Two high-profile historic sites combine to create a dynamic new cultural resource offering programs, activations and exhibits to ignite a conversation around democracy

BOSTON – January 7, 2020 – Today the Bostonian Society and the Old South Association of Boston formally announced the completion of a merger between the two organizations, creating a dynamic new cultural resource unlike any other in our country. Revolutionary Spaces will steward Boston’s Old State House and Old South Meeting House, creating a single integrated experience that links the most fundamental debates of the Revolutionary era to the issues of the current day.

“No pair of sites in the United States captures the creative tension between popular and elite politics in a single visitor experience like these do. Even as they transport visitors to a different time in our nation’s history, they can help us to see our own experience as part of a democratic society today in a new light,” said Nathaniel Sheidley, former Executive Director of the Bostonian Society, now CEO and President of Revolutionary Spaces.

Through a mix of programming at these two iconic historic sites, Revolutionary Spaces will capture the fullness of the fundamental and still-unresolved debates that define who we are as American people. Revolutionary Spaces plans to update interpretative exhibits at the Old State House and Old South Meeting House, build bridges with local communities to expand engagement with diverse audiences, and elevate the standard of care for its physical spaces. Incorporating immersive elements and contemporary forms of storytelling, programs will use the rich history embodied in the buildings to facilitate a fresh understanding of democracy and inspire audiences to address issues that matter to them today in ways that are civil and inclusive.

Through collaborations with a diverse group of stakeholders, Revolutionary Spaces will welcome all people – regardless of background – to participate in the making of meaning around history.

“The desire to reach new audiences was a major factor in our decision to merge two healthy, sustainable organizations,” said Sheidley. “We want to inspire and engage people from all backgrounds to visit both buildings and will work hard to ensure that everyone can see themselves in the stories they encounter in our spaces.”

Together, the Old State House and Old South Meeting House, both high profile stops on the Freedom Trail, currently draw approximately 200,000 visitors annually. Both
museums host a variety of historic exhibits and programming, as well as educational events geared toward schoolchildren. The planned 2020 programming slate includes an exhibit on the legacy of Boston Massacre participant Crispus Attucks and companion facilitated dialogues, a public art installation tied to the 250th anniversary of the Boston Massacre, and a revival of the critically acclaimed theater production *Blood on the Snow*.

“We want the local population to understand how Boston’s historic places can be more than just physical manifestations of our past,” said Martha McNamara, co-chair of the Revolutionary Spaces board of governors. “We still see the spirit of the Revolution every day, in our contemporary debates about what democracy means for ordinary people...we want to bring that energy and leadership toward civic engagement back into these buildings.”

Revolutionary Spaces is led by a board of directors that includes representatives from both of the founding organizations, along with six new board members previously unaffiliated with either organization. Revolutionary Spaces also benefits from a core of engaged supporters who are committed to using these historic resources as a platform to explore difficult historical subjects and leverage the power of place to frame important conversations about the present.

“Individually, these organizations were strong, but this decision brings an exciting opportunity to combine our existing resources, increase our visibility and base of support, and have a much greater impact than we did before,” said Carl Sciortino, member of the Revolutionary Spaces board of governors. “We encourage Bostonians to keep an eye out for great programming, exhibits, and opportunities to learn and participate in experiential activities in the coming months.”

With a combined staff of more than 25 professionals, Revolutionary Spaces will benefit from their depth of expertise in facilities, exhibit curation, education, programming and public engagement across both sites. Revolutionary Spaces expects to grow its staff over time, particularly to support expanded programming. By maximizing existing staff and adding new resources, Revolutionary Spaces will increase the volume and quality of programs that excites imagination and inspires a sense of belonging.

For updates, visit RevolutionarySpaces.org.

**About Revolutionary Spaces**

Revolutionary Spaces stewards the historic Old South Meeting House and Old State House as landmarks, museums, and gathering spaces for the open exchange of ideas and the continuing practice of democracy. Viewing history as a powerful tool for today,
Revolutionary Spaces brings people together to explore the American struggle to create and sustain a free society.

**About the Old State House**

The 1713 Old State House served as the seat of government for the province of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary era. Today, it is a museum and historic site offering tours, exhibits, and public programs exploring Boston’s Revolutionary-era history.

**About the Old South Meeting House**

The 1729 Old South Meeting House was a Congregational church and the largest gathering place for popular politics in Revolutionary Boston. Today it is a busy museum, treasured landmark, and active center for civic dialogue and free expression.

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