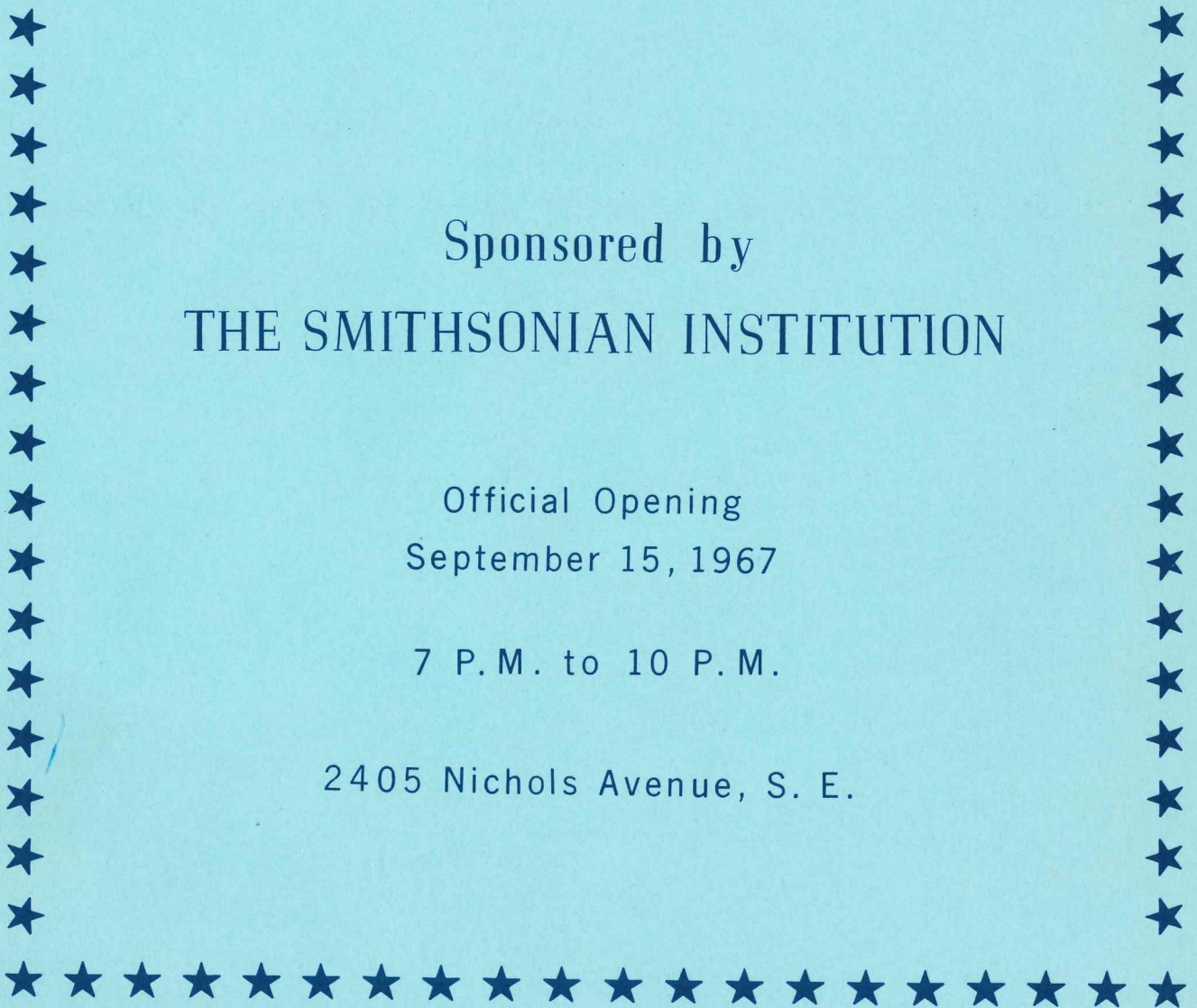




Dedication and Opening of the

Anacostia Neighborhood Museum



Sponsored by

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Official Opening

September 15, 1967

7 P.M. to 10 P.M.

2405 Nichols Avenue, S. E.



Museum Staff

John Kinard, Director
Miss Zora Martin
Edgar Tyler
William Wilson

Special Assistants

James Mayo
Benjamin Davis
Balcha Fellows
Esther Johnson
Ruth Johnson
Helen Williams

Consultants

Charles Blitzer, Director of Education and
Training of the Smithsonian Institution
Caryl Marsh, Psychological Consultant, D.C.
Recreation Department and the Smithsonian Institution



NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Micheal Williams
Booker T. Wilson
Percy Wilson
Lillian Wright

Anacostia Neighborhood Museum

The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, a completely new enterprise, is the result of a close collaboration between residents of Southeast Washington and the Smithsonian Institution. For some time, Secretary S. Dillon Ripley has been exploring ways to make the Smithsonian's vast storehouse of knowledge easily accessible to all people.

Like community groups all over the United States, citizens in the Southeast-Anacostia area of Washington have been working to make their neighborhood a more attractive place in which to live and rear children. Among the problems they faced are unemployment, racial discrimination, exploding population, deteriorating public housing developments, and inadequate schools and recreation facilities.

In November 1966, Washington newspapers carried an account of Mr. Ripley's remarks to museum directors at a meeting in Aspen, Colorado. Mr. Ripley told his audience to try taking their museums to the people. He suggested they rent buildings in low-income neighborhoods and install exhibits that could be touched and operated. He noted that many people learn more through touching and handling than through reading. Furthermore, the close study of objects can awaken skills and creative drives dormant in all of us.

Local community leaders in Anacostia considered Southeast Washington an excellent area to experiment with a neighborhood museum. They also thought that the old Carver Theatre at Nichols Avenue and Talbert Road was an ideal location for exhibits and related activities. In January 1967, community leaders met informally with Smithsonian representatives and enthusiastically offered to cooperate in creating an experimental neighborhood museum in Southeast Washington.

With the help of the Greater Anacostia Peoples, Inc., an advisory council was formed for the neighborhood museum. The council represents all segments of the local community: civic and youth groups, tenant councils, schools, recreation programs, the police, business and professional organizations, the clergy, and local fraternal groups. Members of the advisory council and Smithsonian staff, eager to see their ideas become reality, met often during the winter and spring of 1967. After much consideration a name was chosen for the new museum, the first set of exhibits was selected, and the search began for a director.

We were fortunate to obtain John Kinard as the Director. Born and reared in Southeast Washington, with a degree in sociology and history, and a deep interest in religion and philosophy, John Kinard has already participated in a wide range of self-help programs for young people in Africa and in the United States. He has worked as an organizer and Neighborhood Youth Corps counselor in Southeast Washington, and for the past year has been a program analyst for the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Thanks to generous gifts from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation of Washington, and the Anne S. Richardson Fund of Connecticut, funds were available to rent the Carver Theater and begin its renovation. The advisory council urged that as much as possible of the preparatory work on the building and the exhibits be done by neighborhood people, and the local teenagers were impatient to get going.

Since 1 July, 2405 Nichols Avenue S.E. has been a beehive of activity. Under the talented guidance of the Smithsonian exhibits department, beginners and professionals of all ages have been at work scraping, plastering, painting, laying new floor, making curtains and planting the outdoor exhibit area. Much help came from the Trail Blazer Program, an experimental work-recreation-beautification program for youths, administered by the D.C. Recreation Department, and from other teenagers in the Neighborhood Youth Corps and Work Scholarship programs. With the installation of the first exhibits, the neighborhood museum came alive. Sub-committees of the advisory council together with Smithsonian staff members made plans and arrangements for the formal opening.

The advisory council is already planning for the future and considering applied science exhibits that demonstrate modern technology, historical exhibits on the Negro's role in the United States, and a broad historical survey of the development and goals of the various civil rights organizations.

This formal opening of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum is an exciting human event. The development of the Museum programs may well add an important new dimension to our understanding of how man learns about his world and of how museums may increase their role in the world of today and tomorrow.

Caryl Marsh

September 1967

The Museum
takes this opportunity to extend
heartfelt thanks to
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
Mr. Lucian B. Platt
The Anne S. Richardson Fund
for their generous donations