

Report for Boston National Historic Park/Charlestown Navy Yard

William B. Cogar

May 15-16, 2012

Perspective:

Thank you again for inviting me to be a part of the discussions around the future of the Charlestown Navy Yard. This was a very interesting and enjoyable exercise, and I was delighted and honored to be with such a committed, talented, and pleasant group of scholars and administrators. I thoroughly enjoyed learning so much about the Yard, its history, its potential, and even the significant challenges that those in charge face for the future of the Navy Yard, its collections, and for the continued great work done for the public by the National Park Service. I hope that my participation and this report proves beneficial for you and others to create an exciting path forward in order to help accomplish the NPS's mission overall and that of the BNHP/CNY, in particular.

As you know, my perspective comes from both the serious scholar/historian (twenty years as such, fifteen of those years as History professor at USNA) and some eighteen years in the museum/public history world. While the former perspective has great importance and value, the latter has provided me with a very different approach on promoting and communicating history to different audiences. As such, I have come to learn a great deal about what audiences want, what they respond to, and what they define as "value." In so doing, I have also come to recognize and implement the very important components that go into making public history successful; namely, development (fundraising), marketing, IT, administration, finance, politics, to name a few.

There is a vitally important place for serious scholarship, especially regarding the absolute necessity of accurate and up-to-date historical interpretations conveyed to whatever audience or visitor is targeted. However, my views are not exclusively from the purely academic world. My experience has been as much now along "how" you convey information as to "what" is conveyed. Along with this is the perspective and experience of actually accomplishing this; i.e., identify the desired audience, make the decisions to act, make the case to do so for funding purposes, then implement, promote, and improve upon.

So much is changing these days in the world of heritage and culture, museums, historic houses and sites, etc. Not all is good, especially the increasing cost to do business and the declining sources of revenue, not to mention changes in how history is taught and conveyed in formal educational structures. Yet, there is, I believe, a greater opportunity to convey exciting history, material culture, and relevance to far more audiences – not just in numbers but to different ethnic and racial groups – than ever before. This takes a very important change in thinking that history is not merely or exclusively conveyed in the traditional methods of monographs, physical exhibitions, or signage in front of examples of material culture. It is thinking that the virtual world affords the opportunity to accomplish a great deal more for far more people at a fraction of the cost, a subject on which I will discuss more in the report.

During the course of our discussions, I likely made myself sufficiently obnoxious by constantly talking about what I consider to be the real reason for our efforts; namely, the visitor (those visiting today, those targeted to visit, and the virtual visitors), and while I risk being pedantic and too narrow-minded (not to mention not “scholarly” enough), I believe so strongly that the visitor should always be at the center of the discussions that I will happily run that risk.

My view is that everything we do should be for the audience. Just like I reported at the end of the conference during our wrap up session, it is about “audience, audience, and audience.” Not unlike how we communicate in different ways to convey a meaning depending on who is hearing and reading our message, such is why and how we should convey public history.

I am also a very strong proponent that serious and professional marketing efforts should be standard operating procedures in every effort like the one you are undertaking. Surveys and opinions should be gathered on as much information as possible from the audiences (numbers and types) that now come to a site. The surveys should ask why they come to a site and, and after visiting, what is their perception (before and after) of what they saw. Importantly, the question must be asked, just what audiences are not coming and why? Without this information, everything that is done is basically speculative and based on what the content providers, administrators, and/or funders believe should be conveyed. Normally, this means that “what I believe people want to see, hear and learn about are those things that I believe are important and interesting.” This is a recipe for failure.

An example that very clearly supports this belief is what transpired in 2004-05 at The Mariners’ Museum during the planning for an exhibition on the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The

exhibition was fortunate to receive maximum funding for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Planning Grant and an NEH Implementation Grant. Hence, we concluded that we had a “great subject” and story to convey. Initially, the exhibition’s script and overall exhibition design and layout were written by the Museum’s curators and exhibition designers; i.e., the usual content providers for the Museum’s project. When this was put in front of various focus groups for feedback, the audience demonstrated a very different interpretation and sentiment about what was presented. What the Museum was creating was something that completely missed the essential elements that audiences wanted and believed should be in the exhibition. After a considerable re-work and the involvement of more audience feedback, the exhibition opened to great reviews and acclaim, something that I am sure would not have happened had we not engaged and tapped into the audience.

What therefore is essential in creating any kind of content at a site like the BNHP/CNY is to implement first and foremost a professional and thorough market study on visitation to the site and what is seen as a vision for that site’s future success. Finding out then what the audience knows, perceives, wants, etc. is absolutely crucial and, as I have discovered over the years, this is usually very different from those views, perceptions, etc. of the inside content providers who are normally charged with creating the “visitors’ experience.”

I do not have readily any statistical information regarding visitation trends at NPS sites that deal with cultural history *vs.* natural history. However, statistics at some nationally important historic places demonstrate that visitation is (and has been) on the decline; attendance at such places as Colonial Williamsburg, Old Sturbridge Village, Mystic Seaport, and The Mariners’ Museum have seen declining numbers over a considerable period (yes, there are years when attendance has actually increased but the thirty plus year trends all show a decline).

Furthermore and very importantly, the changing demographics and psychographics – to which I refer to the studies coming from the AAM’s “Center for the Future of Museums” – indicates that traditional subjects and methods of exhibition design are far from achieving the desired success that they did, say, ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago. I refer to the American Association of Museum’s website and then the Center’s pages for very valuable information on these subjects and trends.

Thoughts and Opinions:

Now that I have hopefully made clear the perspective from which I come to this project and subject, let me address what we were tasked to do. The charge was the following: “The resources associated with the greater Charlestown Navy Yard represent 200 years of naval and industrial history that post-date the Revolutionary War period. Charlestown Navy Yard became a part of the plan for Boston National Historical Park only a few years before the park was established in 1975. Although the U.S.S. *Constitution*, berthed in the Charlestown Navy Yard, was added to the *Freedom Trail* in 1974, the Navy Yard itself represents a very different resource and experience in terms of its historic period and its scale.”

We were asked to consider what we thought were the important themes of this place. To assist in this process, the following questions were offered:

- a. Within the Navy Yard there is a disparate array of resources spanning two centuries. How do we make sense of this?
- b. How does the Charlestown Navy Yard, as separate and distinct from the U.S.S. *Constitution*, tie thematically to the larger park and *Freedom Trail* context?
- c. How is the U.S.S. *Constitution* integrated in the Navy Yard story and the Freedom Trail?
- d. What is the story (or stories) we should be telling at the Charlestown Navy Yard and with what resources?

My understanding is that these questions were meant to guide the discussion and to help formulate views and comments from the scholars. The questions were certainly very helpful as a starting point. However, again concentrating on my belief that the audience should be the center of everything, are the questions the ones that we as scholars – university historians, public historians, museum professionals, NPS content providers, or a combination of all these – should actually try and answer or should we think about what the visitors will find of value and meaning.

Going through my notes, it seemed that during our time together, there was a great deal of discussion around what I saw as large, general themes. In addition, there was a conversation (or two) over whether we as a group should concentrate on “what” should be the overall theme(s) as opposed to “how” the stories should be told. I certainly see the logic and comfort in

addressing the “what” idea before the “how” component. Saying, that, though, the two are not separate entities. As I continue my discussion below, please note that I believe that what is successfully conveyed is very much based on how it is conveyed. With regards to the various specific items that we talked about (Ropewalk, Chain-Forge, etc) what is said is guided in large part by how it is said, and if something cannot be done with a large and consistent level of confidence that it will achieve success, then very likely it should not be done.

As to the large themes, the first was the history of the Charlestown Navy Yard from the perspective of naval history and specifically the building and maintaining ships from 1800 through 1973; ships that won wars, protected American commerce, and thus contributed to America’s global leadership position (though the two ships presently at the Yard, the *Constitution* and the *Cassin Young* are both vessels built elsewhere). The second theme focused around the industrial story of the Yard; namely, how the entire site conveys American industrial history and even post-industrial history with it re-use towards residential and commercial purposes. Finally, there was discussion about how the Charlestown Navy Yard as a centerpiece of local history; that thousands of local residents worked at the Ship Yard and conversely how the Yard helped to shape the history and culture that was (and is) Charlestown.

These are all very noble and valuable themes. Indeed, many fascinating stories exist that relate to the themes. But my question is: Can one of them, parts of them, or all of these be done in a way that will in fact be successful? I define success here as seeing an increasing numbers of visitors to the site over a specific, defined time period; measurable metrics, if you will. Another question I have is whether the story (whichever one is chosen, if at all) will in fact not undermine or make confusing what I see is the main reason today why people visit the Navy Yard; i.e., the USS *Constitution* and the Freedom Trail.

Should the site tell the larger Naval and/or Industrial History of Navy Yard?

Let me first address the film on the Navy Yard in the Visitor Center which was made relatively recently and which tells the history of the Navy Yard. It is a good film and well made. Regarding its impact on visitors, though, but does it actually succeed? I understand that only about 1% of the visiting public to the Navy Yard actually sees the film. If so, is this because it is

not shown in the proper format, not shown at the right time in the public's tour, viewed as confusing and unrelated to why people are actually there, or something else?

Going to my concentration on the visitors' perceptions, I am under the opinion that the subject of the film; namely, the history of the Charlestown Navy Yard, c.1800-1974, is not something the visitor expects or actually believes she or he needs to know. The history of the Yard is not what people coming to the site are expecting to see; rather the general perception that I can see is that the visitor's focus is to see the USS *Constitution*, tour the ship, and then may logically venture over to the USS *Constitution* Museum, to learn more about the larger, overall topic on which they came to the site and which is, as I understand it, a very popular component of the Freedom Trail, and hence why they come.

To broaden the visitors' experience to include a history of the entire Navy Yard (in the traditional format of exhibited and interpreted artifacts, would in my opinion, be a very hard "sell" to visitors. To convey satisfactorily a history of the Charlestown Navy Yard would require a huge investment in many different aspects requiring a combination of a vastly larger footprint, not to mention the number and appropriateness of the artifacts. Whatever time and investment in exhibition planning and installation that would be required, there is the very important issue of whether this is something that the American (and even non-American) visiting public would support in enough numbers and ways to justify calling the effort a success.

I believe it is imperative that for planning purposes and – running the risk of beating a dead horse; namely the centerpiece of all efforts being the visitor – that due consideration be given to what might be the "definition" of the visitor in 1974 when the Navy Yard was closed and the National Park Service entered the scene from that very different type of visitor that exists today in regards to what that visitor expects to see and values as relevant and educationally important.

Yes, there is the Ropewalk and the Chain Forge. These, by themselves, are quite fascinating buildings with a very interesting history, both as standalones, or as part of a wider history of the Navy Yard. However, both buildings are in incredibly poor condition, never mind the fact that a) the actual buildings are owned by the BRA, b) the contents of the two buildings belong to the NPS, and c) the BRA cannot do anything with the buildings without the approval of the NPS.

In my opinion, having listened to the others, as well as read the various reports and opinions going back quite a few years, a decision to renovate these two buildings, put their content and stories into a format of professional interpretation and thus include them as part of the visitor's entire experience in learning about the Charlestown Navy Yard would not only be a huge cost upfront – not to mention having the responsibility of long-term maintenance – but most importantly, the effort, I believe, would not be seen as “value-added” by the visiting public.

Then there would be the important issue whether visitors would travel the extra distance to see them (no matter what marketing efforts were used) from what is now the public part of the Navy Yard. Would their specific subjects be such an attraction to justify the costs to undertake this effort? In all likelihood, I doubt it. (On an aside but one that became apparent to me, the fact that the question regarding both these buildings and their futures has been an on-again, off-again topic for a quarter of a century makes me believe that the “view would not be worth the climb.”

I would suggest making some comparative studies if they have not already been done. I am less familiar with the subject of the Chain Forge and thus cannot think at the moment of a place elsewhere from which to glean comparative information and value as a visitation site. However, the pope-walk at Mystic Seaport has not been a very popular part of the visitors' experience in quite a while. The exhibition there is static and it is not staffed, indicative perhaps of the belief that very few visitors would be served by a staff member. The other place to make a comparison is the rope-walk at the Chatham (England) Dockyard. This entire site, however, should be seen as one that has a larger national story for the UK than what I believe the Charlestown Navy Yard has for the U.S. Still, it might be worthwhile getting information on visitation and whatever survey information that has been compiled.

If these two buildings or any other parts of the Navy Yard (located within the NPS's area or that of the BRA) were used to tell the Industrial history of the site, the same issues would prevail. The cost would be astronomical but more importantly, would they become exhibition successes? I would recommend that to either move ahead with these buildings or put the subject finally to rest, a very serious and professional market survey be done by an outside company on what the visitors would say and conclude regarding the proposed uses of these two buildings. Such a survey would at least provide some outside “justification” for either option.

Regarding the rather confused and hazy relationship between the BNHP and the BRA, I believe that there is more opportunity for mutual collaboration at this time if a decision was actually made regarding the two buildings discussed above. The BRA is an important player, despite the fact that it is a public (or City of Boston) agency, its mission is to re-develop that part of the City (Charlestown) and while it has a mission to serve the citizens of Boston, its intent is to make a profit for the City, both in terms of selling space for residential and commercial usage but also for long-term tax income to the City's coffers.

The NPS's mission is obviously opposite to that of the BRA; it is to serve the American public (taxpayer) and visitors. From the discussions, it seems that the relationship (some thirty years old?) between the BNHP/CNY and the BRA is an "on-off" one. Right now, assuming that I heard correctly, the relationship is now a "non-existent" one; i.e., that there is really no conversation going on, no cultivation by either side to maintain neighborly communications, perhaps because the key players are fairly new and that the economic climate has really not been one whereby one or the other entity feels a need to communicate. It seems to me that the present time is a perfect one to begin communication, whereby there is a chance to build up a cordial relationship and begin at least a dialogue on the rope-walk and the chain-forge which can and should be at the center of any negotiations. This might then lead to other projects or programs that can build on mutual respect and admiration where both sides can see advantages to their respective missions from the other's activities and brand.

A very strong recommendation that might be of great help here to those in charge of the BNHP follow very closely what is happening with Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. Here is a former Army base (very old one and very, very historic) being eliminated as a base (BRAC) and turned over to the National Park Service as well as to other entities for development (City of Hampton and the Commonwealth of Virginia). This seems to me – at least on the surface of things – a remarkably similar duplication of what transpired in 1974 at the Charlestown Navy Yard with respects to the US Navy leaving and the facility being turned over to the NPS and to the City of Boston for development.

USS *Constitution*:

The ship is by far and away the largest draw in terms of people coming to the site. I am also under the impression (gotten hopefully correctly during the discussions) that behind Faneuil Hall, the *Constitution* is the largest draw for people who set out on the “Freedom Trail.”

There was considerable discussion over the two days how the public is terribly confused about the *Constitution*; namely, that she is a piece of American Revolutionary War history rather than in truth a ship built fifteen years after the Revolution and one that saw action in Quasi-War with France, the Barbary States War, and most importantly, the War of 1812.

Certainly, those responsible for interpreting the ship and its history, namely, the US Navy and the USS *Constitution* Museum, are challenged to educate the public and set straight this general misperception. However, here is a golden opportunity, I believe, where “truth does not have to stand in the way of a good story.” As our discussions demonstrated, a very strong case can be made that the *Constitution* – while not actually within the American Revolutionary Period as conveyed by the “Freedom Trail,” nevertheless compliments the Trail’s story about freedom, just like another part of the Trail; namely, the Black Heritage Trail with its fifteen or so pre-Civil War sites compliments and tells the story of “Freedom.”

The USS *Constitution* and its famous engagements and what she ultimately represented and stood for, resonates with freedom during the early Federal period; namely, freedom of the seas, freedom from impressment of sailors by foreign navies, and a sense that the victory achieved by the American Revolution and thus our experiment in republicanism was in fact confirmed and guaranteed by our success in the War of 1812, a conflict which the USS *Constitution*, more than any other icon, symbolizes the success enjoyed by the fledgling United States Navy in that war.

Hence I believe the question is not how the *Constitution* fits into the story of the Navy Yard. The vast majority of visitors come to the site to see the ship. I have very serious doubts whether the US Navy or Federal Government will decide to do anything else with the ship that they are not now doing. As such, it is there to stay and it remains THE major draw for the visitor. My suggestion would be to capitalize on this rather than try and add too much more to what the visitor is “suppose” to learn.

USS *Cassin Young*

This is a very important part of the overall challenge as I saw the purpose of bringing in scholars to assess and give opinions. Several times, I heard conflicting pieces of information about this vessel. I understand that she was built in San Pedro, CA, during World War II for service in the Pacific; that she was taken off active service around 1960 and struck from the Navy's register in 1974, the same year that the Navy Yard at Charlestown was closed, although the ship was not in Boston at that time and came to Charlestown in 1978. The ship is still the property of the U.S. Navy and "on loan" to the National Park Service as a "floating memorial ship."

Several times in the course of the discussions, I heard that the *Cassin Young* is interpreted for its combat role in the Pacific in WWII, even taking kamikaze hits in 1945. Next, I heard that her interpretation program centered on the ship representing the Cold War, and specifically Anti-Submarine Warfare. I guess my question is, which is it? While certainly a case could be made that she was both yet how well could this be fitted into what visitors see of the ship itself and, more importantly for our charge, how does it fit into the entire "story" of the Navy Yard?

During the course of the two days, I paid particular attention to the number and type of visitor that either came on board the ship and walked around – knowing that much of the ship's lower decks are not able to be seen by the touring visitor – and those who looked at it from outside the Dry-dock. In both cases, the audience that visited the ship was predominantly male, older and white. This did not surprise me since this is pretty much the norm regarding visitation of stationary ships of the World War II era. I say this as a Director of the Historic Naval Ships Association and therefore familiar with visitation trends at the various other sites that have naval vessels open to the public.

I was also made to understand – and I do not know if this is actually collaborated by professional surveys or are based on more anecdotal factors like observing what people seem to do – regarding those visiting the *Cassin Young* is that they do so after they first visiting the *Constitution* and thus as an afterthought rather than knowing about and visiting the Navy Yard with the expressed purpose of seeing the *Cassin Young*. I also heard during the discussions that while the *Cassin Young* remains in dry-dock, then the visitation numbers will be better than when she is back in the water and thus presenting or possessing less of a visual attraction to the majority of those coming into the Navy Yard by the main entrance.

All these facets bring up the very important question whether the ship is a real asset to those people visiting the Charlestown Navy Yard and thus are better educated in the site's educational purpose or the ship is more a curiosity, and therefore fits as "something that has been here for a long time and we don't know what else to do with it." I heard one participant in the group say that the *Cassin Young* is really something that is off the table for any discussion. I presume by this that its future is already decided or that elements within the deciding authority do not want it to be a part of the discussion regarding the other items in and around the facility.

My own initial opinion about the presence of the *Cassin Young* at the Charlestown Navy Yard is that it is very much a disconnect with the overall perception held by visitors; namely, they come to the Navy Yard as part of the Freedom Trail experience and more precisely to see the USS *Constitution*. Furthermore, the site – with its buildings and overall visual historical genre being during the late 18th and 19th centuries – the *Cassin Young* is an anachronism to the visitor. Yes, there are some who enjoy visiting it, but I would suggest that those doing so are from the World War II and Cold War generations, the numbers of whom are declining rapidly and that the younger audiences have little or no "connection" with the ship.

While certainly the *Constitution* and *Cassin Young* are ships of the U.S. Navy, the stories are so different, and the general appeal of one vs. the other makes me think that any and all efforts to see real success (and therefore justifying the cost of maintaining and interpreting the *Cassin Young*) in conveying an exciting mission-related return on investment is a far cry from a success.

The Site for Charlestown locals.

One of the general topics of discussion that came up regularly was the fact that the Charlestown Navy Yard had a profound impact on the local history and that many thousands of local residents had a direct connection with the Shipyard over the years it operated, thereby shaping much of the history and culture of the local area. The publications given to us included information, as did the film in the Visitor Center.

While dining in town two nights, I asked some locals if they ever went to the Navy Yard; the general consensus was no, there isn't anything "any more" that is considered worth going for. Apparently, there used to be fireworks from the pier but that no longer takes place. Perhaps

this is owing to 911 and security; perhaps it is for costs. There also used to be something called “Park Day,” a Sunday that was very popular with vendors and booths for arts and crafts, etc.

Additional discussions with the locals included such ideas as an annual chowder fest, Xmas/Holiday events and activities, ethnic festivals, dog-lover shows, etc. These were merely some ideas that would possibly entice locals to see the Navy Yard as a venue to visit. This would be a better “sell” if there was more on local history, thereby adding the chance to get more buy-in from locals and a reason to visit the Yard.

The Medium of the Web:

Something that I emphasized during our meetings frequently and rather adamantly was the necessary attention being given to the Internet as a medium to convey information and to attract audiences. Whatever decisions are made regarding the stories be told at the Charlestown Navy Yard, the use of the Web is crucially important in doing so. The Internet is not a fly-by-night phenomenon. It is the medium that is used consistently by a growing number of people from all demographic groups and ages. It is also a global phenomenon, important as a marketing tool for international visitors coming to Boston and thus to the site.

My experience in the museum world has led me to conclude that not only is this medium the easiest, most cost-effective way to tell exciting stories through digital images, motion pictures, inter-activity, etc., but it is the medium of the future. Who does not today use the Web when seeking information? If this is where the vast majority of people are getting their information, then not having an exciting presence means that opportunity is lost in conveying the mission and stories that the NPS is mandated to tell. Reaching millions and millions of people with solid, accurate and inspiring stories of history is what the NPS should do and is doing, of course.

The traditional method of exhibitions has been (and is, still) through the physical exhibition, whereby two- and three-dimensional objects are used to convey the subject matter. But as such, physical exhibitions are limited by the amount of information and space they can convey and possess. Once an exhibit is up and opened, any errors are nearly impossible to change without a major (and often expensive) impact on the exhibition as a whole. Furthermore,

there has always been a battle of words between curators and exhibit designers; the former wanting more, the latter insisting on less.

Physical exhibitions are increasingly expensive, slow to develop and implement, and up and open to the public on a temporary basis (or in the case of “permanent” exhibitions up for far too long!). Furthermore, they are reaching fewer and fewer people each year, as evidenced by the national trends of visitation at so many history museums, historic houses and sites. Those visitors who do go to sites are of an aging population while the younger ages rely more and more upon the Internet for content and inspiration.

In the virtual exhibition, these problems and issues either do not exist or are far more easily tackled. As much information as there exists can and should be uploaded and so the information that the virtual visitor is seeking is selected by that visitor, whether it is cursory materials, or very complex and detailed. Finally, the virtual exhibition can remain forever; it does not have to come down because it gets physically old and tired. The virtual exhibit can be constantly refreshed, not to mention visitations can be monitored in order to see which parts of the exhibition are working well and which are not. This last part is extremely important and valuable. If what is being conveyed is not showing a positive reaction by the visitor, then it is clear that the subject is not resonating with the public, either because it is not seen as something of value or it is conveyed in a less-than-exciting – and effective – manner

To answer those who say that to put everything on the Web will mean that no one goes to see the real thing, I answer with the example of the Mona Lisa. It has appeared thousands and thousands of times in published and copy form, yet people continue to flock to see it in Paris. A very important consideration regarding the Web is that it serves as the ideal (and very inexpensive) marketing medium as well as one to convey the content and information.

Therefore, if the Internet is how people are getting their information, both in terms of content as well as logistical information as to when a place is open, directions, etc., it seems to me that the National Park Service should lead in this area, given its huge and important charge of educating and enlightening the public to America’s national treasures and histories. More of the NPS’s content online would only enhance the “value-added” concept of the Service by the American public, not to mention prove its value to Congress for the need of future funding.

Conclusion:

Let me conclude by addressing again the charge presented to my colleagues and me. It was the following: “The resources associated with the greater Charlestown Navy Yard represent 200 years of naval and industrial history that post-date the Revolutionary War period.

Charlestown Navy Yard became a part of the plan for Boston National Historical Park only a few years before the park was established in 1975. Although the U.S.S. *Constitution*, berthed in the Charlestown Navy Yard, was added to the *Freedom Trail* in 1974, the Navy Yard itself represents a very different resource and experience in terms of its historic period and its scale.”

The “resources” that represent two centuries of history of the Charlestown Navy Yard are in fact more a truth or reality before 1974 when the Yard closed than what I believe they are now. Despite the BNHP coming into existence the following year, for whatever reasons, what has transpired over the last thirty-five years or so has resulted in most (c.60%?) of the 1974 Navy Yard area now belonging to the Boston Re-Development Authority (BRA) and most of the buildings within that area converted to commercial and residential use purposes. Hence, from the standpoint of a large site, not unlike Colonial Williamsburg or Old Sturbridge Village with everything going to support a common and consistent theme for the visitors’ experience, that is no longer the case for the Charlestown Navy Yard with respects to the Navy Yard’s history and the declared intent of the BNHP in 1975.

When the USS *Constitution* was added to the Freedom Trail in 1974, thus adding to the famous cache that the ship has in the mindset of many Americans, the primary focus of the visitor to the BNHP cite became almost exclusively the ship. To change the perceptions of the visiting public to something different (without, of course, taking anything away from the attractiveness of the *Constitution*) would be a very difficult, costly, and time-consuming effort; an effort, made even more arduous given today’s demographic and psychographic nature of the visiting public.

Following my comments above regarding what the Web and virtual exhibitions can do for NPS sites in general and the BNHP specifically, I am of the belief that a very good history of the entire Navy Yard can be done through the use of exciting stories, artifacts, film clippings, including how so many of the buildings no longer part of the Yard have in fact become superb examples of re-purposing industrial architecture. This would, I believe, go a long and successful way to accomplishing the mission of the National Park Service in a format that is becoming

increasingly the way Americans are not only getting their information but actually insisting on getting it this way. From the ever-present situation of reduced budgets, this is not only the cost effective way but for mission purposes the best way.