

President's Message

By Carolyn Curtiss



'Tis that time of year again. A time for wonderment, culinary indulgences, shopping and gatherings of friends and loved ones.

With a certain determination I set about the task of decorating the whole house

which involves ladders, unwrapping all the ornaments and patiently weaving all those white lights around my vintage white and silver Christmas tree.

Colorful mercury glass and glittery metal building ornaments are strategically placed. I'm a sentimental sap; my ornaments have memories of happy travels attached to them.



With a New Year approaching it's also new calendar season.



It brings me joy to announce September 6 - 8th will be the SBCS convention dates. The convention will be the weekend following Labor Day in Los Angeles. It will be concurrent with the fabulous Rose Bowl flea market dates.

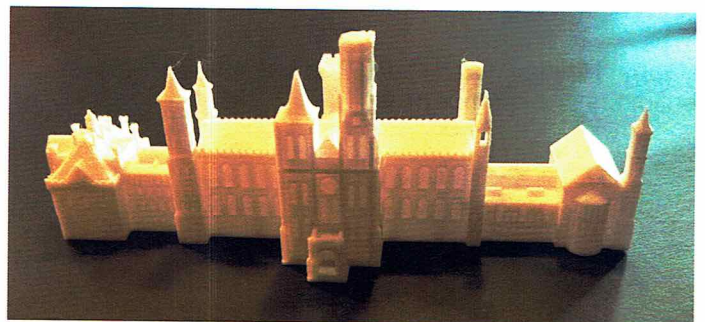
September is more comfortable than the summer months and more affordable. Plus, in all honesty it gives me more time to plan all the details. Selfishly as a resident of the frozen tundra I had hoped for a midwinter date but proved to be to challenging plus that's the rainy season.

There's no shortage of things to see and do. If you are lucky enough to take a few extra vacation days you could engineer one helluva fun entry into Fall by exploring Tinseltown, the fantastic beaches, a vibrant culinary scene and a myriad of museums.

Speaking of museums, one of my favorites in LA; the Getty museums has a must watch video on Frank Gehry sculpturing the Disney Hall. Fascinating. <https://gehry.getty.edu/>. He creates buildings that toy with lighting conditions. If you have never seen a Gehry you must go to Downtown LA and experience it. Across the street is another LA landmark: City Hall. Whether you know it from the "Dagnet" series or it's heavy Microcosms homage it's another great place to see.

With endless possibilities my next project is choosing a commemorative building. It's almost overwhelming but I'll get it done. The challenge is to find something not already on your shelves and to do it legally.

Studying what it takes to make a replica I am blown away by the approach and progress of new member, Tom Babinszki, is taking to bring our common passion of building collecting to life. As a sighted person I had taken architecture at face value. With his 3D printed models he is exploring the tactile nature; the "bones" of the building. I had never thought of that; to actually feel the art in this interactive way. He recently posted on the Souvenir Building Collectors Society's Facebook page several examples he has made. Personally the Smithsonian model is very intriguing.



Tom Babinszki's 3-D printed Smithsonian Castle, Washington, DC

In closing whatever you do this Holiday Season I hope it brings you joy. And keep the dates of September 6-8, 2024 in mind.

Letter from the Editor

By Elizabeth Lawson

The high anticipation of many SBCSers has been for an exhibit at the National Building Museum of the David Weingarten Collection of souvenir buildings. Our dreams have been realized!

'Mini Memories' is open for visits.

The leading story of this issue is a summary of the experience some of us had at the NBM on October 27th. This amazing exhibit is expected to be available for the next two years giving all SBCSers time to plan for their own personal pilgrimages.

As a society the SBCS has a diverse membership and it is our honor and privilege to welcome Tom Babinszki. He brings a new and different way to experience souvenir buildings and you will appreciate his personal story. And by the way several of us have already expressed interest in acquiring his 3-D printed Smithsonian Castle building. There may be a way to do so – stay tuned,

My procrastination in writing the profile about Perry Benson seems to have been destined for this issue. Among Perry's collections are postcards - a common memory souvenir which seems to be almost extinct in this day and age of a quick cell phone pix greeting from some exotic place. Since learning of his post card collection I try to send him a post card from my travels. The post card of Eudora Welty's house in Jackson, MS (SBCS 2021 Jackson) was a true 'first' for his collection!

This issue recognizes the loss of two Founding SBCS members – Jimmy Tyree and, belatedly, Batty Hoffman. We are a richer group because of their membership and past participation.

The article from the Statue of Liberty Club is a fun read. SOLers have the challenge, and fun, of finding the many iterations of their iconic statue. It is a never ending scavenger hunt.

Happy Holidays and best wishes for many souvenir buildings and memories in 2024!

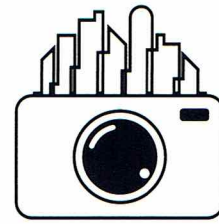


Photo Credits:

**Tom Babinszki, Carolyn Curtiss, Perry Benson,
Joe Kopitz, Elizabeth Lawson, Don Semler,
Terry Vanderplas**



Carolyn Curtiss
St. Paul, MN
lechipster@aol.com
PRESIDENT

Mark Fine
Toronto, Ontario
markfine2020@gmail.com
VICE PRESIDENT

Katharine Isbell
Rockwall, TX
kaisbell@yahoo.com
TREASURER

Elizabeth Lawson
Charlottesville, VA
ewl2m@virginia.edu
EDITOR

Joe Kopitz
Brooklyn, NY
joekopitz@yahoo.com
MEMBERSHIP

Tarrun Verma
Corona, NY
Tarunverma82@gmail.com
WEBMASTER

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The Souvenir Building Collector is published three times a year, with additional notices as applicable. The subscription rate is \$35 a year. The rate includes a one year membership in the Souvenir Building Collectors Society. Three free 50 word ads in the Classified Section, access to the marketplace on the SBCS website, and invitations to all conventions and members only events. Make check payable to Souvenir Building Collectors Society. Mail to Katharine Isbell, Treasurer, the SBCS, 809 Jackson St., Rockwall, TX 75087.

www.sbc society.com

CORRECTION: The name of Steve Backiel was omitted from the list of SBCS Buffalo 24 attendees in Vol 30 #2 – even though a picture of his 'haul' from the convention was included.

MINI MEMORIES

SOUVENIR BUILDINGS FROM THE DAVID WEINGARTEN COLLECTION

AT THE NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM

“Perfect!” The first word of David Weingarten’s opening remarks at the National Building Museum’s Members Preview Reception for ‘Mini Memories’ Souvenir Buildings from the David Weingarten Collection on 27 October 2023. Weingarten was quoting the reaction of a nationally known architecture critic, *presumably Paul Goldberger*, upon hearing of the Weingarten souvenir building collection going to the NBM.



David Weingarten

Weingarten discussed his interest in souvenir buildings, and his well known, among souvenir building collectors, story of his ‘first’ souvenir – the Speyer Cathedral. He ended his remarks with his assessment of the new exhibit as ‘perfect!’

Attending the reception were 12 SBCSers; seven current members, two spouses, and three former members. A nice turnout on the short notice for the event. It is to be noted that all of the SBCSers, except the spouses, ‘hit,’ the NBM gift shop!

Earlier in the day the NBM gave new SBCS member Tom Babinszki a personal tour of the NBM Archives where he was able to handle a selection of souvenir buildings from the collection. (see *Tom’s following article*). Tom’s tour ended outside the gift shop where there was a display of two chess boards. One with the chess pieces and buildings in New York City versus buildings in Chicago and the second set had world famous buildings.



NBM chess sets

**Tom Babinszki
with chess piece**



The day started with an interview with Caitlin Bristol, the NBM curator and ‘Mini Memories’ exhibit designer in the exhibit gallery. The National Building Museum’s purpose is to “inspire curiosity about the world we design and build” and to make people think differently about the built environment. Caitlin spoke about how the built environment influences our memory and asks how do our perceptions of location/where we are influence who we are. Frequently we ‘mark’ that location with a souvenir.

She told Weingarten’s Speyer Cathedral story but then – noted when asked - that a Speyer Cathedral was not in the exhibit. Several Speyers are part of the 3000+ Weingarten Collection but the ‘first’ Speyer is not identified within the collection inventory, a curious oversight. There are 409 souvenir buildings in the exhibit (13% of the collection) and it took Caitlin 3 months to design.



**Caitlin Bristol,
NBM curator &
‘Mini Memories’
exhibit designer**

As you enter the gallery, the walls on the left and right are a series of niches. Starting on the left, there is a 5 minute video showing the casting of a souvenir building from one of the 100+ souvenir building molds in the collection. And – the newly cast souvenir building is part of the exhibit.

**Newly cast
‘Parthenon’;
note that it is not
a true replica**



The exhibit wall niches on the left illustrate the many materials from which souvenir buildings are made and how souvenir buildings have a real use.

continued on page 4



"Mini Memories" gallery



Desk Calendar

The wall niches on the right illustrate souvenir buildings from 49 states (it is up to the exhibit visitor to find the missing state).

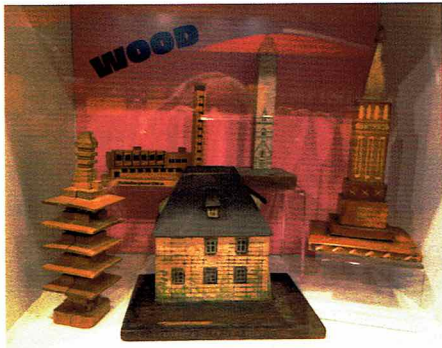
Pewter



New York



Wood



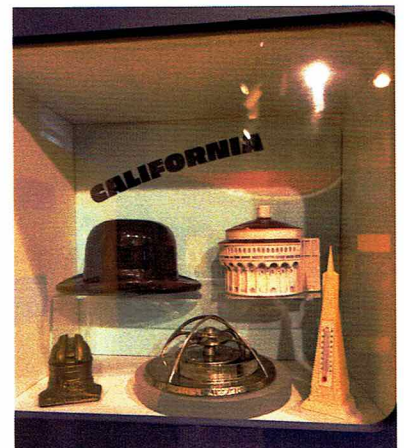
Tennessee



Tin



California



Food & Beverage



continued on page 5

Mini Memories... continued

The glass topped tables in the center of the gallery contained a variety of souvenir buildings which were difficult to photograph due to the glass reflection.



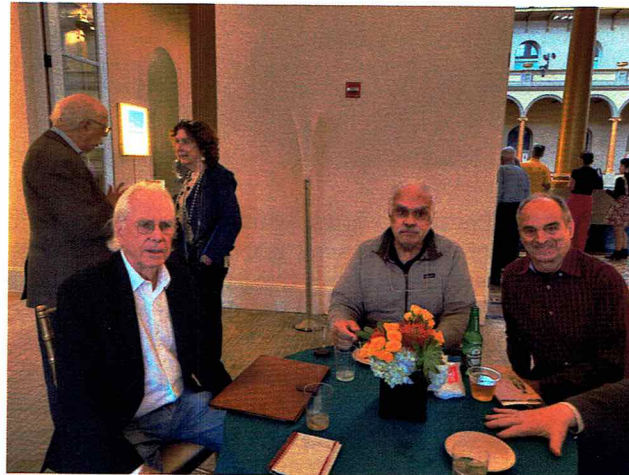
Shakespeare's Birthplace



Margaret Majua & Don Semler

Finally there is a QR code on the wall that, when activated, takes you to the NBM's archival inventory of the David Weingarten Collection

The reason this exhibit speaks to all who see it is because it is an amazing overview of souvenir building collecting. The two niched walls are souvenir building collecting 101 while the 'island' tables are souvenir building collecting 201 and 301. And to complete these lessons – the NBM's own souvenir building of the NBM/Pension Building (wood with a paper covering) is graduate level collecting!



The Philadelphia Breakfast Club: in foreground – John Blatteau, Vince Maiello, Perry Benson; in background Paul Hirshorn with Lucia Howard

**Upper left:
The National Building Museum when it was the Pension Building - and is not a part of the Weingarten Collection**



Some SBCS memories of the NBM Members Preview Reception:



Vickie & Howie Gelbtuch, David Rogowski

**Don Semler,
Tom Babinski,
Joe Kopitz,
Elizabeth Lawson,
Michael Bednar**



The best part of this fantastic day occurred at the Members Preview Reception. In a conversation with Caitlin Bristol she stated that she knew nothing about souvenir buildings when she set out to plan and design the exhibit. "I don't know which buildings are rare, which are highly collectible or which are highly sought after." Our immediate response was "That is why the exhibit is so great!"

Caitlin came to the exhibit challenge with no biases or preconceived ideas but with a completely open mind. The resultant exhibit educates all who see it in the most personal of ways – through our memories. And reminding all of us that the meaning of souvenir is French for memory. PERFECT!

The meaning of miniature buildings for a blind person

By Tom Babinszki

I was born completely blind in Hungary and moved to the United States when I was 23. The travel bug bit me when I was a kid. I was always fascinated by languages, cultures and history. The only way for me to experience anything was through touch. I had the opportunity to travel to over 30 countries and hundreds of cities. But getting there is not always equal to fully experiencing it. I went to many museums, where I was told that the rule is, don't touch. I went to many places where people were marveling of what they can see, and all I felt was the wind blowing. I stood at the Statue of Liberty, at the Christ the Redeemer, at the volcanos of Iceland or Hawaii, at the foot of mountains and at the steps of churches and temples. And only the sounds, and the smells were different. This alone was unforgettable, but I always wonder "what am I missing?"

I went to many historic places, where I was allowed to touch, but through touch, I was not able to experience the world. The most interesting things were always "out of reach". This is why each time I went to a new place, I started at the gift shops and tried to buy miniature models of buildings, skylines, or just anything I could feel what I otherwise wouldn't be able to touch.

You probably heard the parable of the blind men and the elephant. Life always reminded me of this. I never knew what I didn't know, this is why I was fascinated by the miniature models of buildings, or tactile maps of cities. Often I found that it was very different from how I imagined it based on descriptions.

For me, a building was a number of steps I had to walk up to get to the door. The handle of the door, the experience of opening it, heavy or light. The airflow that greeted me, the sounds I heard when I entered. The echo, the lack of, people walking around, talking, or maybe in a church, the silence, or some beautiful music. But after being in so many buildings, one experience started to resemble another one. To me it was the same, but for my sighted companions, it was always a different experience. I just felt that there must be a way for me to get more out of it after I traveled thousands of miles and crossed oceans to be there.

One day I was searching and came across the Souvenir Building Collectors Society. I knew that people collect all kinds of things, after all, I am a coin collector since I was six. It never crossed my mind that one could collect

souvenir buildings. And then new doors were opened for me. I learned so much about what all is out there, and the models of buildings can just be an arm reach from me. Ok, you have to get to those buildings. But it was no longer the touch of the walls and the sound of tourists walking around. There could be a way to learn much more about the world that surrounds me.

After reading some books and the conversation on the SBCS Facebook group, I had another idea. It is the same idea that I had 25 years ago when I started working in accessibility. If I can have access to something, why couldn't all blind people have the same? That's when I had the idea to share this with others. I thought, why not hand tangible miniature buildings to blind people? After all, when a sighted person wants to know what the Smithsonian Castle looks like, they can just go online, look for a picture, and walk away with knowledge. For a blind person, it is completely different. They can read descriptions, which are not created for blind people, thus the most interesting things are in the picture and not the text. They can travel all the way to Washington DC, walk around the building, touch the walls and walk away with the lack of knowledge they came with.

So, I created a new project. I found a designer who can create 3d models of buildings and I could print them out and distribute them to blind people. These are not replica buildings in its traditional sense. I did not replicate the look, only the shape. These are small white plastic buildings that one can balance on the palm of their hand. But these are almost the equivalent of a picture for a sighted person, as much as the lack of sight allows. They are as detailed as fingers could touch. When a feature is too small to feel, we did not include it.

I hope that now, when blind people plan their travel, they could hold my buildings, and be able to ask better questions about the location they visit, they can have a more complex imagination of where they are, or if nothing else, return home with a small model that they can treasure as a memory, just like sighted people can look at their photos and remember the great times.

In the meantime, I am looking forward to learning more from SBCS members, and using the wealth of knowledge they have accumulated in newsletters and online conversations.

PS: While you are there

After you visit **Mini Memories** at the National Building Museum be sure to also see **Brick City**. This is an amazing Lego exhibit of buildings from around the world. And, there is a Lego 'build' of the exhibit sponsor's product – a General Shale Brick!



St Basil's, Moscow

An Homage to Jimmy Tyree



While the SBCS has recently lost Founding Member Jimmy Tyree his spirit is still with us as is that of his beloved late wife Judy.

Jimmy and Judy attended almost all of the SBCS conventions, were always available to help with whatever was needed, and were long time enablers in searching and finding long sought souvenir buildings.

Jimmy and Judy were diligent and experienced 'pickers' in helping others to grow their souvenir building collections. They only started to collect souvenir buildings for themselves after their longtime friends and poker pals Jay Hoffman and David Kelly decided to start collecting. It did not take long for Jimmy and Judy to form a sizeable and remarkable collection. Best of all, they were always open to visitors to come see their collection for which many of us SBCSers had the pleasure.

Jimmy was a joker or as Jay Hoffman described him - 'quite fresh in what he would say'. My favorite 'Jimmy' story goes back to 2015. I was in San Francisco and called the Tyrees to set up my visit to see their collection and interview them the next day. Jimmy answered the phone and the conversation went:

"Hi Jimmy, this is Elizabeth. Is Judy there?"

"I'm going to kick your butt!"

At which point Judy took the phone while I was still in a state of wonderment about Jimmy's greeting. Well, I learned from David Kelly that Jimmy's not so welcoming greeting was because Judy had him DUSTING, for three days, ALL of their souvenir buildings prior to my visit!



Some of the 'dusted' Tyree Collection

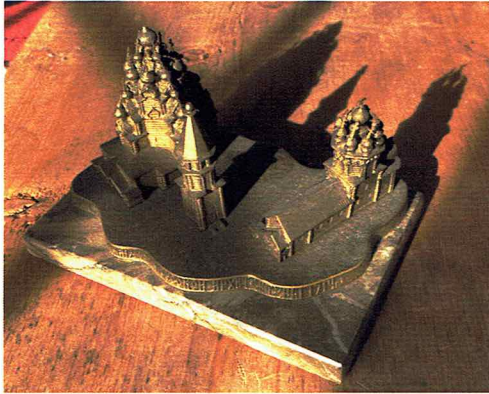
This was Jimmy and I smile as I write this. His smiling and friendly self will be missed.

(see SBCS Newsletter Vol 24 #2 Summer 2017 for the Tyree profile)

Profile: Perry Benson

Some SBCSers are blessed with friends and enablers who while traveling find, buy, and bring back as a gift unusual and interesting souvenir buildings. Perry Benson is the recent recipient of a 'find': The Kizhi Pogost in Russia. The two wooden churches and bell tower are from the late 17th century and are a rare 'find' in the souvenir building world.

**Kizhi Pogost,
Russia**



Alas, this beauty was not in Perry's souvenir building collection in 2020 when the interview for this profile took place on Friday 13 March 2020. At that time our life as we knew it had been cancelled – the Pandemic had started and our world was closing down.

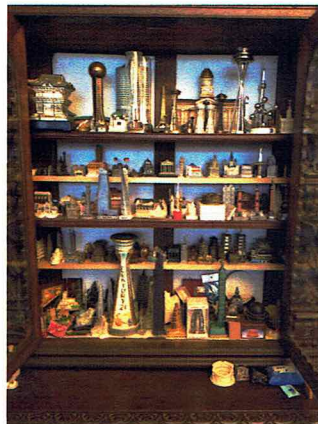
This SBCS newsletter issue is the right time – at last – to read about Perry and his collection of which he has more than one.

To begin this story: Perry joined in 1985 three friends (Paul Hirshorn, John Blatteau, and Vince Maiello) who meet for breakfast every Friday morning in Center City Philadelphia. The 'Breakfast Club' had been meeting for several years before Perry joined. It is still going and on Friday 27 October 2023 rather than meet for breakfast the four members 'met' and went to Washington DC to attend the NBM Members Preview of 'Mini Memories'.

All four are architects, collect souvenir buildings, and are or have been members of the SBCS. When traveling, or being in any gift shop, if an interesting or unusual souvenir building is sighted four are purchased – one for each Breakfast Club member. A built-in enablers club! *(note that the collections of all four were visited at the 2005 SBCS Philadelphia convention)*

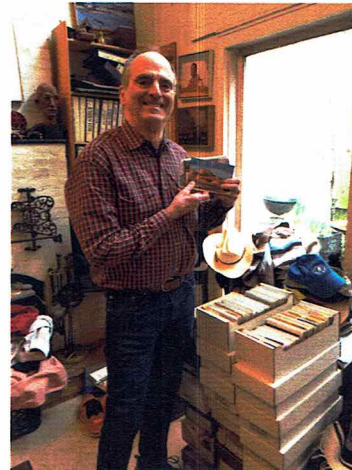
A 'taste' of Perry's collections:

**A cabinet of
souvenir buildings–
no particular order**



**A table of
buildings &
monuments**

**Souvenir
buildings and
white boxes of
post cards**



**Perry with another
collection – post cards
in archival boxes**

Perry is a serious biker. He has biked thousands of miles all over the USA. He does annual rides to raise money for cancer research. And, always, collects buildings and post cards along the way. A true twofer.

**Three of
Perry's
bikes**



continued on page 9



Then there is the train collection.

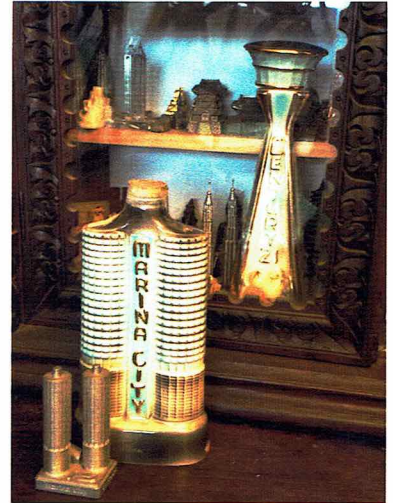


Multiples from Alberobello, Italy – note the metal version – difficult to find

Another twofer – trains and souvenir buildings



Marina City, Chicago as a decanter alongside the InFocusTech metal version



One of the editorial reasons/excuses for the delay in this profile was the need for 'one' more photograph' missed in 2020. That photo was of the 1876 Centennial glass replica of Memorial Hall. This particular souvenir is considered by many to be the first mass produced souvenir building in the USA. Many SBCSers have a copy in their collections but Perry's has a very special provenance: InfocusTech 'borrowed' it to make the mold for a metal version. A souvenir from almost 150 years ago, still with important memories.

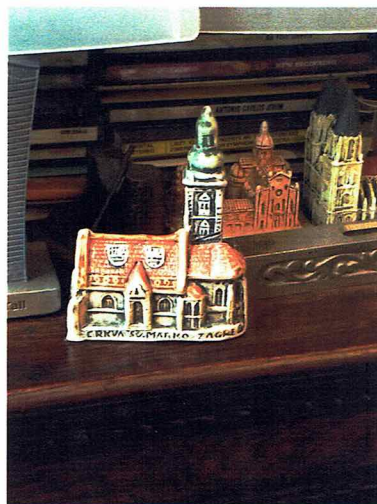


A Benson favorite – the US Capitol with a Shiner's cap



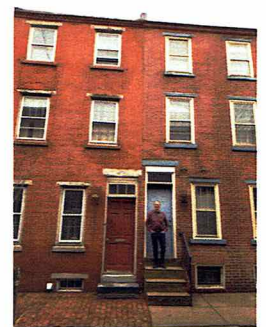
Memorial Hall, Philadelphia, PA

Church of St Mark, Zagreb, Croatia



While not a collection yet (you need three to fit the collection definition) Perry has TWO houses to 'house' his collections. We should all be so fortunate!

Perry Benson in front of his two Philadelphia rowhouses



Barry Hoffman – An Appreciation

Founding SBCS member Barry Hoffman, of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, died September 18, 2022.

A prominent real estate investor and developer in the Boston area, Barry served as Commissioner on the Back Bay Architectural Committee. With his business partner Lester Grant, they developed the Grant-Hoffman building in 1988. Dupliform Castings created a cold cast bronze model of the building which was used as a “deal toy” to give to various partners in the project and was not made for sale to the general public.



**Grant Hoffman Building,
Boston, MA**

In what would become a passion for him, Barry became the Honorary Consul General of Pakistan in 1976 and received the Star of the Great Leader (S.Q.A) decoration. In this capacity he often bestowed to visiting dignitaries and others an official presentation gift - an 11” tall brass replica of the Pakistan Monument Minaret.

Pakistan Monument Minaret

Many years ago, Barry donated his entire souvenir building collection to the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA). The CCA has made the collection available with on-line access. You can find all items from the Hoffman Collection by searching the online search tool with the keywords “Hoffman Collection”. Thank you Barry for contributing a research resource for all souvenir building collectors.



CALIFORNIA

Here we come

6-8 September 2024

Statue Of Liberty Club

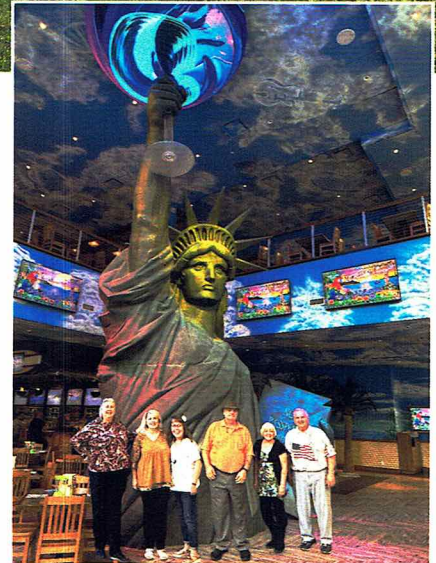
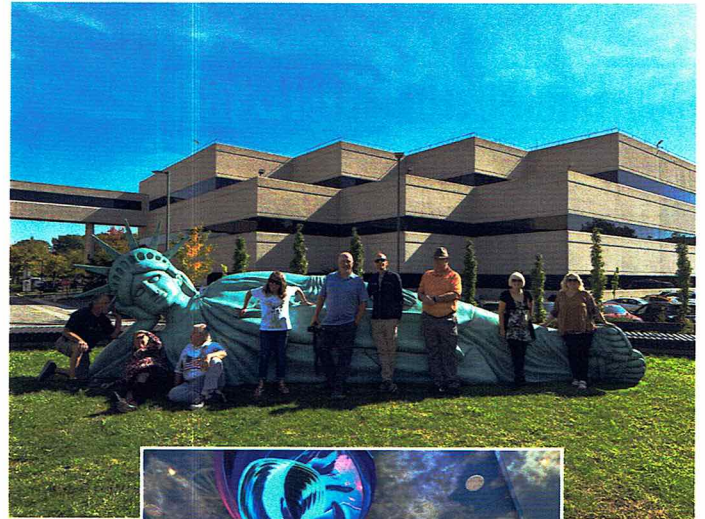
The Statue of Liberty Club conducted its biennial meeting in New York City on October 5-6. 10 members/guests were able to visit Lady Liberty on Liberty Island, the central activity of every NYC meeting.

We 'found' a Reclining Liberty' on Staten Island and had fun, literally hanging on the work of Sculptor Zaq Landsberg.

Some of the attendees visited the Times Square attraction, Margaritaville.

Then some visited RISENY, an interesting history of the many industries that have NYC in their histories, such as subways, skyscrapers, financial services and TV. This attraction has a 4D ride-on-a-bench experience that is exhilarating. Others also took advantage of Broadway musicals, always an extra when in Manhattan.

Future meetings were set for Reno, NV in 2025 and NYC in 2026 for Liberty's 140th Dedication Anniversary ~ sometimes called Liberty's Birthday. For more information, check out our website at: <https://www.statueoflibertyclub.com/>





1201 Jefferson St.
Charlottesville VA 22902
www.sbcsocty.com

*Happy Holidays
and best wishes
for many
souvenir buildings and
memories in 2024!*