounds, they have the same opportunities to take part in daily life activities as our school groups do such as candle dipping, churning butter, hearth cooking, grinding corn, feeding farm animals, and trying out stilts or other period toys.

Follow the North Star is a program in which guests take on the role of escaped slaves and meet people on their journey to freedom who either help them or hinder them on their way. Historic Crime Scene Investigators is a family experience that encourages guests to solve a mystery on the grounds. Storylines for these mysteries vary by season.

Mystery on the Prairie is an adult-focused experience in which participants eat dinner and then question residents of 1836 Prairietown about a murder in the area.

Hearthside is an immersion program where adults help to cook an historic meal and then
Weekend on the Farm is an intensive immersion program where families and single adults are given historic identities for an overnight, 30-hour period and help with chores, attend school and interact with other costumed interpreters at our 1886 Liberty Corner site.

Candlelight is a winter holiday experience where guests tour the grounds and participate in the holiday traditions of the various residents of 1836 Prairietown.

We offer a variety of classes that involve an experiential approach such as blacksmithing, pottery, woodworking, cooking, weaving, and spinning.

Almost all our adult programs include experiential learning.

We do not have data on ethnicities and different cultures taking part in programs.

Yes, experiential education fits in with the social context of our institution. We have found through multiple learning studies (2000, 2002 and 2004) that our guests learn best when they are able to experience the past instead of merely hear about it. Our current experience offerings reflect this philosophy. We give both our general public and school groups many opportunities to take part in the daily life activities they encounter throughout our historic areas as outlined above. We consider it essential that programs have an experiential component to them. Any developments in the future will include experiential education.
APPENDIX D

HOUSE BILL 389
In the House of Representatives, U.S.,
February 8, 2006.

Whereas museums are institutions of public service and education that foster exploration, study, observation, critical thinking, contemplation and dialogue to advance a greater public knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of history, science, the arts, and the natural world;

Whereas Americans, according to survey data, view museums as one of the most important resources for educating our children; and museums have a long-standing tradition of inspiring curiosity in our Nation’s schoolchildren by devoting more than $1 billion and more than 18 million instructional hours annually for elementary and secondary education programs in communities across America through creative partnerships with schools; and by involving professional development for teachers, bringing traveling exhibits to local schools, digitizing materials for access nationwide, creating electronic and printed educational materials that use local and State curriculum standards; and by and hosting interactive school field trips;

Whereas museums serve as community landmarks that contribute to the livability and economic vitality of communities through expanding tourism; and that museums rank in the top three family vacation destinations; revitalize downtowns, often with signature buildings; attract relocating businesses, by enhancing quality of life; provide shared community experiences and meeting places; and serve as a repository and resource for each community’s unique history, culture, achievements, and values;
Whereas the Nation’s more than 16,000 museums found in 9 out of every 10 counties in the United States receive approximately 865,000,000 visits annually from people of all ages and backgrounds, with attendance being free at more than half of these museums;

Whereas research indicates Americans view museums as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information and believe that authentic artifacts in history museums and historic sites are second only to their family in significance to creating a strong connection to the past;

Whereas museums enhance the public’s ability to engage as citizens, through developing a deeper sense of identity and a broader judgment about the world, and by holding more than 750 million objects and living specimens in the public trust to preserve and protect our cultural and natural heritage for our current and future generations;

Whereas museums are increasingly entering into new partnerships with community educational institutions that include schools, universities, libraries, public broadcasting, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which then, as partners, reach across community boundaries to provide broader impact and synergy for their educational programming;

Whereas supporting the goals and ideals of The Year of the Museum would give Americans the opportunity to celebrate the contributions museums have made to American culture and life over the past 100 years; and
Whereas in 2006, American museums are celebrating 100 years of cooperation as a profession and their collective contribution to our communities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of The Year of the Museum; and

(2) requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe such a year with appropriate programs and activities.

Attest:

Clerk.
REFERENCES


Fall flower show opens at museum. (1928, November 9). *New York Times*, p. 16.


Hobbies of the old are shown here. (1948, June 10). New York Times, p. 27.


Mining camp relics. (1894, January 19). *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas), p. 3.


The museum prize plays. (1855, March 5). *New York Daily Times*, p. 3.


Puzzles of modern machinery are shown at museum exhibit. (1928, September 30). *New York Times*, p.156.


