

MEMORANDUM

To: Civil War History Consortium
From: Urban Partners
Date: June 2006
Re: Examination of Multi-Year/Multi-Venue Exhibitions Findings

Introduction

Urban Partners was retained by the Civil War History Consortium to identify several multi-year/multi-venue exhibitions that focus on historically or thematically linked resources and to examine their characteristics. The purpose of this work was intended to inform the Civil War History Consortium of Philadelphia about the methods other commemorative efforts have employed in packaging significant historical and tourism resources and developing institutional linkages during multi-year commemorative celebrations and, more importantly, to identify what success they have had in continuing to promote these resources after the commemorative celebrations have concluded.

Despite our hopes to learn from prior multi-year/multi-venue events, our examination of significant national and international commemorative events provide fairly limited instruction to the Philadelphia area's efforts. At the suggestion of the Civil War Consortium, we have augmented our research on this topic by examining the experience of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, a heritage park that includes a large number of diverse sites that interpret the Civil War period in Virginia. Further research about other Civil War-related collections of sites will be completed by Urban Partners during Year Two of this project, if desired.

This memorandum discusses findings from the national and international multi-year/multi-venue events identified and begins to explore the characteristics of other Civil War-related attractions by detailing the experience of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District.

Experience of Multi-Year/Multi-Venue Events in U.S.

Urban Partners was able to identify several recent celebrations commemorating significant historical events, including the Louisiana Purchase, the Lewis & Clark Expedition and the French-Indian War. Our research determined that the methods/venues being used to interpret these historical events has not encouraged the establishment of lasting institutional and site linkages that would be directly instructive to the Philadelphia experience. For example, the bicentennial commemoration of the Louisiana Purchase has focused primarily on the development of in-school materials and the coordination of teacher workshops and scholarly conferences. While various institutions formed partnerships during the commemoration period, no lasting interpretive linkages have been forged to encourage any continued cross-attendance at these sites.

On the other hand, the on-going bicentennial commemoration of the Lewis & Clark Expedition is very site-based, interpreting the expedition's experience as it traversed the United States. Numerous state, local and tribal partners have coordinated with the federally-designated National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council in its efforts to promote educational and interpretive activities and to protect and preserve the natural, cultural and historic resources that serve as the foundation of the Lewis & Clark experience. Numerous multi-day commemorations, proclaimed "Signature Events" are occurring at key sites to chart the expedition's progress.

Because of the linear nature of the Lewis & Clark commemorative event, there are no significant groupings of geographically proximate partner institutions that appear to be forming long-term interpretive alliances that will carry on after the commemoration is complete. It is hoped; however, that the educational programming established for the event – as well as any attributable land conservation successes during this period – will allow the impacts of the commemoration to extend beyond the celebration itself.

Perhaps the most instructive of recent large-scale commemorative events is the on-going 250th anniversary of the French-Indian War. Events to commemorate the "Seven Years' War" have occurred or are planned throughout the mid-Atlantic and New England regions. While most of the events do focus on specific military engagements, attempts have been made to promote linkages between cultural institutions and to inform visitors about relevant historic and cultural programming at non-military sites. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development has financed promotion of French-Indian War commemorative events through its First Industries Tourism Program (a \$50 million grant and loan initiative to encourage tourism and overnight visits to the Commonwealth). Similar support may be available to the planned Civil War commemoration. While the impacts of this promotion on overall participation in French-Indian War-related events, or the attendance at specific venues, will not be available for several years, it is encouraging that a publicly-funded precedent of this type exists in Pennsylvania. Visitors to the collaborative website (<http://www.frenchandindianwar250.org/>) can access information about a wide range of historical sites and select information based on the calendar of events or visitor experience.

Multi-Year/Multi-Venue Events in Europe

Numerous "Jubilee" events in Rome, Vatican City and elsewhere in Italy commemorated the 2000th year of Christianity. The largest, most coordinated of these celebrations was the Roma 2000 campaign, which used the occasion of the Jubilee to jointly market a wide range of the city's historic, cultural and artistic resources. Numerous walking and transit-oriented tours were organized to provide visitors an overall view of the city through the evolution of its monuments and art-works. (These tours can still be accessed at the Roma 2000 website: <http://www.roma2000.it/zvisite.html>). However, many of the participating venues had little to no connection to the overarching theme of Christianity, with this theme providing the opportunity to promote Rome's tourism-related destinations in their entirety. No assessment appears to have been completed that quantifies the impact of this celebration on individual cultural resources or the city's tourism economy as a whole.

Europe is also home to a rotating one-year celebration of cultural centers. For the last 20 years, the European Union has sponsored the "European Cities of Culture" (recently renamed "European Capital of Culture") to promote cultural activities within a specific city each year. The program's goal is to expand each participating city's tourism base and to enhance local pride and participation in arts-related programming. Each year, the European Union designates one city the City of Culture, providing it the opportunity to showcase that city and surrounding region's cultural assets. Grant funds from the European Union provided for administrative and cultural programming expenses, which are matched with local public funding for a variety of purposes. Some cities have used their City of Culture designation as an opportunity to expand and upgrade their cultural infrastructure – including performance venues, outdoor plazas, etc. – while others have placed emphasis on improving the organizational capacity of resident cultural organizations.

The Cities of Culture program has no established programming requirements which – in addition to the tremendous range of geography, history, cultural assets, socio-economic characteristics and political standing of participating cities – results in very different celebration experiences from year to year. A 1995 assessment of the Cities of Culture program, undertaken on behalf of the European Commission, documents the experiences of participating cities and provides findings that may be instructive to the Philadelphia area's Civil War commemorative event. These include:

- The planning period for Cities of Culture programs ranged from 2-4 years, with the majority of cities spending 3 years on planning activities. Most individuals involved in event preparation felt that their program would have benefitted from a somewhat longer planning period.
- Most cities established an autonomous entity to coordinate Cities of Culture activities and, in some cities, this entity remained in existence following the conclusion of the year's programming to continue to promote cultural activities highlighted during the cultural year.
- Most cities felt that there was significant potential for expanding private sector sponsorship, which could have been realized had there been a more clearly articulated vision of the planned programming early in the planning process.
- In most cities' experience, blockbuster events attracted large audiences, but initiatives targeted primarily to local audiences have proven to be more sustainable over time. The large cost of staging blockbuster events called into question their cost-effectiveness in promoting continued tourism after the Cities of Culture had lapsed.
- Most participating cities did experience an increase in tourism during their designated year, with an increase in overnight stays averaging 12 percent. (However, the report notes, a general growth in European tourism during the life of the Cities of Culture program suggests that cultural designation may not be responsible for this entire impact.) The largest percentage increase in tourism (as measured in overnight stays) occurred in smaller cities that started with a lower tourism base than in cities already experiencing some level of cultural tourism.
- The report concludes that, while critical success factors varied from city to city, the most commonly identified factors include:
 - clarity of theme and value of strong program content;
 - extent of local involvement;
 - need for partnerships, strong leadership and political will, and
 - importance of sufficient planning.

Preliminary Examination of A Civil War-Themed Heritage Area: Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

At the recommendation of the Consortium, we have also begun to examine the operational characteristics of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District as a representative Civil War-themed collection of interpretive resources. A more detailed examination of this and other similarly-themed collections of historic resources will be undertaken by Urban Partners during Year Two of this project, if desired.

The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District was established in 1996. The large district – which is over 120 miles from end to end – includes 8 counties and the cities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Winchester and Waynesboro, VA. In addition to its abundance of significant Civil War battlefields and military engagement sites, the Shenandoah Valley also includes numerous historic sites that interpret related non-military aspects of the Civil War era.

Coordination of civil war-related interpretive and tourism activities within this area is the mandate of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF). (The director of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation is Howard Kittell, a former Philadelphian who has served as executive director of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Chestnut Hill

Historical Society.) The Foundation partners with local, regional, and national organizations to preserve the battlefields (many of which are in private ownership), promote the Civil War story for the region and develop programmatic linkages that integrate these military and civilian experiences.

In its initial years of operation, significant emphasis has been placed on land conservation efforts and battlefield preservation and acquisition. The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation is a key partner with the National Park Service in the establishment of a "new model" national park, the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historic Park. Working collaboratively, the NPS, SVBF and several other entities are independently acquiring portions of the park land for protection as a NPS holding. To date, approximately one-third of the designated 3,500-acre park area has been secured.

The Management Action Plan developed for the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District in 2000 recommended the organization of the area into five geographic clusters. Each cluster will feature an orientation center providing information about that area's battlefields and other thematically related sites. The first orientation center, located in the south-eastern McDowell cluster, was opened in May 2005; the second, located in the Winchester/Frederick cluster, opened Spring 2006.

Visitors experiences within the Shenandoah Valley may include walking individual battlefields, participating in or viewing Civil War battle reenactments, driving a self-guided tour route that incorporates the Valley's major battlefield sites and military campaigns and visiting the many museums and historic sites that reflect the area's Civil War era heritage. These include:

- **Museums** Old County Court House Civil War Museum, Stonewall Jackson Headquarters Museum, Virginia Quilt Museum, Rt. 11 Transportation Museum, Warren Rifles Confederate Museum, Hall of Valor Civil War Museum
- **Historic Homes/Farmsteads**: Historic Homes/Farms: Glen Burnie Historic House and Gardens, Hardesty-Higgins House, Miller-Kite House, Bushong House, Pritchard Farm
- **Mills** Goods Mill, Silver Lake Mill
- **Churches** Union Church, Mill Creek Church, McDowell Presbyterian Church
- **Cemeteries** National Cemetery, Stonewall Cemetery, Elk Run Cemetery
- **Other Historic Sites** Town of Port Republic (site of Jackson's battle headquarters), Shenandoah Iron Works, Turner Ashby Monument, Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center

Despite its wealth of regional Civil War-oriented resources, most of the individual historic sites and cultural institutions in the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District currently attract very limited audiences (under 10,000 per year) and many are open only seasonally. While the initial emphasis of the SVBF has been the acquisition and protection of strategic Civil War land holdings, the Foundation has recently begun to focus on integrating the interpretive programming of area cultural institutions and historic sites in order to jointly promote these tourism resources. A district-wide interpretive plan is currently being produced by John Milner & Associates to establish the coordinated storyline for participating institutions and sites. Additionally, the SVBF recently secured funding from the Virginia General Assembly to develop a marketing plan for the area, which will establish cooperative promotional and public relations strategies that respond to the interpretive themes developed. The outcomes of these efforts to incorporate non-battlefield sites into the interpretation of the Civil War could be very instructive to the Philadelphia experience.