



Calumet Voices/National Stories

The goal of this year's conference is to highlight some of the diverse voices that collectively tell a story of national significance about the Calumet Region. We have taken advantage of the need to hold this year's conference online to bring together, in one virtual space, a diverse group of storytellers who will speak about their own efforts to save and interpret our region's heritage as well as help us to understand the stories of those who built the Calumet Region and the living landscape we now inhabit. The virtual format allows us to expand the conference to include more presenters than ever before and we have even included a virtual field trip!

Acknowledgements

The Calumet Heritage Conference is an all-volunteer effort organized by the Calumet Heritage Partnership (CHP) and we would like to thank all the volunteers who made this conference possible in an especially challenging year. 2020 was the year when the conference committee finally had a head start in conference planning, with a venue reserved, a theme picked out, and a complete list of potential presenters to invite. As spring approached, it became clear that the conference would need to move to an online format and that our original plans for field trips and speakers would need to be entirely rethought.

What resulted from this burst of creative activity is CHP's largest conference ever with nearly 25 presenters, panelists, and moderators. Thank you to all our presenters, panelists, and technical hosts who bravely agreed to participate in this newfangled online conference experiment. We thank the members of the CHP programming committee for the hours of planning work involved including Amanda Aguilera, Kevin Brown, David Klein, Michael Longan, Kristen Markusic, Brad Miller, Tom Shepherd, and Kathy Tobin. Madeleine Tudor and Mario Longoni from the Field Museum and Tess Conway and Sarah Coulter from Calumet Collaborative rounded out the conference planning committee and provided valuable technical, design, and coordination expertise. Thank you to the rest of the members of the board of CHP who managed to oversee the move of the ACME collection and kept all our other activities going even as we continued to plan the conference. Thanks to Calumet Collaborative for its continuing support and for once again providing us with the Calumet

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The Calumet Heritage Partnership is a bi-state non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the unique heritage of the Calumet region. The Calumet Collaborative and the Field Museum are partners in the Calumet Heritage Partnership. Together, they further the development of the Calumet Heritage Area and lead the creation of a Calumet National Heritage Area.



The Field Museum gratefully acknowledges the following partner for their support of programs in the Calumet region:



Heritage Area “swag” that has been made available for a limited time. We thank you for the donations that you provided to help support the conference. Donations, however, do not cover the entire cost of the conference. Thank you to the Field Museum for providing financial support and to ArcelorMittal who supports the Field Museum’s programs in the Calumet Region, including this conference. We thank our accomplished speakers, performers, and most of all you, our audience, for gathering with us this week to learn, network, listen to and contribute your Calumet Voices to telling our National Stories!

Karen Brozynski, President, Calumet Heritage Partnership

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PROGRAM

All times, Central Time

Saturday, October 17th

10:00 A.M. President's Welcome

Karen Brozynski, President, Calumet Heritage Partnership (CHP)

10:05 A.M. Session 1: Keynote, "How to Think About Ruins: A Philosophical Look at The Transformation of City Methodist Church"

Moderator: Mario Longoni, Field Museum

Presenter: Dr. Renee Conroy, Purdue University Northwest

When does a crumbling structure become a ruin? What is the aesthetic difference between a genuine ruin and an architectural folly (an imitation ruin)? How should philosophers parse the distinction between ruins and rubble—and between real ruins and manufactured ruins—to provide useful conceptual resources for communities who aim to preserve their physical history while rehabilitating sites of urban loss?

This talk takes up these questions—and the broader issue of why thinking about *how* we think about the past matters—by considering competing accounts of ruin appreciation offered by philosophers of art. Several theoretical positions and their underlying assumptions will be explored through reflection on the case of Gary's City Methodist Church, an iconic heritage site in the Calumet region currently slated to be transformed from a paradigmatic Rust Belt ruin into a contemporary ruins garden. The proposed metamorphosis of this structure invites us to think carefully about how the aesthetic potential of ruins can inform their civic value as monuments to a shared regional history. In addition, it encourages us to reassess the basic conceptual lenses through which we envision future possibilities for keeping the past alive in the present.

11:30 A.M. Session 2: 2020 Most Endangered List Couch Tour

Brad Miller, Director, Indiana Landmarks Northwest Field Office and CHP Board Member

The Calumet Heritage Partnership's *Calumet Heritage Area Most Endangered List* is an annual list of landmarks across the bi-state, Calumet region that are in jeopardy. The 2020 List includes a masonic temple, iconic Chicago green space, a water tower, and highlights the unique challenges facing sacred spaces. The goal of the list is to bolster advocacy efforts to find solutions and save imperiled landmarks. Join us for a quick couch tour of these endangered places and get a status update from when they were announced at the beginning of the year.

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Monday, October 19th

6:30 P.M. Session 1: Showcasing Calumet Voices/National Stories through Collaborative Exhibitions

Moderator: Madeleine Tudor, Field Museum

Panelists:

Karen Brozynski, Southeast Chicago Historical Society
Cassandra Cannon, United Urban Network Inc.
Serena Ard, Westchester Township History Museum
Emily Parr, Field Museum
Meredith Whitfield, Field Museum

How can exhibits help diverse voices to be heard? In this session, leaders of Calumet heritage organizations and staff from the Field Museum share their experiences of working in partnership to create the *Calumet Voices, National Stories* exhibition series. Presentations and discussion will explore the power of stories told through carefully chosen objects, images, and graphics--and consider how exhibition 'tools' can be used to leverage and connect community heritage for the region's future.

7:30 P.M. Session 2: Stewardship of the ACME Steel Collection

Moderator: Mark Bouman, Field Museum and CHP Board Member

Panelists:

Rod Sellers, former CHP Board Member
Kate Corcoran, former CHP Board Member
Diane Pugh, CHP Board Member
David Klein, CHP Board Member

In December 2001, the Acme Steel Corporation closed, marking the end of 125 years of large-scale steel production in Chicago. Remnants of the closed company, especially its Coke Plant and large pieces of its Blast Furnace, remained on the landscape. Members of the Calumet Heritage Partnership and a number of others mobilized to bring records, photos, blueprints, signs, and other large artifacts to a safe storage site in the office/factory building at Pullman. There, the first steps were taken to assess this collection, make parts of it available to the public, and consider long range plans. But the good news of the creation of the Pullman National Monument posed a new challenge: where would the artifacts go? In this panel, four of the key participants will tell this story of determined rescue amid a background of changing regional priorities.

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Tuesday, October 20th

6:30 P.M. Session 1: Gary's Artesian Well: The Spring at Small Farms

Moderator: Tom Shepherd, CHP Board Member

Presenter: Kay Westhues, Associate Faculty, Ernestine M. Raclin School of the Arts, Indiana University South Bend.

The spring at Small Farms is a public artesian well that supplied drinking water to families who lived in Small Farms and Black Oak, two rural communities now located in the city limits of Gary, Indiana. Small Farms was an historically Black community that was established during the Great Migration; Black Oak contained (and still has) a majority-white population. For approximately three decades, residents from both neighborhoods gathered water from the spring because of unreliable or contaminated private wells and a lack of public water mains in the area. This presentation will explore the history of the spring, informed by oral histories and archival research, and examine why and how it has remained a public commons resource.

7:30 P.M. Session 2: The True Beginnings of The Tuskegee Airmen and Robbins' Historic 1931 Airport

Moderator: Tom Shepherd, CHP Board Member

Presenter: Tyrone C. Haymore, Co-Founder, Director and Historian for the Robbins History Museum

The historic, all-black 1931 Robbins Airport & Aviation School built in Robbins, Illinois, is the first such in American history. It was built and operated by John C. Robinson and Cornelius R. Coffey. John C. Robinson has now officially been named "The Father of the Tuskegee Airmen" and the Ethiopian Air Lines. Both men were born the same year that aviation was born, in 1903. Both were reared and schooled in Mississippi and Arkansas. Both men met in Detroit as auto-mechanics and decided, following Bessie Coleman's death, to enroll in the segregated Curtiss Wright Aviation School in Chicago. They became the first African Americans to graduate from this school as aviation pilots and mechanics, and started their own aviation school in Robbins in 1931, with the help of two female student Willa Brown and Janet H. Bragg, who were among their first students to complete their aviation training as pilots

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Wednesday, October 21st

6:30 P.M. *The Gary Anthology: A Conversation with West Side Writers*

Moderator: Samuel Love, Editor of *The Gary Anthology*

Panelists:

Alva Krystal Wilson, rapper, poet, singer, author, and activist

Kym Mazelle, musician

Terra "Poetry'N'Motion" Cooks, musician, poet, author, and advocate

The Gary Anthology editor Samuel Love is joined by three writers whose roots run through this often-overlooked section of the city. They will discuss how community and personal histories have shaped their respective practices, and where the artistic, cultural, ecological features of Gary's broader west side fits within the general history of the Steel City.

Thursday, October 22nd

6:30 P.M. *The History of the Mexican American Worker Mural in Blue Island: A Chat with the Artists*

Moderator: Kevin Brown, CHP Board Member

A panel discussion about the history and restoration of the Mexican American Worker Mural in Blue Island, Illinois, with the artists who were involved.

Panelists:

Ray Patlan, Artist

Robert Valadez, Chicago artist

Ricardo Gonzalez, Blue Island artist

Erika Valencia, Blue Island artist

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