



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RESOLUTION NO. 110398

Introduced May 12, 2011

Councilmembers Tasco and Reynolds Brown

RESOLUTION

Honoring the American Women's Heritage Society on its 25th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, In November 1986, the American Women's Heritage Society ("Heritage Society") started as an initiative to save Belmont Mansion, which at that time was not being used and was at risk of being demolished, and, through the leadership of Audrey Johnson Thornton, the Heritage Society reclaimed Belmont Mansion and restored it to its former beauty and glory; and

WHEREAS, During the Mansion's early restoration, a Heritage Society historian discovered its place in history and learned that the Belmont Mansion served as a station in the Underground Railroad and, consequently, the Heritage Society was the first organization to use the Mansion as a museum that was open to the public; and

WHEREAS, Through additional research sponsored by the Heritage Society, the importance of the role of Belmont Mansion in the Underground Railroad was learned and The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom recognized the Mansion as a significant place for interpreting the history of the Underground Railroad and The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center named it the first of its Freedom Stations in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Through Ms. Thornton's leadership of the Heritage Society, Belmont Mansion became one of the most important buildings in Fairmount Park and, over a fifteen year period with funding from the City of Philadelphia, National Endowment for the Humanities Save America's Treasures Program, Pew Charitable Trusts, and William Penn Foundation, the Mansion was restored and reopened to the public in 2007 as the Underground Railroad Museum; and

City of Philadelphia

RESOLUTION NO. 110398 continued

WHEREAS, Visitors from around the world view the exhibits and attend the educational programs at the Belmont Mansion and learn about the Underground Railroad, Abolitionist Movement, and the story of the people who live and worked at the Mansion, their commitment to the idea of freedom for themselves and others, and their belief that one person can make a difference for a cause; and

WHEREAS, The Heritage Society has also played an important role in the education of Philadelphia's youth and has adopted the School of the Future and the Global Leadership Academy Charter School and students from these schools are trained to become tour guides; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the Heritage Society is to preserve, restore, collect, and educate the public about the history of Belmont Mansion, its use in the Underground Railroad, the role of the original owners – the Peters Family – in the Abolitionist Movement, and the connections between the Mansion and African American heritage and history in Philadelphia. As a non profit organization that raises money from membership dues, admission ticket sales, rentals, grants, and donations, the Heritage Society is the only African American women's organization to serve as the operator and custodian of an historic mansion in Fairmount Park; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the American Women's Heritage Society on its 25th Anniversary.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to representatives of the American Women's Heritage Society as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.