

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

February 4, 2009 - Letters to the Editor (about the Independence Visitor Center)

## Respect History<sup>1</sup>

You sing the praises of Bill Moore, exiting CEO of the Independence Visitor Center Corp.<sup>2</sup>, in an editorial (“Helping Philadelphia visitors,” Saturday). Allow this park ranger’s dissenting view.

In the past 10 years, Moore turned the sacred ground of the birthplace of our nation [Independence National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service] into a circus by allowing anyone and everyone to sell his wares in any way he pleased, as long as he paid a price. On any given day, one might see at the Independence Visitor Center scantily clad women advertising beer, or bank employees handing out trinkets. Imagine my surprise upon walking into the East Wing to do a tour of Independence Hall and having the place wall-to-wall with balloons for a bank!

There was a time when the story of the founding of the nation was treated with respect. Let’s hope that returns.

Bill Caughlan [National Park Service Ranger, Independence National Historical Park]  
Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania

**Note: Below is the entire text of the Letter to the Editor which provides an even more detailed critique of the Independence Visitor Center as posted by National Park Service Ranger, Bill Caughlan:**

“In its editorial pages, the Philadelphia Inquirer sings the praises of exiting CEO of the Independence Visitor Center Corporation, Bill Moore. Allow this park ranger’s dissenting view: In the past 10 years Mr. Moore turned the sacred ground of the birthplace of our nation into a circus; by allowing anyone and everyone to sell their wares in anyway they pleased, as long as they paid a price. On any given day one might see at the Independence Visitor Center scantily clad women advertising beer, or Commerce Bank employees handing out balloons and trinkets. Imagine my surprise upon walking into the East Wing to do a tour of Independence Hall and having the place wall-to-wall with balloons advertising a bank! Or, having an Underground Railroad walking tour interrupted by someone selling who-knows what dressed up in a giant hippopotamus costume! There was a time when the story of the founding of the nation and the price paid by those who came before us was treated with respect. Bill Moore allowed the money changers into the temple and thereby desecrated it. It is hoped that the next CEO will exhibit a proper attitude toward our national shrine.”<sup>3</sup>

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

**February 11, 2009 – Letters to the Editor (response to “Respect History” Letter to the Editor, see page 1)**

## **Hail and Farewell**

For 10 years, the National Park Service has enjoyed working side by side with the Independence Visitor Center Corporation in the Independence Visitor Center at Sixth and Market Streets.

Our purpose is to welcome guests and to enhance their enjoyment of Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, and the region. The partnership has been successful, with much credit due to Bill Moore, who recently resigned as leader of the visitor center to take another job. Thanks to his support for the park, we have seen the Independence Mall development project through to completion, strengthened the Friends of Independence, and witnessed an upswing in tourism-related activity throughout the historic district.

Cynthia MacLeod  
Superintendent  
Independence National Historical Park  
Philadelphia

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/38991132.html>

<sup>2</sup> The Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia was built on land owned by the Federal government and administered by Independence National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS has contracted with a private entity, Independence Visitor Center Corporation, to operate the facility, and the NPS has supported the Visitor Center with Federal appropriations of \$6.4 million since 2001 that has primarily been disbursed with annual appropriations of \$850,000.00. The Visitor Center is approximately 50,000 square feet in size, and is marketed as the “largest facility of its kind in the world.” The Visitor Center was designed and intended to serve as a tourism hub and the primary point of orientation and visitor services for the Park and surrounding environs. The Visitor Center is the only official on-site ticketing location for visitors to pick up tickets to Independence Hall. The Visitor Center promotes the notion that that visitors need to “Start at the Center” in order to experience the “best way to see Philly.” For details, see <http://www.theconstitutional.com/news/inhp/INHP-Payments-to-IVCC.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Bill Caughlan’s Facebook public account, posted on Wednesday, February 4, 2009 at 12:37pm, [http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/profile.php?id=1601793629&v=app\\_2347471856&viewas=1176191320](http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/profile.php?id=1601793629&v=app_2347471856&viewas=1176191320)

Copies of the related documents about the Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia and Independence National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service, are available at:  
[www.TheConstitutional.com/nps](http://www.TheConstitutional.com/nps)