



EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY 2021

A Special Report for our Supporters

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY

2021

By the Numbers...

3,000

students who joined
in virtual programs

2x

the number of
Eastern State Members
in 2021 vs 2020

101

nights of new
evening programming

794

postcards that were
written to incarcerated
people by museum
visitors in 2021

23,311

gallons of rain that can
be held underground as
part of our stormwater
infrastructure improvement

93

percentage
our attendance
increased between
2020 and 2021

9 participants in the 2021
Masonry Academy



Lithograph of Eastern State Penitentiary by G. Lehman

As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 crisis, we reflect on all the ways the pandemic has forever left its mark on Eastern State. There have been challenges, but with those challenges came opportunities. From programs and operations to the site itself, 2021 was a year of change, most of it profoundly positive. Even in the face of uncertainty, we made significant progress towards our next chapter. And we couldn't have done it without your help.



Reimagining

Our most dramatic transformation was the introduction of 101 nights of completely new evening programming over the course of three seasons. During *Night Tours: Summer Twilight*, we partnered with businesses that share our values and offered the opportunity to relax with a beverage on our baseball field at the new Fair Chance Beer Garden. In the winter, we brought this visitor favorite back with additional seasonal programming like our *Pop-Up Museum*, where carefully selected artifacts pulled from the thousands of historic treasures in our archives told the story of *Segregated Cellblocks: Race and Change at Eastern State*.

In between our summer and winter *Night Tours*, we took a major leap. We reimagined our fall fundraiser, *Terror Behind the Walls*. For 30 years, this program funded the bulk of our most transformative, mission-driven work, and served as Eastern State's financial backbone. Safety concerns forced us to cancel the event in 2020, and we knew going into 2021 that continued COVID-19 precautions would force us to evolve in big ways this year. But, in the end, this created an unanticipated silver lining.

Rethinking *Terror Behind the Walls* was not easy; it's something we considered carefully. From those difficult conversations grew *Halloween Nights*: a new iteration of this 30-year tradition that honored the elements our visitors have come to love and expect and added so much more. *Halloween Nights* opened more of the site to the public than ever before,

Halloween Nights visitors reading *The Big Graph* and an actor at *Halloween Nights*



Masonry Academy participants working on Cellblock 9

created space for new partnerships with other fair chance businesses, and enabled visitors to engage with our mission through an educator-led tour of the Hospital Block and a new highlights audio tour recorded by Steve Buscemi. We can't wait to continue the evolution of our evening programs in 2022.

Rebuilding

As our programs developed, the building itself did, too. Construction of the first phase of our planned visitor center began in the fall of 2019. This work included upgrades to electrical and plumbing infrastructure, designed to support the eventual completed project. In this phase, we created a massive storm water retention system to make Eastern State more environmentally friendly. We also built a new tour launch point, providing visitors a place to rest, refill their water bottles, and get a reprieve from inclement weather.

While we had planned to complete the work without closing the site to the public, COVID -19 had other plans. Like many cultural institutions, we were closed for most of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. These closures devastated our earned revenue income but also allowed our construction team to work more efficiently. When visitors returned in March 2021, they benefited from greater accessibility and began their audio tours at the new tour launch point. On June 10, 2021, we officially cut the ribbon celebrating the completion of phase one and unveiled a new donor plaque recognizing those whose generosity led the way.

Returning

After many months of closure, our reopening in March 2021 required a rigorous reimagining of our programs. We produced more new programs in less time than at any other moment in our history. We expanded our virtual programs for schools, scouts, and other groups. We built an interactive workshop that explores pathways to criminal justice reform, which has since inspired everyone from middle school students to human resources professionals. We launched new programs for members and found different ways to stay connected. We met people where they were, both on site and online, to have conversations about the legacy of criminal justice reform that were more important than ever. Indeed, 2021 was a watershed year for Eastern State.



Left Image:
Cutting the ribbon for
phase 1 of the Visitor
Center project

Right Images:
Mayor Kenney chats
with participants
of Eastern State's
Masonry Academy
and members enjoying
an exclusive Member
Saturday tour

Council Member Kendra Brooks and staff visit Eastern State



Though at times I was not sure, today I firmly believe that Eastern State will emerge from the challenges of the pandemic as a stronger and more sustainable organization. And I know that we could not have reached this moment without the incredible dedication of our staff, steady guidance of our Board of Directors, and the generosity of our donors. None of our success – past, present, or future – would be possible without friends like you. We have truly come together in the face of adversity and demonstrated what a resilient organization can accomplish, so that we can fulfill our mission for years to come.

Thank you,

Sara Jane (Sally) Elk
President and CEO

Our Mission

Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site interprets the legacy of American criminal justice reform, from the nation's founding through to the present day, within the long-abandoned cellblocks of the nation's most historic prison.