

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 140219)

## RESOLUTION

In recognition of Women's History Month, honoring the outstanding contributions of Ms. Audrey Johnson Thornton on behalf of the American Women's Heritage Society for her tireless efforts to restore the Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum located in the Fourth Council District in Philadelphia and proclaiming the banquet facility as the Cornelia Wells Banquet Hall and Conference Center.

WHEREAS, The American Women's Heritage Society ("Heritage Society") started as an initiative to save Belmont Mansion, which was at risk of being demolished in 1986 and through the leadership of Audrey Johnson Thornton, the Heritage Society reclaimed Belmont Mansion and restored it to its former beauty and glory; and

WHEREAS, During the Mansion's early restoration, a Heritage Society historian discovered its place in history and learned that the Belmont Mansion served an important role as a station in the Underground Railroad and was recognized by the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom as a significant place for interpreting the history of the Underground Railroad, the first of its Freedom Stations in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Additional historic research revealed Cornelia Wells, a young woman and her daughter Jane was purchased in 1811 from a slave owner and made an indentured servant and cook for the Peters family, Richard Peters who was a member of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. After three years, Cornelia Wells was able to earn her and her daughter's freedom; and

WHEREAS, After acquiring her freedom, Cornelia Wells continued to work regularly with the Peters family doing household washing. There was little work available for former slave women who were denied the opportunity of an education; and

# City of Philadelphia

*RESOLUTION NO. 140219 continued*

WHEREAS, Cornelia Wells settled in a little cottage down by the river from Belmont Mansion, She gardened and took in washing, sewing and cooking for other prominent families in the area to support herself and her daughter Jane; and

WHEREAS, Through Ms. Thornton's leadership of the Heritage Society, Belmont Mansion has become one of the most important buildings in Fairmount Park open to the public as the Underground Railroad Museum; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of Women's History Month, honoring the outstanding contributions of Ms. Audrey Johnson Thornton on behalf of the American Women's Heritage Society for her tireless efforts to restore the Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum and in recognition of the legacy of freedom, leadership, and entrepreneurial spirit for African American women demonstrated by Cornelia Wells efforts to earn her freedom from slavery and support herself and her family against great odds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby proclaims that the banquet facility at the Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum shall be officially named the Cornelia Wells Banquet Hall and Conference Center.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution shall be presented to Ms. Audrey Johnson Thornton on behalf of the American Women's Heritage Society and the Historic Belmont Mansion and Underground Railroad Museum as evidence of the sincere appreciation of this legislative body.

# City of Philadelphia

*RESOLUTION NO. 140219 continued*

# City of Philadelphia

*RESOLUTION NO. 140219 continued*

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twentieth day of March, 2014.

Darrell L. Clarke  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Jones, Tasco, Blackwell, Bass and Quiñones  
Sánchez  
Sponsored by: Councilmember Jones, Tasco, Blackwell, Bass, Quiñones  
Sánchez and Reynolds Brown