

CURATING THE PAST: PRESERVING THE FUTURE

MUSEUM STUDIES PRAXIS PROGRAM

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Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

MAIA ROARK
HAVERFORD '25

BACKGROUND



The Historical Society of Pennsylvania is one of the nation’s largest archives of historical documents, with over 21 million books, manuscripts, and prints.

Some of my favorite items at HSP include:

- A draft of the Constitution
- Journal C, a handwritten account of the Underground Railroad
- A diary of a medical salesman and his racoon, Dimples

MY ROLE



I worked in the Learning & Engagement Department under Brianna Quade, the Community Engagement Coordinator. This semester, I helped curate a case on Nellie Rathbone Bright for an exhibit on historical preservation of Black communities in Philadelphia.

MY PROCESS

- Sifting through collections and finding exhibit-worthy items
- Talking to the exhibit team
- Researching objects
- Combing through the card catalog
- Forlornly acknowledging that I can’t put everything in one wall case
- Picking my favorites
- Writing tombstone labels
- Editing tombstone labels
- Putting away documents in the collections

Nellie Rathbone Bright:
Preserving Education

Overview blurb



Educational background blurb



Principal-community initiatives blurb

PAS blurb



Black Cats America Book flyer

Outside of the classroom blurb

HIGHLIGHTS

- Making buttons
- Field trip to the Lawnside Historical Society
- Researching in the Reading Room
- Pulling Wanamaker materials for WHY
- Costco teambuilding retreat

TAKEAWAYS



- I love the people at HSP
- I wish I could stay at HSP
- How do I find job opportunities at places like HSP?

NEXT STEPS

- Organizing the documents in my Nellie Rathbone Bright wall case
- Editing my wall labels
- Attend the exhibit opening in June
- Find a job!



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