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Jessica Elfenbein, Department Chair
University of South Carolina | Department of History
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Greetings Chair Elfenbein and Search Committee Members,

Please accept this letter and attached documentation as an expression of my enthusiastic interest in the tenure-track position of Assistant Professor in Colonial or Early Republic US History at the University of South Carolina. As a postdoctoral teaching fellow and recent Ph.D. graduate in history from the University of Missouri with graduate-level certifications in geographic information systems (GIS) and museum studies, I bring a multidisciplinary and innovative approach to research and teaching that aligns with the department's goals of fostering academic excellence and interdisciplinary collaboration.

My research agenda centers on the economic, social, and intellectual networks that shaped the Colonial and Early Republic. My dissertation, "Reciprocities Market: John Bartram's 18th-Century Botanical Subscription Service and the Seeds of Independence," explores deep-seeded interdependencies between local knowledge production, transatlantic communication networks, and economic transformations throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. This work contributes to the fields of economic and intellectual history by analyzing the emergence of market and consumer revolutions through land use, material exchange, and scientific inquiry. Demonstrated through social network analysis alongside traditional historical methodologies, I argue colonials not only utilized consumption as a means of asserting independence but that they embraced the mechanisms of the market as well. I pull the timeline of the market revolution forward, to argue for their concurrent materialization. This year, in my position as a postdoctoral fellow within the University of Missouri history department, I will complete my book proposal and secure a publisher as I complete the final chapter which centers the economic as much as scientific motivations behind John and William Bartram's mention of Indigenous land use and praxis.

My strong external funding record and publication background likewise make me a strong candidate for this position. My research has been well supported through generous residential fellowships at the Huntington Library, American Philosophical Society, Florida Atlantic University, and the Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library. I have a similarly proven record as a producer, through the publication of a co-annotated book project *Legends of Mexico* (2019), an award-winning article in Lindenwood University's journal *The Confluence* (2021), and contributions to high school and undergraduate pedagogical development through several projects with Bedford Freeman and Worth (McMillan), creating testing and broader assessment content for the first and second editions of the AP U.S. History

textbook, *Fabric of a Nation*. These combined experiences demonstrate a deep commitment to research excellence as much as innovative teaching practices.

I incorporate digital humanities tools, including GIS, Nvivo, and data visualization, to enhance the accessibility and impact of my research findings and look forward to the opportunity to train undergraduate and graduate students in digital research methods. My teaching philosophy emphasizes active engagement with primary sources, historiographical debates, and interdisciplinary perspectives. I have successfully taught a wide range of courses, from introductory surveys of U.S. History to writing intensive junior-senior-level courses on early modern Europe and environmental history. In this role, I have repeatedly coached students through article-length writing projects, research proposals, and historical methods while teaching at McKendree University and the University of Missouri. My courses employ a middling-out and bottom-up approach. Focusing on land, political economy, material culture, and diverse actor-agents, I continuously engage students with primary sources and diverse media elements, which helps students grasp the context and content of historical events as much as the skills and methodologies of the historian. This method showcases the historical research process and motivates students to delve into historiographical discussions early on. By creating an inclusive and vibrant learning atmosphere, I prepare students for diverse careers in a rapidly evolving field.

I look forward to sharing my extensive experience and skills in public history and community engagement with USC's undergraduate and graduate students. These experiences reflect my dedication to making history accessible and relevant to broader audiences through sustained community engagement and service as I honed my skills in archival management, public history outreach, and digital humanities. I served as an archivist technician with the U.S. National Archives, and as the project lead of a team of four to eight undergraduate and graduate students for a countywide digital archive initiative for three years. Additionally, since 2019, I have volunteered as an executive board member of the O'Fallon Illinois Historic Preservation Commission in the promotion of local history and architectural preservation through landmarking and lifelong learning workshops. In my capacity as a postdoctoral educator in the history department of the University of Missouri, I also serve as a member of the Undergraduate Studies Committee. In this role, I successfully redesigned the learning objectives for the department's sophomore level methods seminar and U.S. history survey to 1877 as an integral part of the University of Missouri's five-year review and accreditation process.

I am drawn to USC not only for its commitment to academic excellence and inclusivity, dynamic intellectual environment, interdisciplinary methods, and strong tradition of quality faculty research. I am eager to contribute my expertise in Colonial and Early Republic history, innovative teaching and research methods, and collaborative spirit to the history department.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to the possibility of contributing to the rich academic and community life at the University of South Carolina and would be delighted to further discuss how my student outcomes, background in public and digital history, research interests, and teaching philosophy align with the USC history department's vision.

Sincerely,
Shannan Catherine Mason, Ph.D.