

Civil War History

C O N S O R T I U M

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GREATER PHILADELPHIA REGION TO BECOME A PREMIER CIVIL WAR RESEARCH AND TOURISM DESTINATION

Funding from Three Foundations Supports Research to Reveal Region's Vital Contributions to the Preservation of the Union

PHILADELPHIA, PA (April 2005) – Three foundations are providing \$225,000 in combined funding to support planning and initial development for research and presentation of the extraordinary and neglected Civil War history of the Philadelphia region. The grants have been made to members and collaborative partners of the Civil War History Consortium, a group of 22 libraries, museums, historical sites and governmental agencies in the Philadelphia region.

The Civil War History Consortium is dedicated to developing and providing public access to the Philadelphia region's vital contributions to a defining moment of national and regional history. Rich resources that illustrate the region's importance in the Civil War era, treasures that are now largely invisible to the general public, are cared for and preserved in many museums, libraries, archives, and historic sites. The support provided by the three funders will begin the process of opening the troves that hold those treasures.

The Heritage Philadelphia Program, an Initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts, has announced a \$150,000 collaborative grant to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania/Civil War History Consortium, which will conduct an unprecedented survey of Civil War sites and assets held by regional institutions. Further, the grant provides for a market awareness and cultural heritage tourism economic impact study.

(more...)

“Our region’s stories of the Civil War enrich and deepen our understanding of ourselves as a city, a region, and a nation,” said David Moltke-Hansen, president of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and interim chair of the Consortium. “The Consortium’s work will help us integrate those stories into the broad narrative sweep of American history, taking us beyond Philadelphia’s traditional Colonial and Revolutionary focus, and showcasing the region’s preeminence as a heritage destination. We are grateful to our funders for making this possible.”

The second grant of \$25,000 from The Phoebe W. Haas Charitable Trust supports the Consortium’s strategic planning process, which outlines a three-to-five year plan for opening public access to Civil War history in the Philadelphia region, and provides funding for projects that complement the survey work.

The Consortium will conduct an initial inventory and assessment of the area’s many Civil War-related sites. The sites will be mapped on a groundbreaking geographic information system currently being developed by the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries in partnership with the City of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project based at the Athenæum of Philadelphia. Initial funding for this work was recently provided by a \$50,000 planning grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This publicly-available online resource will make it possible for researchers and visitors eventually to research the history of a building by entering a specific address, or by browsing neighborhoods and blocks.

“The Consortium’s comprehensive approach represents a new contribution to heritage tourism in the Philadelphia region,” said James Straw, chairman of The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of the Union League of Philadelphia, where the Consortium was founded. An analysis of the region’s sites will also identify important themes to explore in the area’s Civil War-era history.

Expanding the definition of “The Civil War” to embrace its antecedents and its lasting effects will give voice to previously-silent messages. “The Consortium’s work offers an opportunity to reveal the impact that African Americans had, both as soldiers and civilians, on the outcomes of this wrenching conflict,” said Joseph Certaine, director of the Governor’s Southeast Regional Office. Certaine is a re-enactor in the United States Colored Troops and the Buffalo Soldiers, and served as historian/technical consultant to the television documentary

“Invisible Men of Honor,” which aired on the Comcast and Direct TV networks as part of Black History Month. “This was every American’s war.”

The Consortium’s project team will conduct interviews with tourists, residents and members of the leisure and travel industries to determine how best to position the area as a Civil War-heritage destination. “This is a project of value to us at the Civil War and Underground Rail Road Museum in two important ways,” explains E. Harris Baum, who chairs its board. “Information from the marketing assessment will help us to plan exhibitions and public programming. Beyond that, showcasing a wide variety of Civil War sites and offerings will bring more overnight visitors to the area, helping us to fulfill our mission of interpreting and sharing our Civil War collections with the broadest possible audience.”