

# Creating Community Connection: History as a Foundation for the Future



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**History Department**

## **“Remembering the Last Cast at Bethlehem Steel: A Community Reflects as it Forges its Future”**

**Saturday, November 19, 2005, 6:30 p.m., Zoellner Arts Center, Baker Hall, Lehigh University**

### **BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY CHALLENGES**

- November 18, 1995, Bethlehem Steel’s last cast
  - Steelmaking in Bethlehem ceased after 100+ years
  - Community identity lost virtually overnight
- November 2005 – Another Crossroads
  - Struggling with deindustrialization
  - Divided over Steel site redevelopment



### **METHOD: COMMUNITY EVENT**

- Primary Source Research: historical documents, photos, video footage & oral history interviews
- Multi-media, free event
  - Theater: Local actors, including steelworkers, delivered monologues chronicling steelmaking
  - Music: Local musicians performed steel-related folk songs between actors
  - Photography: 125+ historic photos projected on screen onstage
  - Video: 13-min oral history segment
- Reception: Q&A with former Steelworkers, local artists & historical organizations

### **RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS: COMMUNITY IDENTITY & FOUNDATION**

- Budget: Amount Pledged \$3,023 Amount Spent: \$2,849
  - \$174 donated to South Bethlehem Historical Society
- 600 hours of work over 10 weeks
- 350 attendees cried, laughed & sang along while learning history
- Commemorate 10-year anniversary of Last Cast
- Connect watershed moments
- Recognize accomplishments of workers & community
- Highlight recent industrial past
- Expand personal experience to communal experience
- Create sense of common purpose, history & fate
- Build momentum through shared events & heritage
- Inspire pride in past – Instill confidence in future
- Planted seeds community cooperation
- Embraced public history as vital part of identity
- Exposed Community to LU Public History program



**Funding Sources:** Local businesses, citizens & organizations: *South Bethlehem Historical Society, LU Depts.: History, American Studies, Science, Tech & Society, Community & Regional Affairs, PA Federation of Injured Workers, Steelworkers’ Archives, Save Our Steel, Downtown Bethlehem Association, LV Chamber of Commerce & Fox Optical*

**HISTORY → SHARED EXPERIENCE → COMMUNITY IDENTITY → EMPOWERMENT → FUTURE**