



## MARGARET “MOLLY” LESTER

Associate Director, Urban Heritage Project  
University of Pennsylvania, Stuart Weitzman School of Design / PennPraxis  
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### EDUCATION

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- University of Pennsylvania, School of Design | M.S., Historic Preservation** 2012  
Preservation Planning concentration  
Thesis: “Specialization and Significance: An Assessment of the Career and Works of Minerva Parker Nichols.”
- University of Virginia, School of Architecture | Bach. of Architectural History** 2008  
Bachelor of Architectural History with Honors; Minor in Architecture  
Thesis: “‘This Memorable and Decisive Event’: Memory and Modernity at Philadelphia’s Centennial Exhibition”

### CURRENT POSITIONS

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**University of Pennsylvania, Stuart Weitzman School of Design / PennPraxis | Associate Director, Urban Heritage Project** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2017 – Present

*Selected projects:*

- **Lincoln Memorial Cultural Landscape Inventory**  
*Project Manager/Lead Historian*  
Client: National Park Service. Washington, DC
- **DC Small Parks Project: Cultural Landscape Report and Cultural Landscape Inventories**  
*Project Manager/Lead Historian*  
Client: National Park Service. Washington, DC
- **Catoctin Mountain (Camp Misty Mount/Camp Greentop) Cultural Landscape Report**  
*Project Manager/Lead Historian*  
Client: National Park Service. Thurmont, Maryland
- **Fort Myer National Historic Landmark and Fort McNair National Register Nominations**  
*Project Manager/Lead Historian*  
Client: U.S. Army. Arlington, Virginia and Washington, DC
- **Historic Preservation Citizen Engagement Project / Neighborhood Preservation Toolkit**  
*Project Co-Manager/Lead Author*  
Client: William Penn Foundation. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
► Winner of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia’s 2019 Public Service Award + Preservation Pennsylvania’s 2019 Initiative Award for Education
- **Miller House + Garden Conservation Management Plan**  
*Architectural Historian/Graphic Designer*  
Client: Newfields, as part of the Getty Foundation’s Keeping It Modern program. Columbus, Indiana
- **Historic Sacred Places Project**  
*Project Co-Manager/Lead Surveyor*  
Client: The Pew Charitable Trusts – Philadelphia Research initiative. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- **Pennovation Historical Research and Interpretation Strategy**  
*Project Manager*  
Client: University of Pennsylvania Facilities and Real Estate Services. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- **She-She-She Camps Project**  
*Project Manager*  
Client: PennPraxis. National ([www.SheSheSheCamps.org](http://www.SheSheSheCamps.org))

**Sachs Program for Arts Innovation | 2020 Grantee**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2020 – Present

Directing an interdisciplinary interpretive project centered around “building ghosts,” the imprint and last impressions of a demolished building, left behind on the walls of neighboring structures. The year-long project will create a “census” of ghosts in Philadelphia using architectural street photography, oral histories, and archival research. It will result in a new digital platform and a series of stories published by *Hidden City Philadelphia*.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation | 2019 Fellow**

New York, New York, 2019 – 2020

Led an independent research and media project exploring the career and significance of architect Minerva Parker Nichols (1862-1949). The year-long project used Nichols’ portfolio to test new ways to identify, evaluate, and commemorate a body of work that defies traditional preservation frameworks, resulting in the “What Minerva Built” podcast and video shorts (see *Publications* below).

**Independent Architectural Historian**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2014 – 2017

Selected clients and projects:

- **PennPraxis, Civic Infrastructure Research and Summit, 2015 – 2017**  
*Researcher and Summit Event Planner*
- **PennPraxis, Indianapolis Museum of Art Master Plan, 2015 – 2016**  
*Architectural Historian and Preservation Planner*
- **History Matters, East Baltimore Project, 2015 – 2016**  
*Lead Architectural Historian and Preservation Planner*
- **Change Over Time Journal, 2014 – 2016**  
*Editorial Assistant*

**Partners for Sacred Places**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2014 – 2015 and 2008 – 2010

- **Program Director, Strategic Investment in Sacred Places, 2014 – 2015**  
Implemented SiSP, a national training and consulting program for congregations with historic buildings. Coordinated Partners staff and consultants to manage project outcomes, deliverables, and budgets.
- **Grants and Program Director, Philadelphia Regional Fund, 2008 – 2010**  
Oversaw all Philadelphia regional programs. Administered over \$2.2 million in capital grants. Organized a quarterly training program in best preservation practices, attended by over 50 congregations.

**Heritage Consulting Group | Junior Associate**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2012 – 2014

- Researched, wrote, and coordinated all phases (Parts I-III) of applications for the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Incentive Program. Provided design review and consultation to clients.

PUBLICATIONS

**The Routledge Companion to Women in Architecture (forthcoming)**, Anna Sokolina, ed.

Expected 2021

“For Homeowners and Housekeepers: The Architecture of Minerva Parker Nichols in Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century America”

**“What Minerva Built” Podcast and Video Shorts**

2020

A 9-episode limited-series podcast and companion video shorts about architect Minerva Parker Nichols, produced as part of a 2019/2020 fellowship with the James Marston Fitch Charitable Foundation. Available on most major platforms and at [www.MinervaParkerNichols.com/Media](http://www.MinervaParkerNichols.com/Media)

**Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography**

2019

“‘Lady Architect’: The Work and Writings of Minerva Parker Nichols in Late Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia”

**National Park Service**

2013 – Present

- **Maryland Avenue NE Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2019
- **Bryce Park Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2019
- **East Potomac Golf Course Cultural Landscape Inventory** (with Shannon Garrison), Washington, DC, 2017
- **Langston Golf Course Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2017
- **Fort Chaplin Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2017
- **Fort Bunker Hill Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2016
- **Fort Dupont Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2013
- **Fort Mahan Cultural Landscape Inventory**, Washington, DC, 2013

- National Register of Historic Places Nominations** 2013 – Present
- **Great Falls National Historic Landmark District Update**, Paterson, NJ, 2020
  - **Mill-Rae**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2017
  - **William Penn Memorial Museum and State Archives Building**, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 2014
  - **Joe Frazier's Gym**, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2013

**Hidden City Philadelphia** 2013 – Present  
 Various contributor columns on topics related to architecture and history in Philadelphia.

**AWARDS AND HONORS**

- Preservation Alliance for Great Philadelphia, Public Service Award** 2019  
*Accepted on behalf of PennPraxis, for the Historic Preservation Citizen Engagement Project/Neighborhood Preservation Toolkit*
- Preservation Pennsylvania, Initiative Award for Education** 2019  
*Accepted on behalf of PennPraxis, for the Historic Preservation Citizen Engagement Project/Neighborhood Preservation Toolkit*
- Visitation Community Center, Partners in Mission Award** 2019  
*Accepted on behalf of the InKind Baking Project*
- University of Pennsylvania School of Design, Faculty Outstanding Academic Achievement Award** 2012
- University of Pennsylvania School of Design, Robert and Susan Heidenberg Fellowship** 2011
- University of Virginia School of Architecture, Frederick Doveton Nichols Memorial Award** 2008

**SELECTED SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS**

- Chipman Design Architecture (upcoming)** 2021  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Virtual due to COVID-19
- Preservation Pennsylvania Annual Conference** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Virtual due to COVID-19
- The Carpenter Company of Philadelphia** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Virtual due to COVID-19
- Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Virtual due to COVID-19
- Women in Architecture, American Institute of Architects – Philadelphia Chapter** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Virtual due to COVID-19
- The Athenaeum of Philadelphia (postponed due to COVID-19)** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- KiernanTimberlake** 2020  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Conference** 2019  
*Topic: Neighborhood Preservation Toolkit*  
 Denver, Colorado
- DC History Conference** 2019  
*Topic: DC Small Parks Project (co-presented with the National Park Service)*  
 Washington, DC

- Architectural History at UVA: Richard Guy Wilson + Our Community Scholars** 2019  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Charlottesville, Virginia
- Preservation Pennsylvania Annual Conference** 2019  
*Topic: Neighborhood Preservation Toolkit*  
 Chambersburg, Pennsylvania
- Lower Merion Conservancy** 2019  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
- Philadelphia Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians** 2019  
*Topic: Minerva Parker Nichols*  
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**VOLUNTEER + LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

- InKind Baking Project | Founder and Chair** 2017 – Present  
 Established a network of 575+ volunteer bakers and coordinate donations of baked goods to fulfill requests from under-resource non-profit organizations and individuals, in an effort to build community and extend hospitality. Project bakers have served over 45,000 people to date, including refugees and recent immigrants, families experiencing homelessness, and others.
- Young Friends of the Preservation Alliance | Co-Chair** 2014 – 2017  
 Managed the outreach, networking, and advocacy initiatives of Philadelphia’s only organization for young preservation professionals. Coordinate programming and budget with staff of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.
- Hill College House, University of Pennsylvania | Graduate Associate (Resident Advisor)** 2010 – 2013  
 Oversaw the Exploring Philadelphia residential program for 96 college freshmen. Organized suite-wide and house-wide programming. Established and managed a programming budget. Mentored residents through their freshman experience. Acted as periodic Graduate Associate on duty, with primary responsibility for disciplinary incidents.
- The Corrymeela Community (Ballycastle, Northern Ireland) | Summer Volunteer** 2010  
 Implemented programming for 25 teenagers from Catholic and Protestant Northern Ireland, as part of Corrymeela’s cross-community initiatives. Supported the daily operations of the residential center, including reception, kitchen and housekeeping responsibilities.