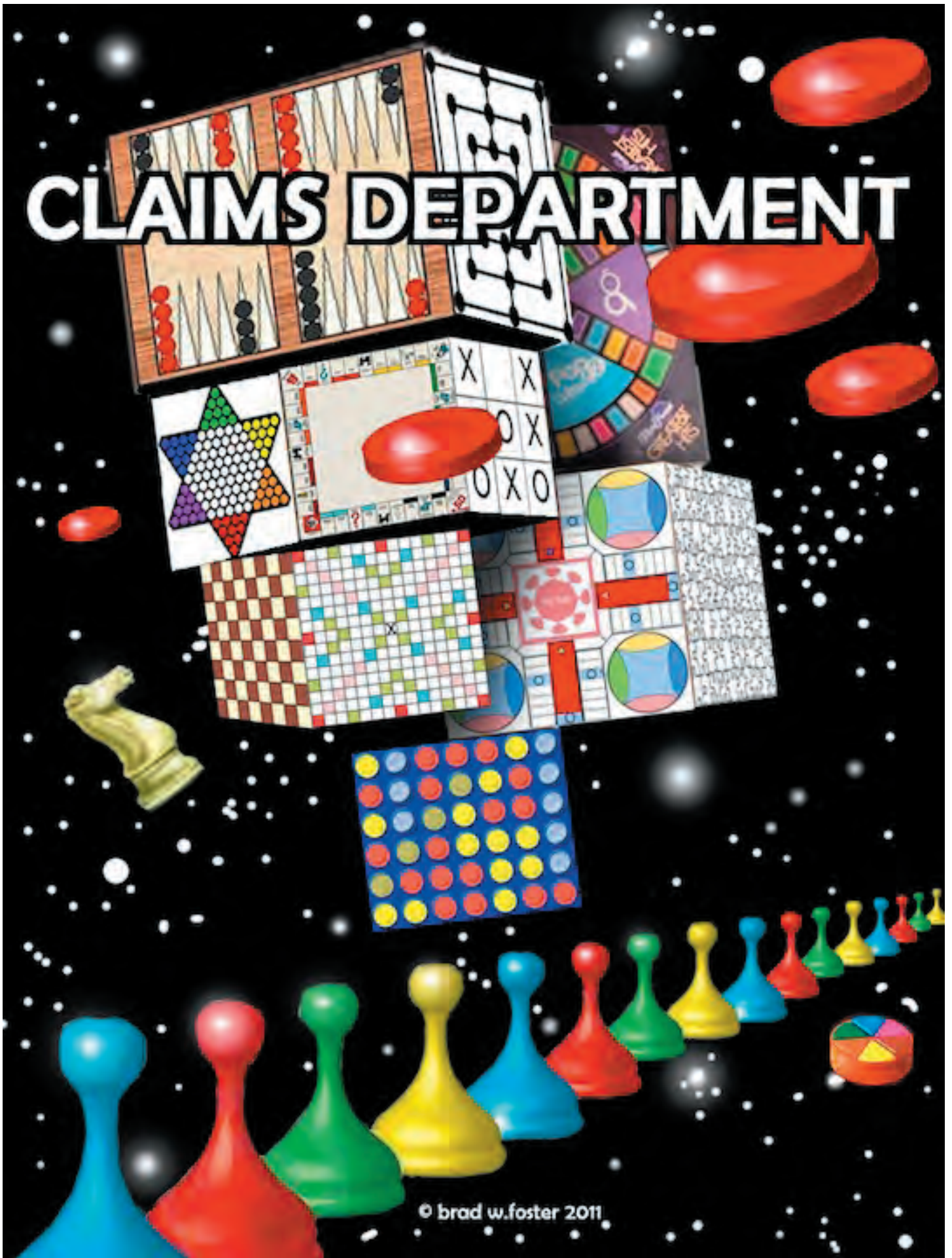


CLAIMS DEPARTMENT



© brad w.foster 2011

CLAIMS DEPARTMENT

CHRIS GARCIA IS YOUR EDITOR

Welcome to another, very different Claims Department. This is usually a one man show (and often the death of a wrestler is a central theme) but this one is different because it's dedicated to The Museum and I figured other folks would have something to say about it. It turned out to be a good idea because it got me writing from folks like Kristina Kopnisky, the Hugo-nominated Steven H Silver and Howeird. It also gave me a chance to write an article I had started with ages ago, and though I didn't get to do what I had been hoping it would be, I did have a blast.

This is being completed in the run-up to Renovation, the Reno WorldCon. James Bacon, my frequent co-conspirator, is currently in the shower and we're getting ready to get him a car so that he can do the rest of the work for the Teen Lounge. Somehow, we've been in the same house for several hours and we haven't started a new zine yet.

Well... just the one.

This issue is so very different that I even considered changing the name of the zine. or maybe giving it a number or a date, but then I realised that would be going too far!

Hey, that's John Dowd! I didn't expect him to be coming by the Museum! And he's with Allen Baum! I love that guy! It's a busy time, everyone's in town for WorldCon and since the BArea is the closest major metropolitan area (as long as you don't count Sacramento, as I don't!) folks are stopping by! I love that!

This issue also explores museums, and I'll be heading to a museum I loved as a kid, the Railroad Museum in Sacramento. I'll also be enjoying Lake Tahoe for a day and finally getting to introduce my lovely and talented girlfriend, the Lovely & Talented Linda, to my favorite pancake place in the world: Heidi's!

Plus we'll have John The Rock Coxon, Mr. Taffman himself, in the house for a few days!

Enough about this twisted WorldCon! It's time for some content.

OK, maybe content is the wrong word for my stuff, but, perhaps for the first time, CD may be good!

CONTENTS

COVER BY BRAD W. FOSTER

PAGE 1 - INTRO / CONTENTS

PAGE 2 - YOUR REGULAR CLAIMS DEPARTMENT BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

ART - MUSEUM STAIRS BY JOHN D. WILLIAMS (KRASH.DEVIANTART.COM)

PAGE 4 - CHICAGO MUSEUMS SEEN THROUGH MY AGES BY STEVEN H SILVER

PAGE 8 - MY FAVORITE MUSEUMS BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

PAGE 10 - MY FAVORITE MUSEUMS BY BOB HOLE

PAGE 11 - A WALK THROUGH THE MUSEUM IN MY HEAD BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

PAGE 13 - A CAPITAL IDEA

WORDS & PICTURES BY KRISTINA KOPNISKY

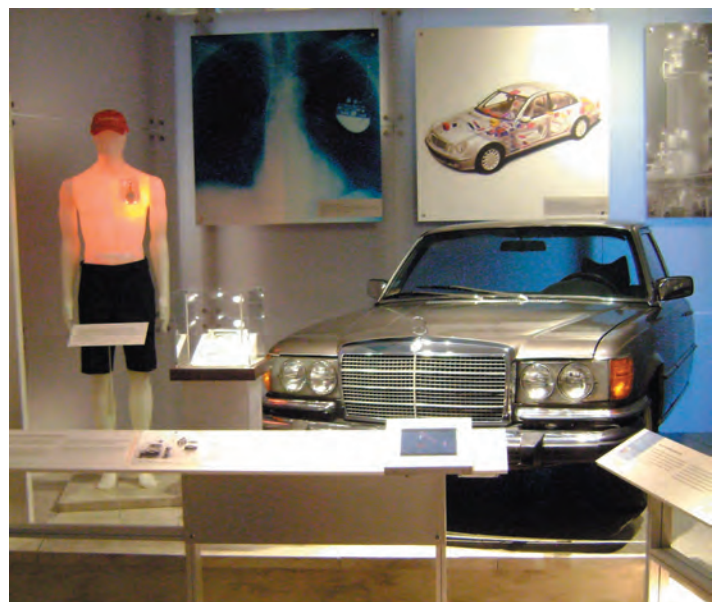
PAGE 15 - LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM

WORDS & PICTURES BY HOWEIRD

PAGE 19 - YOU DAMN KIDS! GET OFF MY

ARTIFACTS BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA



THE MUSEUM ISSUE

YOU REGULAR CLAIMS DEPARTMENT

I've worked at a Museum almost my entire adult life. I first tasted the museum buzz at Forry's place in 1984. We went there and saw all the great stuff and at some point he used the word 'curator', a word ten year old Chris did not know. When I asked what that meant, and got an answer, I knew that was what I wanted to be. Museums, when they are good, are the houses of history. I hate modern museum theory, which may be while I'll never go very far in teh field.

After a stint at the Smithsonian in the early 1990s, and then at the Computer Museum in Boston, I came to the Computer Museum History Center in Mountain View in 1999, which later became The Computer History Museum. I have spent the better part of thirteen years in the Museum trade, and all along there has been a dream bubbling up under the surface. An idea I had one night while out for a walk with my tennis racket and ball. I was thinking about what I would do differently with the Museum I was at and then it hit me that I would do almost everything differently. Different policies, different location, different focus, and most of all, a different path forward. This was the germ that led me to looking into what it would take to start a museum, which led me to realize that I don't have what it takes to start a museum (ie. Money), which led me to think of doing this issue about the Museum I

would want to create, to build, to shepard.

That issue didn't quite happen, but what did is something I enjoy. That's the trip, I guess.

I know that Claims Department is usually all me and it's a story of a trip and a Movie, Book and Music, and thus I can not ignore that. I'vem pleased that we can bring more folks in, especially Kristina and Howeird, who are two of my favorite people!

But still, I gotta do the book, movie and music. This past year, there have been several Steampunk novels where Curators and the like serve as main characters, but the one I'm going to focus

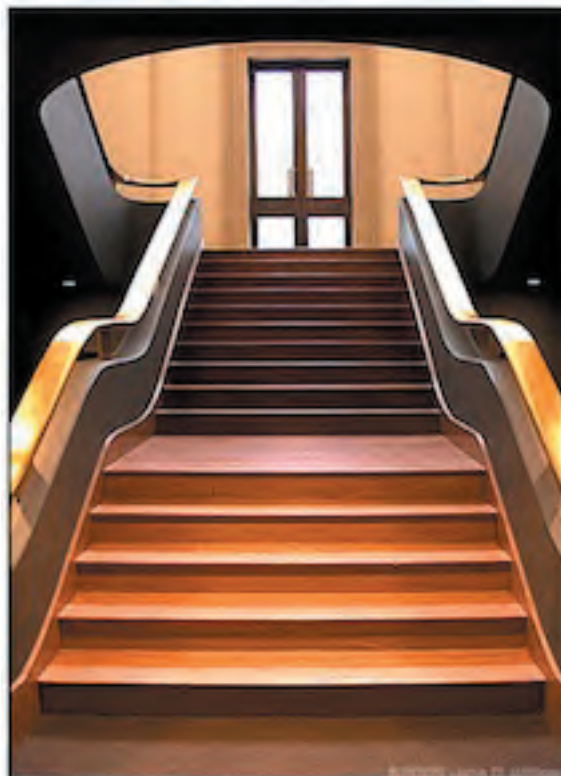
on is Kraken by China Mieville.

Kraken starts out in a little place called the Natural History Museum in London. There, a giant squid somehow manages to disappear. This may or may not have something to do with the deep deep magical under-current that runs through London. It leads us to a sort of magical police force featuring a young recruit named Collingwood who is AMAZING! She's easily the hottest female character of any sort I've read about in ages. She even has a spirit piggy who is a lot of fun.

China is the master of the weird. His works go across the genres of fantasy, horror, science fiction (and if you haven't read Embassyville), and steampunk. He's awesome at all of them. I can not say how much he has bent my mind over the last decade. Here, his writing style is pretty exemplary and I can't say how much fun I had with his characters. The plot is somewhat massive and twisty, but it is the prose that powers me through. It's twisty too, and it's dark. The funny thing is that James Bacon describes it as Robert Rankin but not funny, which is good as I don't believe that it is supposed to be funny. There are some funny moments, that's for sure, but all in all, it's a very serious novel about somewhat silly things happening in a strange time. It reminded me of Tim Powers in his Last Call/Earthquake/Weather/Expiration Date period. It's pretty awesome how he does

things. This one is highly recommended.

The movie? Well, I bet you think I'm going to say A Night at the Museum or A Night at the Museum 2: Battle for the Smithsonian? No, not at all. You might think I'm going to say Election, which ends with Mc. McAlister as an educator at a museum in New York. Nope, though that's one of my favorite movies of 1999. Ghostbusters II, featuring Sigourney Weaver and Peter McNichol as employees of the Metropolitan Museum? A bit better guess. What about House of Wax? No. The episode of The Simpsons where they go to the Springfield Historical Society and find Jedidiah Spingfield's



(aka Hans Sprungfeld's) confession. No, not that one either. Don't Eat The Pictures: Sesame Street Goes to the Metropolitan Museum of Art? Not at all.

No, I am choosing The Maiden Heist.

Back in the day, they shot The Maiden Heist in Boston and at the Worcester Museum of Art back in the early 2000s. It's a comedy, something of a black comedy in fact, about three Museum Guards whose Museum is closing and the art is going to to a museum in Copenhagen. They come up with a plan to steal the three works of art that have always moved them. Christopher Walken plays the guard Roger who is in love with the painting The Lonely Maiden. The brilliant William H. Macy is deeply effected by a statue, a large nude, and he tries to recreate the pose by stripping down and standing in front of it. Morgan Freeman plays the saddest of them all, a guy who is inspired by a painting which he then paints copies of over and over. One of the best scenes is when he paints a version of The Lonely Maiden and it's terrible while the copy of his own painting is perfect.

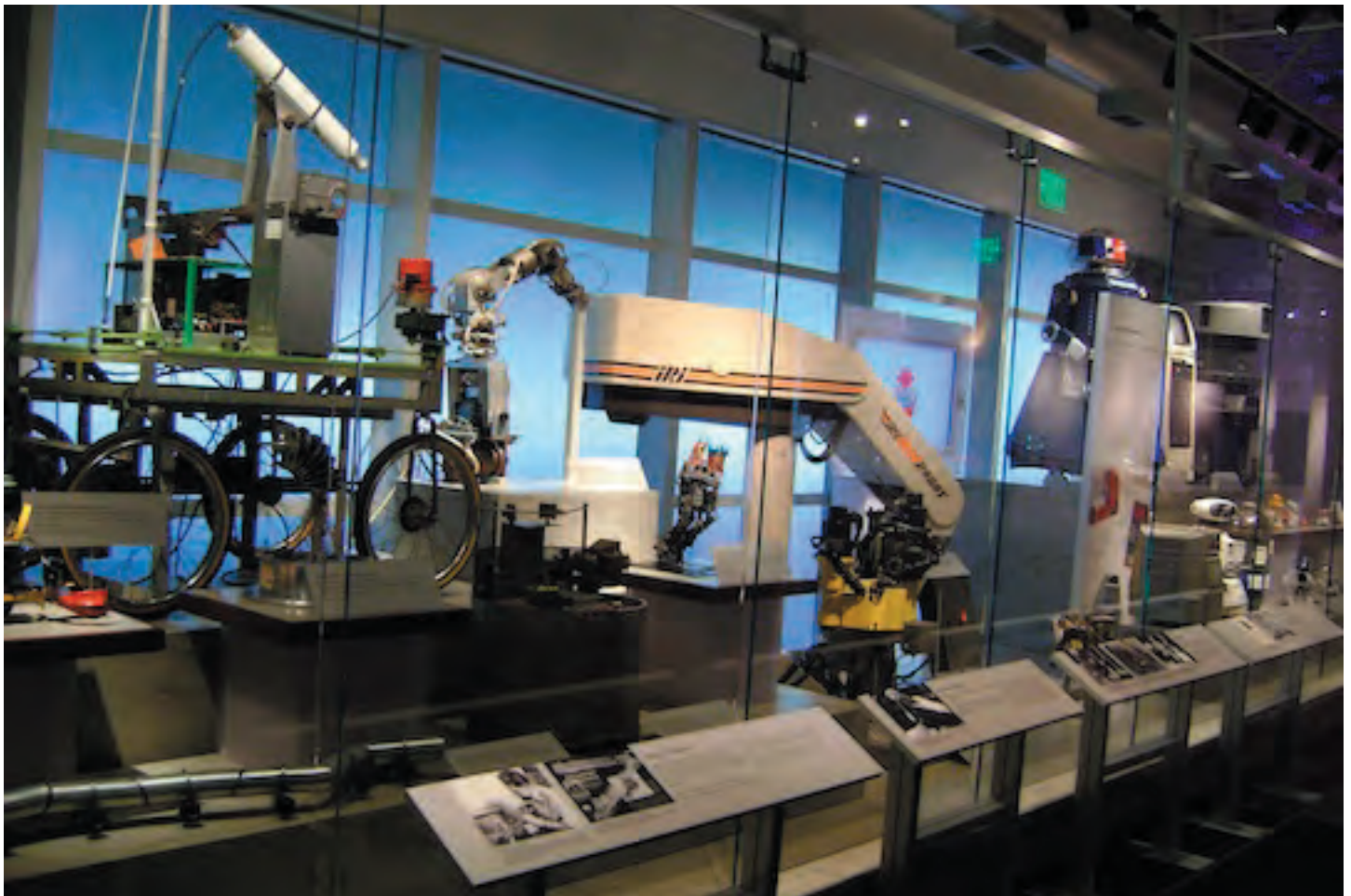
The heist picture is a Hollywood staple and this one is pretty good as they have all the troubles with a normal heist compounded by the fact that Roger has to deal with his wife, played beautifully by Marcia Gay

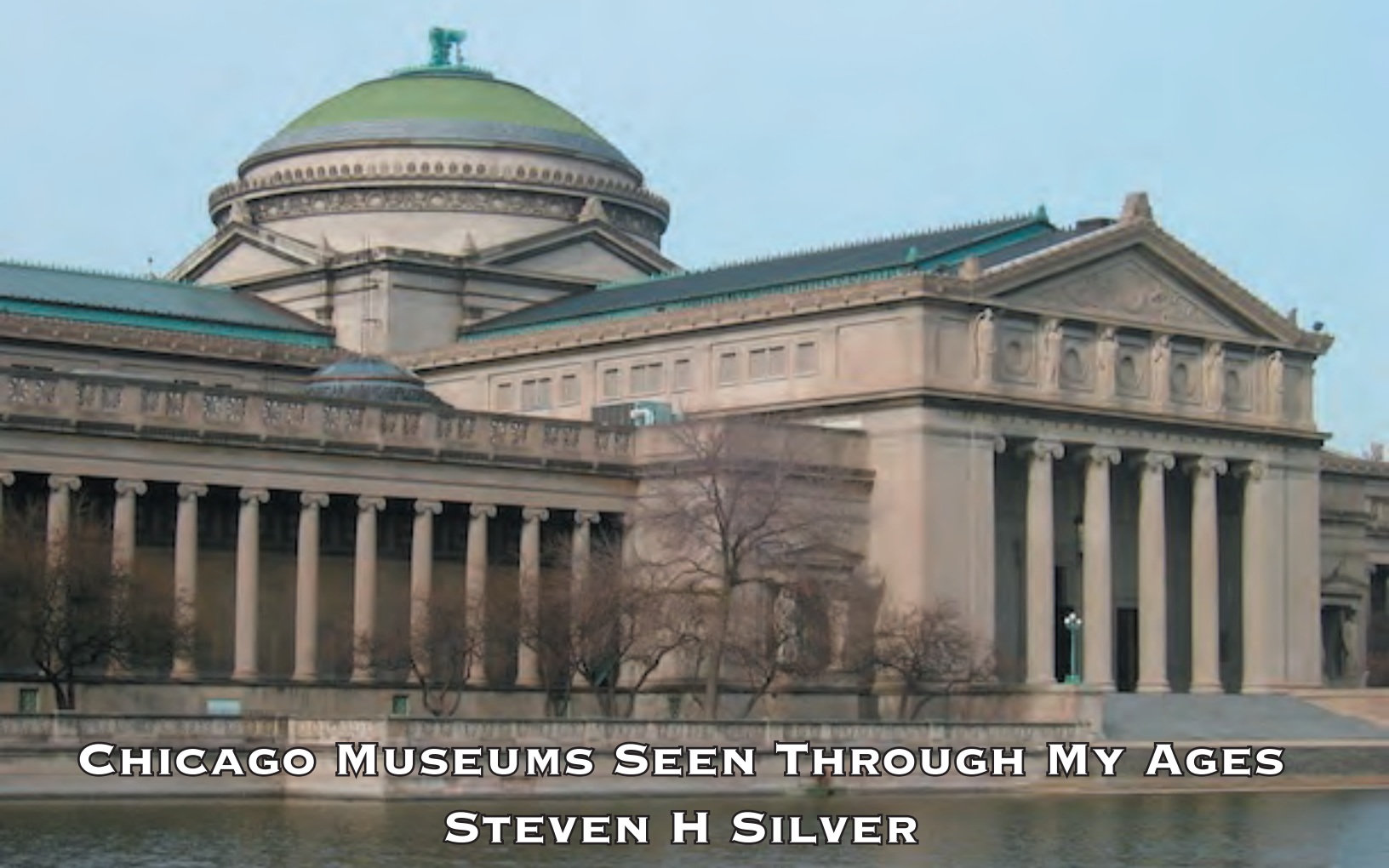
Harden. She's an obstacle and all she wants is to move to Florida. It's very impressive how she works the character. I think that this was her best comedic performance in ages. I love her in Pollack, but here, she's just fantastic.

The film was held back, it was supposed to be released in 2008, but there was trouble at the distributor and it ended up shelved until 2010. Still, it didn't do well in the theatres though it found something of an audience on DVD. I really enjoyed it.

Museum Music? What could that be? How many albums, or even just songs, are there about vatrines and stanchions and museum guards and so on? None that I know of, but there is one that I can think of that fits the bill: The Museum of Love by The Meat Purveyors. It's a story about a woman who has had her heart broken and likens it to a museum. See the exhibit on sadness, the diorama of madness. She talks about the specific items that she used to woo her love and the items that he used to reject her. It's a great song with a good hook and a delightful listen!

So, that's the regul;ar Claims Department. I promise not to turn this into a regular zine with varying contributors and a high standard of production!





CHICAGO MUSEUMS SEEN THROUGH MY AGES

STEVEN H SILVER

When I was a child, I loved to visit my great grandmother. We would drive from our home in Chicago's northern suburbs to her apartment on 56th Street in Hyde Park. After spending fifteen minutes paying our respect to her, my mother would usually take my sister and me downstairs and across the street, where we would cross the wide parking lot and climb the stairs to one of the last remnants of the World Columbian Exposition, the Palace of Fine Arts, currently home to the Museum of Science and Industry.¹

The enormous building covers nearly 14 acres of land and was practically an indoor amusement park for a child. Perhaps the most famous exhibit was the captured U-505 submarine which, at the time, clung to the side of the building, dwarfed by the immensity of the Beaux-Arts style nineteenth-century building. In 2004, the museum began restoring the submarine and moving it into a dry dock built into the museum, no

longer visible by Lake Shore Drive, but more importantly no longer ravaged by the elements, which had caused evident damage to the hull. Inside, in a cavernous room, the U-505 can be seen for the large, 77 meter long ship it is, the size of the room adding to the feeling of enormity of the ship rather than dwarfing it. There were a variety of exhibits which, as a child, didn't inspire me, mostly on the ground floor. Living in the suburbs and traveling into the city, I wasn't interested in the farm exhibits (many, but not all of which, are still there). The coolest part of that area from my point of view was the "life-size" representation of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. And while my sister was enthralled by Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle, that was for girls and I didn't want to have anything to do with it.²

One of the stagnant exhibits, which is still there and I enjoy, but think could be done better, is the "Yesterdays Main Street." A small, dark cobblestone street

1 - I discuss the building's history and re-use, along with other survivors of the World's Columbian Exposition, in a series of articles entitled "Remnants of the World's Columbian Exposition" and published in issues 133-135 of Henry Welch's *The Knarley Knews*, April/May-August/September 2009.

2 - As an adult, my perception of the Fairy Castle has changed and it really is pretty amazing. When the artist Nene Thomas was a guest of honor at Windycon 37 in 2010, the one thing she wanted to do aside from the convention was visit the museum to see the Fairy Castle, a book about which she had as a child she counts as a major influence.

leads from the main museum past recreations of storefronts showing the wares of stores as they would have been in 1910. At the end of the street is a small theatre showing a loop of silent films: Charles Chaplin³, Gertie the Dinosaur⁴, Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse at the Circus and others. I remember being in first grade when the museum announced the addition of Finnigan's Ice Cream Parlor, a functional dessert store at the beginning of the street, where it meets the main part of the museum. Serving ice cream in glass, rather than paper, Finnigan's actually points up the biggest problem with Yesterday's Main Street...with the exceptions of the ice cream parlor and, to a lesser extent, the movie theatre, it isn't interactive. This display would heavily benefit from the addition of animatronics.

Another addition that I remember fondly from my childhood was a lengthy exhibit on circuses, much of which is still located at the museum, but not as extensive as it was when it first opened. A temporary exhibit showing items from the "Museum's attic" showed a wide variety of pieces which didn't fit into any of the standing exhibits, but which were still cool to see, along with the short passages describing what they were and how they were used.

As an adult, I've been to the museum numerous times, often with my kids and am less impressed (or perhaps more jaded). Favorites are still there... the coal mine tour, the extensive model train, the baby chicks, and new exhibits have been added. There is a Boeing 727 suspended from one of the interior balconies, the Pioneer Zephyr railroad train including a 20 minute tour, the interactive ToyMaker 3000, which allows the visitor to make an individualized gravitron toy top while watching how computers interface with mass production, or the Henry Crown Space Center with Jim Lovell's spacesuit, the Apollo 8 capsule, Scott Carpenter's Aurora 7, and a life-size training mockup of

a lunar lander used by the Apollo 11 crew.

And yet, there are parts of the museum that I feel are run down, in desperate need of updating and repair. When I look at those parts of the museum, I just wish they would either remove the broken exhibits, wall them off, or replace them. With a building as vast as this one is, there are always empty halls that you catch a glimpse of while walking from one exhibit to another, in some cases waiting for the next traveling exhibit, in other cases, merely an empty room waiting for someone to notice it.

By the time I was in my early teens, I refocused my museum love. Six years after my great grandmother died, we didn't visit Hyde Park as much, nor the museum. I turned my attention to the Adler Planetarium, located on the Lake Front. The Adler Planetarium, which first opened in 1930, was the first planetarium in the Western hemisphere.⁵ I took numerous classes there, and, although my parents drove me into the city, it was also freedom, for when they couldn't drive me, I would take a train to Union Station and then a bus to the planetarium for my classes.

When I was going to classes there, the planetarium included a large underground exhibit area, which ended in the museum's cafeteria, where I first met David Scott⁶ and, after several years of correspondence, Clyde Tombaugh. The exhibits included scales which would reveal your weight on various planets and moons throughout the solar system, a rock retrieved from the moon, and scale models of the planets (including Pluto) embedded into the wall. That area, with all those memories, is closed off to the public now.

The middle floor of the planetarium had a wonderful display of telescopes, including one which may have been used by William Herschel to discover Uranus and the Dearborn Telescope, which was the largest in the world when it was built in 1860. In the same gal-

3 - My discussion of Charles Chaplin, along with other silent film comedians, can be found in my fanzine, Argentus 9, 2009.

4 - Chaplin, Gertie the Dinosaur, and Ignatz and Krazy Kat all postdate 1910, so the presence of the theatre indicates that the museum isn't entirely consistent with their depiction of the street, despite the museum's statement that the street depicts that year.

5 - At Windycon 36, in 2009, Joel Zakem told me he had something for me. While going through papers belonging to an aunt, he had come across a 63 page booklet issued shortly after the Planetarium opened and he figured it was something I would appreciate. He was right and the booklet, is now in my collection: Fox, Philip, Adler Planetarium and Astronomical Museum, Fred I Kingley Co., Chicago, IL, 1937. The only other copy of the booklet I've seen was on display in a restaurant in Rosemont, IL where I had lunch with Bruce Farr, Alex von Thorn, and Marah Searle-Kovacevic during a Chicon 7 planning meeting.

6 - For some details on the meeting, see my article in the FenCon VIII Program Book, September 2011.

lery was a workshop where astronomers could grind their own lenses and mirrors for telescopes and build their own, sadly now gone. In the late 1970s, an exhibit on navigation was incorporated which had a button that, when pressed would recite some dialogue which included the captain of a ship calling loudly for his navigator, Mr. Silver. It always made me jump.

The upper floor of the planetarium housed the Sky Theatre, the dome on which sky shows would be presented and show the wonders of the universe without the dusty glow the city of Chicago provided. In the front of the building on that level was a frieze showing symbols of the sun and eight planets. Although Pluto had been discovered⁷ prior to the planetarium's opening⁸, it was too late to add it to the frieze, which, according to the IAU, is now accurate again.⁹

One of the coolest exhibits at the Adler Planetarium is the old Atwood Sphere, named for builder Charles Atwood. Originally housed at the Chicago Academy of Sciences, this is a wooden sphere about 5 meters in diameter. There are 692 holes drilled into the interior to represent stars. From its creation in 1913 until the Adler's opening in 1930, it was used by school groups for lessons in astronomy, and later, during World War II, to help teach pilots about night navigation. When the Adler underwent a major renovation a few years ago, the Atwood Sphere was opened up for viewing, although it can only accommodate about 10 people at a time.

The planetarium has also recently added an area targeted at younger guests, called Planet Explorers, which can also be enjoyed by adults. A mock up of a

space station allows the visitor to experience the vertigo of a space walk and other features help promote kids' interest in astronomy and planetary exploration. While the entire museum contains hands-on elements, this portion of the museum immerses the visitor in those elements.

And, although I have fond memories of the old cafeteria at the Adler, as the place I met Scott and Tombaugh, I will admit that the food choice is better at their new cafeteria. Plus, instead of eating underground, the new dining room takes advantage of their location on Lake Michigan to present a panoramic view while you eat.

After several years of exile, I returned to Chicago in 1995 and discovered something amazing. My favorite museum now wasn't the Museum of Science and Industry, which appeared to be a bit run-down,¹⁰ and the Adler was a bit limited in scope.¹¹ The museum I find we go to most often is the Field Museum, which is just across the Museum campus from the Adler Planetarium.¹²

When you enter the Field Museum, the first thing you notice is that the grand hall is big. You also notice that it contains two totem poles, an elephant, and a Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton named Sue. When I was growing up, Sue wasn't there (or even discovered, yet) and instead there was a brachiosaurus skeleton (now located outside the museum and visible from Lake Shore Drive) and a couple of model hadrosaurs.

The dinosaurs are now located on the east side of the building, upstairs (they had been on the west side, downstairs). The exhibit is much more modern, showing the skeletons standing in areas reminiscent of



7 - February 18, 1930.
8 - May 10, 1930.

9 - Although I'll point out the SP3, presided over by Michael A. Burstein.

10 - The last several times I've been there, they seem to be on track of improvement and I keep thinking it is about two-three years from being where I'd like it to be.

11 - Because, you know, their scope was only the universe.

12 - The third museum on the campus is the Shedd Aquarium, which is home to an alligator snapping turtle that I can spend hours watch doing nothing except stretch to the surface about once every hour.

their habitats. Also, there is a lengthy walk up to them that tells the life story of the Earth up until the age of the dinosaurs, as well as showing various pre-saurian life forms. Outside the dinosaur display is the lab which cleaned and prepared Sue for display and continues to be used to prepare fossils, now in full view of the public.

If dinosaurs aren't your thing (and aren't dinosaurs everyone's thing), the museum has plenty of other cool things to draw your attention. Rather than just laying out their mummies in rows, there is a mock Egyptian tomb stretching from the first to the ground floor and ending at a full blown exhibit on ancient Egypt, including the opportunity to try to drag a pyramid brick (try it, enjoy the hernia).

Back in 1979, I was on an archaeological dig in Kampsville, Illinois and got to meet the man who built the Pawnee Earth Lodge which had opened in the museum two years earlier and which still stands in the museum. Because of that tie, I feel I have a bond with the lodge, but my favorite place in the museum is a little visited area on the third floor, where the Field Museum maintains Ruatēpūke II, a Maori Meeting House originally built in 1881 in Tokomaru Bay. Whenever I visit, I take off my shoes and sit in the house, which I find a peaceful and meditative place.

My wife's favorite exhibit is the gem room, located just across the hall from the jade room. While the gem room displays a wide variety of examples of gemstones formed into necklaces, bracelets, and other pieces of jewelry, the jade room demonstrates the amazing things that can be done with the simple gemstone.

One of the really cool things the Field has done is make a series of short podcasts available. These can be downloaded to an mp3 player prior to a visit to the museum and you can be guided around by Peter Sagal of the radio show "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me" to more than twenty exhibits in the museum. These podcasts include interviews with curators and experts about how the exhibits are created and maintained. Following the podcast will take you past nineteen of their major exhibits, including the man-eating lions of Tsavo¹³ and the Benld meteorite, which landed in southern Illinois in 1938, crashing through a garage roof and smashing through the back seat of a '37 Pontiac. The meteorite,

car seat, and muffler are all on display.

Just as the Adler Planetarium has recently added a kids' section, so too, did the Field Museum, and, again, it has enough in it to retain the interests of parents while the kids are exploring it. The kids' section at the Field is also relatively close to Underground Adventure, the conceit of which is that the visitor is shrunk down to microbial size to see what things are like under the earth.

But my absolute favorite exhibit at the Field Museum is simply in a glass case down a hallway behind the cafeteria. It isn't marked on any map and over the years its position has changed many times, never announced. And that is a coelacanth. Truly a wonderful thing to see.

So, currently, the Field Museum is my Chicago museum of choice, but who knows if it will remain that way. The Museum of Science and Industry could easily reclaim my affection with some upgrades which appear to be underway. And Chicago has several other, smaller, lesser known museums that constantly beckon. The Oriental Institute, for instance, has a wonderful exhibit focusing on...



13 - Featured in the films *Bwana Devil* (1952), *Killers of Kilimanjaro* (1959), and *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996).



MY FAVORITE MUSEUMS

BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

I go to a fair number of museums. I'm not a fan of a lot of them, was flat-out bored by the Natural History museum in New York, for example, but there are some that just blow me away. I figured, 'Hey, why not talk about the ones I enjoy.'

The first thing I should point out is that as a Museum Guy, I have different things that I look for. Do they have enough text? Is the stuff they put out well-displayed? Is there an awesome bathroom? These are the things I look for.

So here is a list of the ones that I always look forward to getting back to!

The Cartoon Art Museum, London

On my TAFF trip, I made arrangements to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the Cartoon Art Museum right around the corner from the British Museum. I made it there and one of the Curators showed me every inch of the museum. The first visit was great, with two amazingly beautiful re-creations of Heath Robinson cartoon machines. They were great, and I was most saddened when I went back two years later and it wasn't there. They did have a beautiful display of Granville art, which made me very happy. The old political cartoons (the ones from the 18th and 19th century) were probably the coolest thing there the second time we came around.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

I took a lot of art classes when I was in college. Well, art history classes, and that meant I had to visit the MFA a whole lot. About once a month at least. Since you got in free with a Student ID back in those days, I used to go about twice a week. I saw dozens of rotating exhibits, some of them pretty amazing, some of them awful. The one that I remember best was the last exhibition that was begun while Roy Lichtenstein was still alive. It was an amazing combination of his techniques to recreate a series of Japanese prints. The result was amazing and I think it was the best temporary exhibit I've ever seen. The arms and armors exhibits and the Egyptian stuff in the permanent exhibits were things I saw at least a hundred times each.

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Montreal

I love Montreal, and we were there the first Wednesday of August, which happened to be the Free Entry day at the Museum of Contemporary Art. It was also during the Francophone Music Festival which basically surrounded the museum. We went in and there were two amazing rotating exhibits. One was a series of photographs from Chernobyl, the slums of Cuba and New Orleans post-Katrina. The result was sobering, but amazingly powerful. Then there was an exhibit

of babycribs, some of them with toys and stuff, and it was very good.

Maybe the highlight was the video room. They had a series of videos, many of them from Montreal music acts like The Arcade Fire and zzz is Playing;, which is the video that moved me the most. I mean, it was an awesome, one continuous shot video which I was amazed by. This is a museum that I could tell I would want to return to over and over if it were in my backyard.

The Victoria & Albert Museum

One of the Big Five of London Museums, the V&A is a masterpiece dedicated to art and design. The three biggest things for me there are the lovely Hereford Screen (which I covered in my TAFF report and the first issue of Exhibition Hall), the Samurai suit (which was in the back when I came the last time) and the gorgeous Tipoo Tiger, a wind-up music box of a tiger eating a British Tax Collector. All of these are great, and there's a Jesus on a Donkey that I like, but the real thing at the V&A is the textile room.

One thing that a lot of more modern museums have eschewed dense display in favor of more flashy exhibit techniques. I no like, I much prefer simpler techniques and the V&A has these sliders with samples of textile and garments in several rows of cabinets. It's pretty much amazing. I spend hours in the section that covers the textiles of Egypt, the Incas, Africa and Polynesia. There's almost no one around to while you're looking 'em over and it's awesome. I have such a great time in there. It's one of the great reasons to go to the V&A.

Science Museum, London

You think I love it because of the Babbage Engine they have, right? Or maybe it's the fact that they have half of Babbage's brain, right there on display, right? Or maybe you think it's the funky steam-powered stuff. Nope, none of those, though they're awesome. No, it's the Making of the Modern World Exhibit.

No other museum exhibit I've seen has an exhibit that takes so many significant pieces of technological history and puts them in one place. There are three of the most significant locomotives, the English Electric ACE computer, a Cray-1, an early Atomic Clock, several other thingees and some gorgeous machines that describe how world-wide technology has effected the world around us. The best exhibit I've

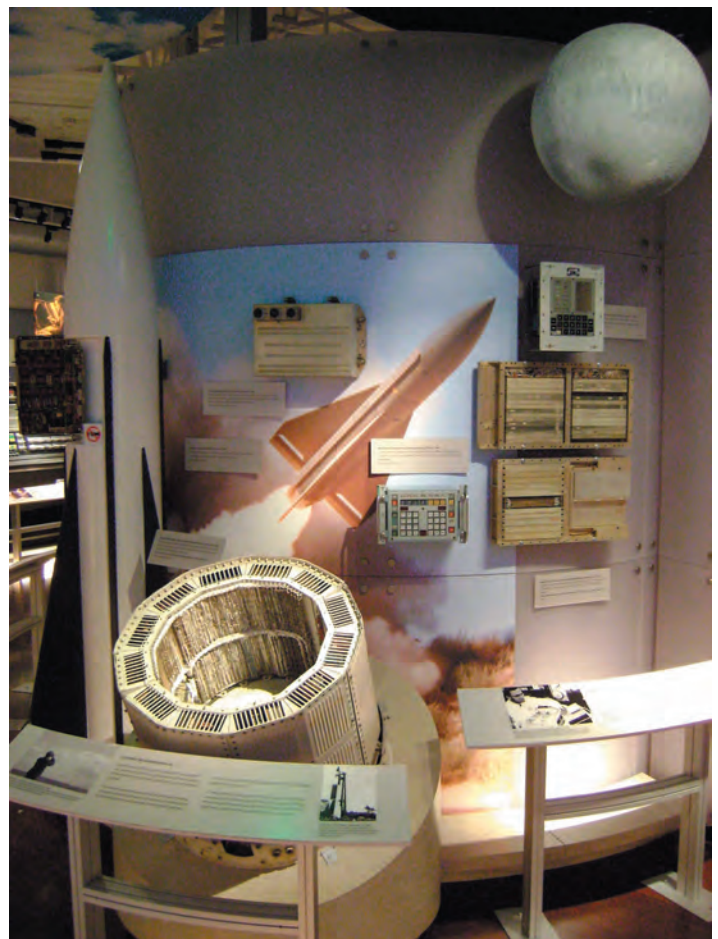
ever seen and one that I think folks should go out of their way to see in the flesh!

The Rosecrucian Museum

San Jose's best work of awesomeness is the Rosecrucian Museum. It's an awesome place for going to see a bunch of freakin' mummies! They've got several mummified animals, including an alligator, a cat and a couple of hawks and falcons. It's a wonderful place with a recreation of an original tomb and so many ushabtis that it'll make ya scream!

The DeYoung Museum

Linda and I tend to go there when they have a new special exhibition since Linda's a member and gets a free pair of tickets to each exhibit. They do some really good touring stuff, but the real good stuff is their permanent and rotating galleries of stuff from their collections. The last time we went, we saw a Picasso exhibit, but the rotating gallery had Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton and several pieces of Art Deco inspired sculpture. There is an exhibit that's permanent of a Cathedral made out of guns, bullets, a tooth and a part of a human spine. It's a powerful exhibit.





MY FAVORITE MUSEUMS BY BOB HOLE

I love museums. I have always loved going to them and working at them. I've done a fair amount of research on them, and I have always dreamed of someday running one. And if anyone has a place, I'll bring the stuff! I can't say I have a single favorite museum. I have lots of favorites, and each for a different reason.

One of my favorites is the Carnegie Museum, in Roseville, California (www.rosevillehistorical.org). It's a small museum of local history. I worked there for about a year, and it's got a lot of cool stuff. Like many small local history museums it's mostly a big place full of a wide variety of objects donated by locals. They've got an old wash-tub, model planes (there's a local airbase), plus a really cool n-scale model railroad modeling parts of the city and its history. Roseville was important in the development of the railroad in California, and still has the largest train sorting yard along the Pacific Coast, so railroad history is well represented in their collection. Though a visit could take only a few minutes, you could certainly spend hours there, looking in detail at the collection items. The only major disadvantage to the place is that it's not wheelchair accessible. The museum is

housed in a 1908 Carnegie Library owned by the city of Roseville, and as an historical landmark the city does not have to make accommodations. This has frustrated museum workers for a long time, but they compensate as well as they can by providing outreach and other programs.

In 2008 I took a large looping trip through the western United States and found several wonderful small museums. Two favorites stand out. The Tucumcari Dinosaur Museum (<http://www.mesalands.edu/museum/museum.htm>) is a true gem. It's at the Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari, New Mexico. It's well worth a visit if you have an interest in dinosaurs. They've done a truly amazing job at presenting dinosaurs as both fossils and living creatures. Considering most large colleges don't have anything like this, it's an amazing place. I visited a lot of dinosaur related museums that summer in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and other states, and really this is the one that stands out in my mind. It's well laid out, well-presented and really a cool place to visit. I also very much enjoyed my visit to the Bayard Depot Museum in Bayard, Nebraska (no

website I could find), just east of Scott's Bluff. They're housed in the old railroad depot and totally chocked to overflowing with "stuff". Unlike the Roseville museum, this one's only lightly organized and just totally cramped with things to see. That's something that many museum professionals dislike about small museums, especially the small historical museums, but it's one of the things I find charming. (Note: This editor, as a museum professional, LOVES tightly-packed, charming museums!) Yeah, the well interpreted and laid out exhibits are cool, but sometimes you just wanna rummage. The volunteer who was overseeing the Bayard museum that day gave us a personalized tour of the place, highlighting the objects he'd donated- and giving us the history of his family in Bayard. It was a super-personal tour that no one else could give, but it was fascinating.

That's one thing that is a constant among most museums. The volunteers. They're totally priceless, and the generally run the place. Every museum I've been associated with would be completely unable to operate without hundreds or thousands of hours donated by

their volunteers. And they bring such passion and interest to everything they do, it's really fun both as staff and as visitor to deal with them.

The last place I'll mention here (out of hundreds I like) is the Sierra Mono Indian Museum (<http://www.sierramonomuseum.org/>) in North Fork, California, just south of Yosemite National Park. It's a small native-run museum that has wonderful displays. Though lightly interpreted (=most things are identified), they've got some great stuff from the Mono culture and the landscape around them. They've got taxidermied animals that are important to the culture, as well as baskets, clothing, and other artifacts. The highlight for me was a nifty display of local plant materials and what they are used for. Like many museums, this one has a very much living part - hosting and participating in events throughout the year. It's a nifty place.

As I said, there are many more I've visited or worked at, and I love them all. And as you can see, there are some smaller gems out there. Go visit a museum, support it, and maybe volunteer.





A WALK THROUGH THE MUSEUM IN MY HEAD

BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

I park the car in the lot across the street and look at it, looming. Three stories in the back, two in the centre, the nearest a short building, dug into the ground as the rest of the museum grows up from the ground. It is a glass and steel massive, looming building, more than a football field in all directions. The place feels like a kind of Post-Modernist series of Cabinets of Curiosities lined up by height. That walk down a slight grade to the entry seems to make the buildings grow both higher and wider, higher and wider.

Welcome to the Museum of Games and Gaming

The lobby is clean, marble floors, and a wide desk where four young folk sit and sell tickets, handing you a well-designed, colorful and informative map. There's a list of ten artifacts that are called the Essentials! It doesn't list their locations, but beside each is a check box marker 'Seen it?' I take it and have three choices: to the long, slightly rising hall to my left, straight ahead through a tunnel, or up a slightly dropping hallway to my right.

I go ahead.

Walking through, it's a tunnel that goes through the center of a storage area where the objects are on either side. Some are simply labeled, a few of the closer machines have full textual labels. Many have numbers with a little icon that has a dial number for the audio guide that you can rent, or just use an

iPhone app. There is actual work being done behind it. It is a view on the world of museum work and the objects.

The tunnel ends in a smallish courtyard with a café to one side, small, outdoors, with a series of tables. In the center of the courtyard, there's a patch of grass and a small area for kids to play. The café specializes in quick bites, and I grab me a small sandwich and a Coke.

After my small lunch, I head back in, spend a little bit of time looking at the visible storage again, then return to the lobby and make my way up that hallway on the left. This is the Games Hall of Fame, dozens of games that have been deemed worthy of inclusion and preservation, research and presentation. There are all kinds of games; board games and card games and video games from the last 500 years. The individual inductees are in three foot round plexi cylinders with photos and associated artifacts in them. The top is the official induction plaque with the dates and inventors and a blurb. There's a few dozen of them, and they're very well done. They're widely spaced, obvious so that there is room to grow at the rate of a few a year for at least four decades. The display is effective and the photo opportunities with the objects are irresistible.

The middle section is half-gift shop and half research library. It's an amazing gift shop, games and

shirts and knick-knacks of all sorts. The Library features access to materials for researchers and hobbyists who want to peruse actual research. There are journals and books and a collection of instructions. No actual games, just ephemera and archive materials. It's impressive and there's a full-time team of five who will work with you for a fair fee.

Leaving back to the main hallway, there's more games leading to the furthest building. The Atari 2600! Nintendo! Parcheesi! Magic: The Gathering! Dungeons & Dragons! They're all here.

In the main building, the largest and most distant, there is the main exhibit. The biggest timeline of games and gaming, put together so that you could enter from either side and get the experience. There are looks at games in different cultures dating back to the days of Egypt and Babylon, the card games of England and France, traditional games of Africa, and, of course, those card and board games we would all recognize. It's a big exhibit that would explore roots and connections. There'd be a specific audio tour, but there'd be full text on the walls and for every object. That would be the key.

Going down the opposite hallway of the Hall of Fame, this one dedicated to the People of Games and Gaming. The same concept, cylinders full of games and photos, but imbedded in each is a video monitor of them speaking or someone speaking of them. This would allow for updates too, without a full reinstallation. People are more likely to change over time than objects!

Back to the lobby of the entry section, I head up the stairs, and off to the left along the long hallway. There's a way up to an event space on top of the lobby area. More rental spaces mean more potential revenue sources! Also, it'd be a lovely place to hold a wedding.

The long hallway here is the home of an exhibit on Video games. This one has a lot more multimedia and is linear, going from the near point at the beginning with games like SpaceWar! and NIM, to the far point looking at MMORPGs and recent releases. This one would be far more traditional, a timeline with spots for investigation of topics. Of course, it would also be the area for the most experimental exhibition techniques. There's be long monitors where game characters would appear and virtual labeling on the screen would appear. It would be at least partially controlled by the people who stand in front of it.

At the middle building's second floor, there's

the area where games can be played. This interactive area where docents and people lead people through activities, and where an Arcade recreation can also be another area of monetary income. I spend a fair amount of time watching folks play and hop in on a couple of demos and play a bunch of pinball. Nothing better than actually playing pinball in an arcade setting. there's also the greatest pin ever: Superman, the giant playing field leading to incredibly fast play.

Leaving the second area, I walk to the big building and there's a theatre with where they hold events, lectures and video gaming contests and the like. There's also the largest cafeteria, which is where a lot of money can be made for a museum. Here, you can have a seat, and very smartly, they've themed the tables, each one the playing field for some board game or a cocktail table version of a video game or pinball machine. There's also a few other objects around the cafeteria, just to make it a bit more branded as a part of the museum.

The remaining area of the largest building is given over to the classrooms where teachers and museum staff can come together and use the space to allow classes to do projects, hold summer camps and so on. Many museums don't do these and it's not a good idea to skip over it!

The other hallway is rotating exhibit space where temporary exhibits. The one when I visit? It's all about the game Monopoly and how it spread. The growth of Monopoly can be seen as meteoric and one of the best signs of American economic Imperialism. You can look at Monopoly in a number of ways that will make it possible to understand the game and the world it came out of.

The uppermost portion of the Main building would be administrative space. Having a place for people to actually do their work is important, and I've seen museums that have built small nooks into exhibits where people are expected to work. Some of that space would also be used for storage and research, so it would be a multi-function area.

I'd leave the museum, a meal in my belly, a few hours of excitement and a bunch of pinball played, and feel like finally, someone got it right, they took a little bit of everything and put out a strong museum that gets that games are both important and fun, neglecting neither side of the equation.

Which means that such a place really isn't possible.



A CAPITAL IDEA

BY KRISTINA KOPNISKY

There are many cultural and historical reasons to visit Washington D.C. If you are a museum junky like me it is almost an overwhelmingly rich environment. The set of reasons I am going to write about are the museums that are operated by the Smithsonian Institution. <http://si.edu/> The Smithsonian has over a dozen museums and a zoo in the area. They cover a wide array of subjects and all are free of charge for admission.

The National Mall is home to a lionís share of their museums. Fortunately these are easy to find. The National Mall is found by looking for 2 landmarks. The Washington Monument and the Capital Building. SI museums located on the mall are: American History Museum, Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Castle (be sure to check out the gardens in the back), Ripley Center International Gallery, Freer Gallery, Sackler Gallery, African Art Museum, Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Air and Space Museum, and American Indian Museum. The Renwick Gallery and American Art Museum Portrait Gallery are a short walk from the Mall. The National Zoo is a Metro hop away and is probably best planned for on a separate day. As you can see any museum buff could spend a week in the District and still not view everything they would like to.

A little advanced planning will open up a world of possibilities in free events that each location offers. Visit the events section of the websites for the ones

that interest you and plan your trip around the events. Many of the events are free or low cost for admission. The Smithsonian also has collections of books and other items that are not on display. If you care to do the leg work you might qualify as someone that they will open their archives to in order to view a certain book or artifact. I have personally never had need but I would think that the libraries department would be a good starting point if you care to pursue this. <http://www.si.edu/>

Lockers for use by the public are spotty. Security issues in recent years are partially responsible for this. Lockers are available for rent at: African Art Museum, American History Museum, Freer Gallery, Sackler Gallery, Natural History Museum, Reynolds Center for Art and Poetry, and Udvar Hazy Center.

The National Mall is easily reached by taking the Metro. wmata.com Trying to park in the area is not recommended. Parking is pricey and scarce. Driving in the District is unpredictable due to the various events and construction that may be happening on any given day. Unless you really need it I would encourage you to skip renting a car and stick to the public transportation system.

Bring your hiking boots or walking shoes. Washington is not a friendly city to people who are reliant on mobility assistance devices. If you are a walker then

you will think it is a fantastic city. Folk who need assistance to get from point a to point b would do well to make some extra plans when planning there vacation to the US capital. Accommodations have been made in most buildings but may not be readily apparent. Segways are available for rent. If you can stand but not walk for long periods of time this may be something you wish to consider. There are even tours offered that utilize Segways instead of buses. <http://www.capitalsegway.com/>

Food is expensive at the Smithsonian Museums. If you can manage it I would suggest packing in your food and water for the day. The McDonalds at the Air and Space Museums makes the prices at an airport seem like a steal. Your bag lunch bag will be searched by a security guard at each location.

Flying through Dulles Airport? Have a few hours to kill between your flights? The Smithsonian has an air and space location for you. The Udvar-Hazy Center is located near IAD. The hangar is home to the Enterprise space shuttle and the infamous Enola Gay. There is a shuttle that runs from the airport to the hangar. As of this writing the cost of fare is \$.50 per person 11 years of age and older. Passengers under 10 ride for free. Call 540-338-1610 for schedule and rate information. Driving is not advised. While the museum admission is free there is a \$15 per car charge for parking.

There are many other pay museums in the area too. If you do have access to a car you may also want to think about taking a side trip to Baltimore or Northern Virginia. Hotel prices vary greatly depending on time of year and location. A little poking around might yield a decent rate of at around \$100 a night. Yelp is fairly reliable for finding eateries in the area.

A trip to Washington DC is worth making at least once during your lifetime. With a little planning it can be a wonderful and enriching experience. Fen may even want to consider coming out for Balticon for Memorial Day weekend and then making a side trip to the District. <http://www.balticon.org/>





LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM BY HOWEIRD

It was a case of lost and found. I was on my way to my first rehearsal of Los Altos' Ye Olde Towne Band at the recreation center, and I turned into the wrong driveway. The driveway dead ends at the back of the police department, where I hastily (but very safely) turned right, toward the front of the building. After a couple more turns, with my GPS politely telling me "recalculating..." I was passing by the most amazing flower garden. I could see the rec center about 100 yards away, and I was early, so I parked the car, got out, and took some pictures.

The garden belongs to the Los Altos History Museum.

After rehearsals I looked them up on the web <http://www.losaltoshistory.org/> and made a note to return during their business hours.

I spent most of a summer afternoon taking pictures of the flowers, and left enough time to go inside the main building. It looks very plain on the outside, like a newly built old farm house, but on the inside it is all shiny and bright. Admission is free, but there's the obligatory donation box at the door. Friendly volunteers and staff are happy to answer questions, and

there is never any pressure to donate.

The design is very open and airy, the high ceilings, hardwood zig-zag staircase and large windows and skylights make for a pleasantly bright atmosphere.

After passing the gift shop at the entrance, you'll find display area which changes regularly. The first time I went they had train travel posters with matching photographs. Another time the area was set up as the fancy dining room for a wealthy household of the area from the mid-1800's, I think. July's display was a collection of local scenes painted by local artists.

Upstairs is the fixed exhibit area, arranged in a square U around a tall display of portraits of prominent Los Altos citizens and boosters, current and historical. At the top of the stairs is a relief map of the area, with pull-outs describing the weather, history and ecology. Turn left and there is a history wall and a model railroad display showing what the town looked like in the 30's. There is an Old West display, a door from a mission house and a nook filled with matching artifacts. Another display talks about the marshlands, and one shows some of the Native American culture and crafts of the area.

Across the plaza beside the museum is the newly restored J. Gilbert Smith House, which is on its original site, brought up to code (a pity that all those annoying pipes and sprinklers had to be installed) and festooned with bunting. Or maybe the bunting was left over from the 4th of July and they just had not taken it down yet.

The Smith House is a two-story building made in large part from redwood, and hosts a combination of artifacts found in the house, and others from the museum collection. For instance, the Gilberts did not have any children, but the museum has set up a child's bedroom with some of the usual toys and period furniture and clothing.

Smith's private office is interesting – he built it without access to the inside of the house. One has to walk outside and around the back to enter the small room.

Tours of the house and museum are available as soon as enough people find their way to the house. If you go to the house during their normal open hours and find the door locked, don't fret, it just means the docent is leading a tour upstairs, or across the way at the main museum. Hang around for 15 minutes and you'll get your turn.

One of the things I like best about the museum is the special events they host. Train Days this year will be on Saturday and Sunday, September 17 & 18, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. "Shaped by Water" Exhibit Events in October will include a "Tree Building" workshop, water grass planting, with the exhibit's Grand Opening Weekend and Riveropolis unveiling Saturday and Sunday October 15-16, Noon-4pm. The 26th Annual Fall Antiques Show will be Sunday October 16, 10am-4pm, next door at the Hillview Community Center, and the Smith House Tea Party & Holiday Boutique is scheduled for Wednesday November 16, 10am-4pm. Earlier this year they held a fashion show for the adults and a teddy bear day for the kids. Check the web site for details.

Los Altos History Museum
51 So. San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022
(650) 948-9427

Open Thursday through Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.
Admission is free.





LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM





YOU DAMN KIDS! GET OFF MY ARTIFACTS!

BY CHRISTOPHER J GARCIA

I hate the modern idea of the Museum. That's not true. I hate the modern view of museums by many of the people who work in areas like education and exhibit design. They've forgotten what I consider to be the single most important thing about a museum —

The Objects.

I've seen too many Museums that forget the basics, that museums have a thousand year history that should be respected. They see a visit as an 'encounter', and they see tours as things that should be 'grown organically' and they see the point of the museum as to teach.

That's where I think it goes seriously off the tracks.

I know, I know, I'm an old codger, but think about it. What did a museum mean to you when you were a kid? To me, it was a day away from regular learning where I got to come to things myself. It was informal learning, and it worked incredibly well. Kids became attached to museums, to exhibits, to objects. There's a tradition of objects that I feel will be lost on today's younger generations because they see objects as unimportant, that the 'story' is the important thing. I get why they say that, because then the story you tell on-line or in a classroom is just as important as the visit to the museum.

It's not.

Modern museum educators, and I've met quite a few, all have the same trouble: they refuse to see the experience of going to a museum as having value in itself. They rail against traditional museum techniques such as the diorama. One of my favorite museums from when I was a kid was the California Academy of Science. I loved it, and not just because they had a dope aquarium. They also had an amazing museum with a beautiful hall of dioramas, recreations of African savanna, the Asian steppe, Amazon rainforest,

the Rocky Mountains, the Swamps of Louisiana, and so on. It was amazing and I always felt a connection with it. I identified with it, and I would often go there first. It was always the touchstone. I identified with it and I identified the museum with it. That attachment made my connection with the museum stronger and it made me want to go again and again. Those dioramas became my friends.

I brought this up to a Museum educator who was visiting us once and her response was lame. "You're one of those few who can really get a diorama. To most people, they're useless. They teach nothing."

Wow. Just wow.

One thing that's been difficult for the Computer History Museum is drawing large numbers of people. The reason for this is that we're not an established museum, we don't have a pull yet. Part of this is because we don't have a generation or more hooked on coming to see us, interacting with and identifying with specific objects. Look at a museum like the Rosecrucian Museum in San Jose, and they are an old museum that has barely changed since the late 1960s. They show the same objects in the same way. It's a simple formula, and people remember them, people identify with them and school groups go there and do their thing, which introduce these objects, shown simply without glitz, no high-end A/V, no complicated lesson plans around them, and those kids end up growing up and bringing their families, bringing their classes and sharing that experience of the objects, of the space, of the scene. They won't remember the educator and crossword puzzle and 'docent experience'. When that becomes the focus of a museum, that's when things go off the rails.

And sadly, that's where museums seem to be headed.