

THE GEORGE WRIGHT

FORUM

Volume 19

❖ 2002 ❖

Number 4



THE JOURNAL OF THE GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY

Dedicated to the Protection, Preservation and Management
of Cultural and Natural Parks and Reserves
Through Research and Education

The George Wright Society

Origins

Founded in 1980, The George Wright Society is organized for the purposes of promoting the application of knowledge, fostering communication, improving resource management, and providing information to improve public understanding and appreciation of the basic purposes of natural and cultural parks and equivalent reserves. The Society is dedicated to the protection, preservation, and management of cultural and natural parks and reserves through research and education.

Mission

The George Wright Society advances the scientific and heritage values of parks and protected areas. The Society promotes professional research and resource stewardship across natural and cultural disciplines, provides avenues of communication, and encourage public policies that embrace these values.

Our Goal

The Society strives to be the premier organization connecting people, places, knowledge, and ideas to foster excellence in natural and cultural resource management, research, protection, and interpretation in parks and equivalent reserves.

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IUCN—The World Conservation Union, and The Natural Resources Council of America

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ISSN 0732-4715

Editorial guidelines may be found on the inside back cover. Text paper is made of 50% recycled fibers. Printed by Book Concern Printers, Hancock, Michigan

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Number 4

Society News, Notes & Mail	2
The State of the Society: A Report from the GWS President	
<i>Bob Krumenaker</i>	4
The GWS Strategic Statement, 2003-2007	7

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT SITES OF CONSCIENCE

Guest Editor: Martin Blatt

Introduction: The National Park Service and Civic Engagement	
<i>Martin Blatt</i>	9
Interpreting Slavery and Civil Rights at Fort Sumter	
<i>John Tucker</i>	15
Frankly, Scarlett, We Do Give a Damn: The Making of a New National Park	
<i>Laura (Soullière) Gates</i>	32
Civic Engagement with the Community at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site	
<i>Sarah Craighead</i>	44
The National Park Service: Groveling Sycophant or Social Conscience?	
Telling the Story of Mountains, Valley, and Barbed Wire at Manzanar National Historic Site	
<i>Frank Hays</i>	50
Activating the Past for Civic Action: The International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience	
<i>Liz Sevcenko</i>	55
Dialogue Between Continents: Civic Engagement and the Gulag Museum at Perm-36, Russia	
<i>Louis P. Hutchins and Gay E. Vietzke</i>	65

<p>On the Cover: Watch tower and administrative building at the Gulag Museum at Perm-36. <i>National Park Service photo by Louis Hutchins.</i></p>

Society News, Notes & Mail



Kilgore, Reynolds, Emory Join GWS Board; New Officers Named

In an election which saw all four candidates run strongly, Bruce Kilgore and John Reynolds emerged as the winners in the race for the two available seats on the Board. Kilgore and Reynolds surpassed Brad Barr and Bobbi Simpson in the balloting. Kilgore retired from the National Park Service after a long career which saw him make significant contributions to science in the parks, and which earned him the Society's highest honor, the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence, in 1997. Reynolds retired from the Park Service in August 2002 after a distinguished and extremely varied career which was capped by his leadership of the NPS Pacific West Region. In addition to these two new elected Board members, at its 2002 annual meeting the Board appointed Jerry Emory to a term. As a freelance writer, Emory has written extensively on a variety of subjects, including the personal history of George Wright. He is currently a writer/research officer with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. These new Board members replace outgoing Board members Bob Krumenaker, Laura Gates, Elizabeth Bertillion Collins, and Peter Brinkley.

For 2003, Dennis B. Fenn takes over as president of the Society. Formerly the chief biologist of the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division, Fenn now directs the BRD's Southwest Biological Research Center. Abigail B. Miller, our new vice president, is the deputy associate director of the National Park Service for natural resource science and stewardship. Stepping in as GWS secretary is Gillian Bowser, assistant chief of resources at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. Dwight T. Pitcaithley, the NPS's chief historian, remains as treasurer of the Society.

GWS Dues to Increase for First Time in Ten Years

The GWS Board has approved an increase in the Society's dues schedule, effective January 1, 2003. These increases are the first since 1992. The Board decided to raise the dues for two reasons: to keep pace with steadily rising operating expenses, and to bring our dues structure more in line with those of comparable professional societies. Annual dues for regular individual memberships go to \$45 (from \$35), institutional memberships increase to \$100 (from \$35), patron memberships will be \$1,000 (from \$500), and supporting memberships go to a flat \$150. Life memberships will go up to \$500 (from \$350); these can still be paid in two annual installments. Annual student memberships remain unchanged at \$25. In addition, there is now a new category: "sustaining life membership." It is meant to encourage life members to continue to contribute to the GWS on a regular basis by committing to pledge \$45 per year over the cost of a life membership. This option is open to both existing life members and newly joining ones.

2003 Joint Conference Preparations in Full Swing

Preparations are going full-bore for “Protecting Our Diverse Heritage: The Role of Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites,” the joint meeting of the GWS and the National Park Service Cultural Resources 2003 conferences. An unprecedented 134 sessions have been scheduled to accommodate a program that is at once that most diverse and most comprehensive of any meeting the GWS has been involved in. With the addition of the CR2003 conference to the event, there is fine balance in the program, with natural, cultural, and interdisciplinary sessions each occupying about a third of the program. By the time you read this, registration for the joint conference should be underway, and you will be able to view the entire program on-line. Go to the conference website at

<http://www.georgewright.org/2003.html>

and follow the links to the registration form and program information. Remember, GWS members attend at a discount!

Boyd Evison 1933-2002

Boyd Evison, a leading figure in the National Park Service for 42 years, died on October 4, of cancer. He was 69.

Boyd began working for the National Park Service as a fire control aide in Grand Teton National Park, and continued as a permanent ranger in Petrified Forest National Park. He served as superintendent of Saguaro, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, Grand Canyon, and Great Smoky Mountains national parks. He was also assistant director for operations in Washington, D.C. and regional director in Alaska during the Exxon Valdez oil spill episode.

When he retired from the National Park Service in 1994, he became executive director of the Grand Teton Natural History Association, and is credited for expanding scientific and educational programs there.

Boyd earned the George Melendez Wright Award in 2002.

Ray Dasmann 1919-2002

Raymond F. Dasmann, professor, and pioneer in the field of international environmentalism, died of pneumonia November 5. He was 83. He was instrumental in the formation of several of the early conferences of the Society, and gave the paper “World Parks, People, and Land Use” at the 1986 conference in Fort Collins. Ray Dasmann wrote more than a dozen books, including “The Destruction of California,” “Environmental Conservation” and “Wildlife Biology.” Also, earlier this year he published his memoir “Called by the Wild: The Autobiography of a Conservationist.”

He was a native of San Francisco, and after WW2 he studied under Starker Leopold, earning a B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley. He was a professor of wildlife management at Humboldt State University, and later, professor of biology at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

The State of the Society:

A Report from the GWS President



The Board of the George Wright Society recently concluded its annual meeting and as I prepare to step down at the conclusion of my term as president and as a Board member, it seems appropriate to share with the membership a status report. In my opinion, the Society is strong as we begin 2003.

On pages 7 and 8 in this issue of *The George Wright Forum*, you'll see the Society's new five-year Strategic Statement in which the Board defines who we are as a Society and what we hope to accomplish over the next five years. There's always been some tension between the pride over what we accomplish well and the desire to become something more, and this subject of "who we want to be" is always a topic of vigorous discussion at Board meetings. We have now said that we want to grow about 50% in membership, and broaden somewhat who we reach out to. We've set some targets for growth that are ambitious but achievable. Critically, however, we have said that we are proud to be the sponsor of the conferences and the *Forum* and believe that those shall remain our primary "products." In other words, we do not intend to change the face of the Society significantly. While to some that may look like a statement of contentment and lack of ambition, I think it is a modest but forward-looking and realistic assessment of who we are and what we do best. Hopefully the Board will measure its progress against the

Strategic Statement each year so that we indeed do achieve the "stretch" goals within the five-year timeframe. Former Board member Neil Munro really pushed us towards the adoption of a simple, workable, strategic plan, and deserves all of our thanks.

The finances of the Society are sound for the time being, although the last two years have been tough ones due to the market's downturn. Early in 2002, at outgoing Board member Peter Brinkley's urging, we modified our investment mix to reduce the Society's stock market exposure. That decision did the Society extremely well this year considering the poor performance of the stock market. The anguish over that decision, however, and subsequent discussions about further refining our asset allocation, demonstrated amply that the Board needs to do a regular review of our portfolio, and an efficient means of making changes when they are appropriate. We need to measure our performance against benchmarks we set in advance, and be dispassionate about decisions to hold tight or move our assets, always while keeping

foremost in our minds the long-term goals for the Society. I'm very pleased that at this meeting we adopted a financial strategy that does just that, thanks to efforts of Dwight Pitcaithley. Still, we recognize that while we are in reasonably good financial shape for the short term, our long-term financial sustainability is worrisome, and so we've established a fundraising committee, led by Rick Smith. The committee's charge is to develop realistic, achievable strategies for raising funds that fit within the scope of the GWS strategic statement. Lastly, we made some decisions about membership dues, conference registration fees, and the pricing of our conference services that will improve our bottom line. We hope the membership will be supportive, particularly of the dues increase, the first since 1992 (see "Society News, Notes & Mail" for details).

I'm very pleased to report that we (finally) established a framework, and set aside funds, for a modest retirement program for Executive Director Dave Harmon this year, something that is long overdue. We will match Dave's tax-deferred contributions up to 5% of his salary. We also brought Emily Dekker-Fiala onto the staff, on a part-time basis, which has been an outstanding decision and has both improved our capability and provided some modest stability for Emily as well. Previously, Emily has been a contract employee, providing conference services on a reimbursable basis.

The biannual conference, is, of course, the Society's flagship event, and in November the conference com-

mittee, led by Dave Parsons, reviewed the abstracts and set up the framework of the program for the 2003 conference. With the explicit addition of the NPS Cultural Resources 2003 component, this conference looks like it could be the largest and most successful to date. The prospect of travel freezes and budget cuts in the federal government, however, loom over the conference and threaten to derail it, and with it, the needed influx of cash the Society relies on in non-conference years. While this makes me very nervous, I'm also confident that the conference committee and the executive staff are monitoring this closely and will do whatever is appropriate if circumstances change. If the conference is successful, it's my hope that we finally lay to rest the myth that the GWS conference is primarily for and about natural resources, and that the cultural community embraces this venue fully. My hope is that we continue to have the broad and balanced participation but that we no longer need to label the conference as a joint GWS-CR meeting—that it is understood that a GWS meeting *is* for all resource management professionals.

The Board, of course, is the leadership body of your Society. The 2002 election was one of the most contested in years, and we are very pleased to add John Reynolds and Bruce Kilgore to our midst. With Rick Smith, that will now make three NPS retirees on the Board, an interesting trend. The Board has also appointed Jerry Emory, a research officer at the Moore Foundation in San Francisco. The Board at this writing is considering one addi-

tional appointment to fill out its ranks, but has not yet make that decision. The Board will be holding quarterly conference calls so the momentum of the annual meeting is not lost and we continue to make progress on our goals. It will be my pleasure to turn the president's gavel over to Denny Fenn, who will have a one-year term as president since he only has the one remaining year on the Board. In many ways, this will be a transition year as there are many new members of the Board and collectively the Board and the membership will have the chance to determine where we are heading for the next several years. We decided to make sure there are opportunities at

the April conference for the membership to talk with the Board to express its concerns and goals for the next year.

In sum, I believe we are in good shape and will be in even better shape in the next few years provided we use the strategic statement and financial strategy as guidelines and targets for our programs and actions, revising and updating them as needed when circumstances and goals change. It has been my pleasure and honor to be president of the Society these last two years, and a Board member for the last six.

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Civic Engagement at Sites of Conscience

Introduction: The National Park Service and Civic Engagement

I am pleased to serve as the guest editor for this special issue of *The George Wright Forum* which focuses on the National Park Service (NPS) and the agency's incipient civic engagement initiative. Although civic engagement is equally relevant to sites based in natural and cultural resources, this issue focuses on cultural resource parks and sites. Civic engagement encompasses both the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and a commitment to act accordingly. In a democracy such as ours, every citizen needs to make moral distinctions in civic life and act upon them. In *Democracy is a Discussion*, Sondra Myers writes that the engagement of citizens "in discussion of public issues for the purposes of making informed decisions, resolving conflicts, seeking common ground, and affirming their rights and responsibilities, is essential to the development and sustenance of democracy."¹

These notions have real implications for the practice of public history in the National Park Service. In a report published in 2001, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*, the National Park System Advisory Board called on the agency to fulfill its promise in the 21st century. The board asserted that, "in many ways, the National Park Service is our nation's Department of Heritage.... Parks should be not just recreational destinations, but springboards, for personal journeys of intellectual and cultural enrichment.... [We] must ensure that the American story is told faithfully, completely, and accurately.... Our nation's history is our civic glue."²

This report strongly influenced the thinking of NPS Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust, who conceived the agency's civic engage-

ment initiative. In response to a number of critical challenges in National Park Service sites and programs, she asked that superintendents, educational and interpretive specialists, and resource professionals of the Northeast Region organize a workshop focused on civic engagement and the agency. I had the distinct privilege of serving as the coordinator of the workshop, which was held in New York City in December 2001. The meeting brought together park managers, resource specialists, public historians, scholars, and museum professionals to discuss how national parks can become centers for civic engagement. Out of that workshop the agency developed the 2002 report, *The National Park Service and Civic Engagement*, which serves both as a summary of the workshop and an outline for further steps. During the work-

shop sessions, participants sought to pursue the recommendations of the National Park System Advisory Board and to build on similar concepts articulated in NPS policy, as well as on changes in interpretive programming that have been developed during the past decade.

The workshop participants recommended the following preliminary actions:

- Publishing and distributing the report from the workshop.
- Holding additional workshops in other parts of the country.
- Providing professional development opportunities for park managers, interpreters, and resource managers to cultivate a broader context in interpretation, to facilitate work with communities on complex issues, and to embrace civic engagement in day-to-day park operations.
- Convening an NPS-wide working group on civic engagement to advance the initiative.
- Creating an internal website to facilitate communication throughout the NPS and to promote successes in the agency.³

There has been progress towards the realization of these preliminary action items. As noted above, the Northeast Region of the NPS published the workshop report in 2002.⁴ In December 2002, the NPS Southeast Region convened a civic engagement workshop in Atlanta. (The publication deadline for this introduction precluded a report on this meeting.) In spring 2003, I will report on the civic engagement initiative as part of a

panel at the annual meeting of the National Council on Public History. Also this spring there will be a session on the initiative at the George Wright Society–National Park Service joint conference, “Protecting Our Diverse Heritage.” In addition, the Northeast Regional staff of the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) program has recently developed, in conjunction with the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City, the Sites of Social Conscience initiative within the NHL program.

How does the present collection of essays fit within the civic engagement initiative? For one thing, most of the authors—Laura Gates, Frank Hays, Sarah Craighead, Liz Sevchenko, and Gay Vietzke—participated in the New York City workshop. All of the essays presented here address issues at the very core of this initiative. The National Park System Advisory Board report stated the matter succinctly: “The study of our nation’s history, formal and informal, is an essential part of our civic education. In a democratic society such as ours, it is important to understand the journey of liberty and justice, together with the economic, social, religious, and other forces that barred or opened the ways for our ancestors, and the distances yet to be covered.”⁵ At the NPS Discovery 2000 conference, John Hope Franklin, chair of the National Park System Advisory Board, elaborated upon this idea in his keynote address: “The places that commemorate sad history are not places in which we wallow, or wallow in remorse, but instead places in which we may be moved to a new resolve, to be better citizens....

Explaining history from a variety of angles makes it not only more interesting, but also more true. When it is more true, more people come to feel that they have a part in it. That is where patriotism and loyalty intersect with truth.”⁶

I will now turn to each essay and provide some brief introductory remarks that place each within the framework of the civic engagement initiative.

Fort Sumter National Monument and Cane River Creole National Historical Park both feature slavery in their park stories. With respect to Fort Sumter, Superintendent John Tucker indicates how his park’s treatment of slavery has shifted its focus recently to provide greater context for how slavery was a root cause of the outbreak of the war that is commemorated at the site. Interpreters at Fort Sumter also relate the park’s historical themes to more recent issues by choosing to interpret civil rights at the site. Cane River, as Superintendent Laura Gates relates, is expanding the context for understanding plantations by having visitors enter the cultural landscape of this new park through the working part of the plantation, thus positioning the story of the work lives of the former slaves in the forefront of the narrative.

In both instances, what is demonstrated is the centrality of historical context. Although furnishings of historic houses and troop movements of a specific battle are critically important to a place, the value of a particular site goes far beyond the details of that site. Civil War-era parks that fail to address slavery as being a chief cause of the

war tell a terribly flawed story. They also fail to provide an environment wherein visitors can have a civic engagement experience that teaches the entire truth about the past and allows them to make linkages between that past and contemporary America.

A 1998 report from the superintendents of Civil War battlefields, *Holding the High Ground: Principles and Strategies for Managing and Interpreting Civil War Battlefield Landscapes*, provided direction for placing battlefield stories within the social, economic, and political context of the period. In 1999, Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., inserted important language into the fiscal year 2000 Department of the Interior appropriation legislation, which concluded, in part, that “Civil War battlefields are often weak or missing vital information about the role that the institution of slavery played in causing the American Civil War.” The Secretary of the Interior was directed to encourage NPS managers at Civil War sites to “recognize and include in all of their public displays and multi-media educational presentations the unique role that the institution of slavery played in causing the Civil War and its role, if any, at the individual battle sites.” There has been significant change at NPS Civil War sites—and also resistance to broadening the story. NPS Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley has been a national leader in this effort to transform the NPS culture at battlefield sites from places where only the story of the battle is told to a place where the battle is placed within its critical context. Pitcaithley has also written about these developments.⁷

The report *Rethinking the National Parks* argues that NPS should make efforts to connect indigenous peoples with “parks and other areas of special significance to strengthen their living cultures.”⁸ Sarah Craighead, formerly superintendent at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, and now superintendent at Saguaro National Park, writes about the Washita site, established in 1996. It marks the place of Custer’s 1868 attack on a sleeping Cheyenne village. The collaboration which she describes between the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, while not without problems, is emblematic of how civic engagement can work to enhance a park’s operation and its relationship with key stakeholder groups.

Superintendent Frank Hays writes about a new park, Manzanar National Historic Site. According to Pitcaithley, a string of congressional acts in the 1990s designated new kinds of historical parks, “parks that require that we understand the past, not simply celebrate it. They require us to think about the past, not merely feel good about the past.” These new parks include Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, Lower East Side Tenement National Historic Site, Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, Tuskegee Army National Historic Site, Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, and Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site.⁹ The lessons of civic engagement with respect to Manzanar focus on two important areas: how we manage our cultural resources and how we cooperate with key stakeholders. Today, very little of the cultural

landscape of this prison center for Japanese Americans remains intact and thus it is difficult for visitors to comprehend the harsh conditions that the internees endured. Without that context, however, visitors will also find it a real challenge to understand the story of massive denial of civil liberties and due process, the relevance of this episode to racial profiling in today’s America, and more. So, largely as a result of the active participation of Japanese Americans in the planning process, the park’s general management plan calls for the reconstruction of the camp’s barbed wire fence and entrance sign, which have been completed, the reconstruction of one guard tower, and the attempt to relocate and restore one or more of the camp barracks buildings.

Liz Sevcenko writes about the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, established in 1999. It was founded by nine agencies and organizations from around the world, including the Northeast Region of the National Park Service and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. The central purpose of the coalition is the strengthening of connections between the past and the present. Clearly, this aim is central to the successful realization of civic engagement. In order to be active citizens, visitors to international sites need to understand the past and its relationship to the present. The National Park System Advisory Board report states: “Understanding the relevance of past experiences to present conditions allows us to confront today’s issues with a deeper awareness of the alternatives before us.”¹⁰

Louis Hutchins and Gay Vietzke relate the experiences of the NPS technical assistance team that visited one of the International Coalition members. Established only a few years ago, the Gulag Museum near Perm, Russia, preserves one of the last surviving Stalinist-era labor camps. Like other Coalition members, the Gulag Museum not only preserves and interprets the powerful history of the site but also acts as a stimulus for discussion, debate, and civic engagement in present-day Russia. The mission of the Gulag Museum is “to promote democratic values and civil consciousness in contemporary Russian society through preservation of the last Soviet political camp as a vivid reminder of repression, and an important historical and cultural monument.”

One could easily substitute “national park” for “museum” in the following: “Civic engagement occurs when museum and community intersect—in subtle and overt ways, over time, and as an accepted and natural

way of doing business. The museum becomes ... an active, visible player in civic life, a safe haven, and a trusted incubator of change.”¹¹ The National Park System Advisory Board’s 2001 study concluded: “As a nation, we protect our heritage to ensure a more complete understanding of the forces that shape our lives and future. National parks are key institutions created for that purpose, chapters in the ever expanding story of America.... By caring for the parks and conveying the park ethic, we care for ourselves and act on behalf of the future. The larger purpose of this mission is to build a citizenry that is committed to conserving its heritage and its home on earth.”¹² In this sense, national parks are implicitly centers of civic engagement. However, as these essays demonstrate, successful civic engagement requires focused and deliberate attention. Fully implemented, civic engagement will enable the National Park Service to realize its mission for the 21st century.

Endnotes

1. Sondra Myers, *Democracy is a Discussion—Civic Engagement in Old and New Democracies* (New London: Connecticut College, 1996), p. viii.
2. National Park System Advisory Board, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2001), p. 14.
3. National Park Service Northeast Region, *The National Park Service and Civic Engagement* (Philadelphia: National Park Service, 2002), p. 14.
4. To obtain a copy, please write to: Northeast Regional Director, NPS, 200 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2878.
5. *Rethinking the National Parks*, p. 14.
6. Cited in *The National Park Service and Civic Engagement*, p. 6.
7. See Dwight Pitcaithley, “Barbara Kingsolver and the Challenge of Public History,” and James Horton, “Presenting History: The Perils of Telling America’s Racial Story,” in *The Public Historian*, Fall 1999, Vol. 21, No. 4.
8. *Rethinking the National Parks*, p. 21.
9. Dwight Pitcaithley, “Evolution of the NPS Since 1990,” talk at the Civic Engagement workshop, New York, December 6, 2001.
10. *Rethinking the National Parks*, p. 10.
11. Eileen Hirzy, *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (Washington, D.C.: American

Association of Museums, 2002), p. 9.

12. *Rethinking the National Parks*, p. 30.

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Interpreting Slavery and Civil Rights at Fort Sumter National Monument

As we waited for Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., to arrive late one fall day in 1997, we wondered aloud as to the real purpose of his visit. To my knowledge, never before had a twentieth-century African American congressman representing a Northern state set foot on Fort Sumter—much less any congressman from Illinois. As with any good bureaucratic system, the park received calls from other Civil War battlefield superintendents as Jackson traveled through Georgia following the trail of General William Tecumseh Sherman traveled some 133 years past. As he moved about the South, we heard about his impression of the battlefields and the ongoing interpretive efforts. Was Jackson planning to lay waste to these park interpretive efforts and the park managers? What would be his impression of Fort Sumter and the interpretive efforts underway? Would he be impressed with Fort Sumter and the story surrounding its important role in American history? Would the congressman chastise the staff for not accomplishing his agenda items? As is the case for most VIP tours, the congressman was running late.

Fort Sumter National Monument was authorized in April 1948 by a simple act of Congress. The legislation states that the monument “shall be a public national memorial commemorating historical events at or near Fort Sumter.” Without further direction from Congress, the National Park Service (NPS) relied upon its staff to clarify the interpretive purposes for Fort Sumter National Monument. Interpretation consisted of guides leading small groups to interesting spots within the fort.

During this period, the NPS interpretive focus for battlefields was on the “slice of time commemorative experience.” In all likelihood, this approach to interpretation came out of the battlefield commemorations conducted by veteran’s groups such as the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the

Grand Army of the Republic in the post-Civil War period. Most efforts by these patriotic and civic organizations focused on healing the division between North and South. Reuniting the country was a top priority. Military parks were authorized to commemorate the heroic events and deeds that occurred on the hallowed grounds where blood was spilled by both Northern and Southern soldiers. Congress had abandoned efforts at Reconstruction in the South and lacked the resolve necessary to guarantee the rights of citizenship to newly freed slaves. The country was not ready for the social revolution reflected in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. The role of slavery and the rights promised to black Americans were forgotten in the rush to reunify the country and memorial-

ize a brothers' war. The nation's military parks reflected this atmosphere.

Mid-twentieth century America was fraught with civil unrest as the freedoms promised 100 years ago began to emerge. It was during this era of emerging civil rights that Fort Sumter's interpretive program began to take shape. When NPS published the first master plan for Fort Sumter in the 1950s, the fort's interpretive program was based on the 1860 election of President Abraham Lincoln, the secession of South Carolina, and the subsequent movement of Major Robert Anderson from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. The major focus was on the initial Confederate attack of 1861 and the Federal bombardments of 1863 and 1864, known as the Siege of Charleston. These components made up the interpretive programs offered at the fort.

During the following decade, once the archeology was completed, permanent exhibit facilities were needed to enhance the visitor experience at Fort Sumter. A new museum was constructed with Mission 66 funding in the disappearing gun position of Battery Huger—an Endicott Battery completed in 1899. But the focus of interpretation did not appreciably expand with the museum exhibits. The events of 1861 and the bombardments of 1863-64 remained the central interpretive themes. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, interpretation changed little at Fort Sumter.

Clearly, two major influences were at work during the early years of Fort Sumter National Monument. First, as articulated by Thomas J. Pressly, was a "climate of opinion." Immediately

after Fort Sumter was authorized, the nation was again struggling in a very public fashion with questions of race and equality. From the adoption of the Constitution in 1787 to the 1950s, questions of citizenship and equality were enmeshed in the power of politics. Although the Civil War had freed the slaves and for a short time visited certain rights on them, by the turn of the twentieth century freedom was still very limited for African Americans.

As the nation entered the 1960s, Fort Sumter was preparing for the Civil War Centennial in 1961. Fort Sumter was sitting in Charleston Harbor, surrounded by one of the most conservative communities in the nation, as slave descendants began demonstrating for their rights across America. The seriousness of segregation was highlighted by events of the Civil War Centennial Commission in Charleston:

The manner in which those controversies and disputes could generate an atmosphere bearing at least some resemblance to a century earlier was illustrated at Charleston, South Carolina, in April of 1961, at the commemoration of the centennial of the beginning of hostilities at Fort Sumter. For that occasion, the Civil War Centennial Commission, an official body established by act of Congress, had arranged a "national assembly" of centennial organizations of the various States. When a Negro woman member of the New Jersey Centennial Commission reported that she had been denied a room at the headquarters hotel in Charleston because of her race, the Commissions of several "Northern" States announced that they would not take part in the assembly at Charleston. At the insistence of the President of the United States, the



Figure 1. Mission 66 exhibit at Fort Sumter. *National Park Service photo.*

place of meeting was transferred to the nearby non-segregated United States naval base. Thereupon, the members of the South Carolina Centennial Commission, almost as if they had read the stage directions from a script written in 1860-1861, seceded from the national Commission. Ultimately, two commemoration meetings were held, one under the auspices of the national Commission at the naval base, and a second meeting at the original headquarters hotel sponsored by "The Confederate States Centennial Conference." It thus seemed possible to re-create in the United States of the 1960's a recognizable facsimile of the climate of opinion of the 1860's, even if the occasion itself was momentous only as a symbol.¹

It was in this climate that Fort Sumter began forming its interpretative program.

The second major influence originated with the commemorative activities of both North and South after the war. Efforts to honor family heroes and comrades-in-arms led the nation to view battles as important events representing gallant behavior. It would have been far more difficult for America to discuss the causes of the war and the still-unfulfilled guarantees of citizenship. Similarly, the National Park Service followed this course throughout most of the 20th century. Park rangers preferred to discuss battlefield strategy and gallant actions by fallen heroes rather than discuss the actions and events that truly led to the opening shot at Fort Sumter.

To further confound the issue, in the 1970s NPS issued a new master plan for Fort Sumter. In this plan much of the emphasis was on Fort

Moultrie to ready it for the bicentennial of the nation. It is interesting that Fort Moultrie was to be developed much as an outdoor museum depicting seacoast defenses from 1776 to 1947. However, "Fort Sumter on the other hand, will be maintained and interpreted for public use and enjoyment as a 'slice of time'— [a] singularly significant period during the 200 years of coastal fortifications that is found in the history of the Civil War at Charleston."² Still the fundamental question of why the war started in Charleston was not answered.

Fort Sumter and Charleston's re-evaluation of the Civil War could not wait any longer. With the election of Mayor Joseph P. Riley in 1975, Charleston would soon recognize that its early economy was actually based on rice, not "King Cotton." From this understanding, Charlestonians have begun to realize that highly skilled slaves were imported from the Gold Coast of Africa to cultivate the many rice fields of the Lowcountry, making large profits for the planter class. The revelation that African slaves were not imported just for their laboring ability but for their intellect as well has made a significant difference in presenting the story of the Atlantic slave trade. What has long been obvious in academia and confirmed by oral traditions is finally making its way into the streets. Now we all can learn about the contributions of our ancestors.

By the 1990s, NPS interpretive rangers were beginning to make a re-evaluation of the role of holistic interpretation in programming within the national parks. Those responsible for interpretation began this re-evaluation

long before Congress or the NPS Washington office identified it as a need. Interpretive efforts such as those begun at Fort Sumter in the early 1990s were reflected in many Civil War sites around the country. Washington supported these individual park efforts. NPS regional offices helped formalize the efforts with a multi-regional conference of battlefield superintendents, held in Nashville during the summer of 1997.

In this new environment, the interpretation at Fort Sumter began to change. At the beginning of the last decade, the park interpretive program consisted of Lincoln's election and the Civil War era. Interpretive staffing was marginally sufficient to keep the visitor use sites open on a day-to-day basis. The park did not have a historian on staff. When the question "Why did the nation separate?" was asked, it could not be adequately answered.

Another of the driving forces in the Fort Sumter interpretive plan was a need to change the vintage Mission 66 exhibits that had served the park since 1961. The exhibit space did not meet the basic Life Safety Code, nor was it fully accessible. In addition, it was recognized that "the exhibits have a very narrow focus on Civil War events 1861-65, with little information on the constitutional issues of the preceding decades that led to the conflict. In the same manner, the significance of antebellum Charleston as a powerful and independent social, economic, and political force is not emphasized."³ The objective outlined in the interpretive plan was to "enhance public understanding of the social, economic, and political events leading up to

the Civil War.”⁴ From this exercise, three basic questions arose: Why did the nation separate? What role did Fort Sumter play in the Civil War? What will the visitor see at Fort Sumter today?

The 1960s-era museum at Fort Sumter was redone by park staff in the early 1990s. Completed in 1995, the new museum retained many of the treasured artifacts that were a part of the old museum, exhibited in fresh surroundings with a more sweeping story line. Blocking out damaging sunlight and providing handicap accessibility were important priorities designed to safeguard artifacts and improve the visitor experience. Another high priority was bringing the text in line with current scholar-

ship. New exhibit text and graphics includes an introductory section that deals with the growth of sectionalism, antebellum politics, and slavery as the causes of secession and war. Most of the exhibit remains site-specific, dealing with topics such as the fort’s construction, people and events leading to the firing of the first shot of the Civil War, and what happened to the fort during the ensuing war. A section was added on the participation of African Americans in the war, highlighting the role of the 54th Massachusetts on nearby Morris Island.

An even more ambitious exhibit project began in the fall of 1999 with exhibit planning for the new Fort Sumter tour boat facility at Liberty Square. The new building was sched-



Figure 2. 1990s renovation of exhibits. *National Park Service photo.*



Figure 3. Liberty Square ferry terminal. *National Park Service photo.*

uled to open in June 2001. Here was the opportunity to prepare the visitor for the Fort Sumter experience on the mainland before boarding the ferry. Decades earlier, planning had begun to locate a new Fort Sumter departure site in downtown Charleston. First conceived in 1961, it was not to be a reality until 40 years later. Two major objectives were included at the outset of the 1990s planning effort. One, the original garrison flag would be displayed in the new facility. The garrison flag that flew over Fort Sumter from December 26, 1860, until April 11, 1861, had been on display at the fort from 1961 until 1980. It was removed and sent to the NPS conservation center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Prior to the planned opening of the new tour boat facility, the flag would be treated and placed in a permanent container for exhibit. Secondly, the new dock facility exhibit would emphasize the causes leading to the outbreak of the Civil War. The exhibits at Fort Sumter would continue to provide interpretation regarding the events of the war in Charleston Harbor.

About the same time, NPS directors such as Roger Kennedy began to challenge the field ranger to do a better job of relating sites to the changing demographics in America. Director Kennedy wanted the parks to better meet the needs of the American population by the year 2000. We were

encouraged to not repeat the mistakes of 1970s environmental education by preparing “stand-alone” programs but rather to fully integrate interpretive efforts with professional scholarship. The parks were encouraged to step into the professional community to discuss interpretive ideas and approaches taken in the parks to provide visitor understanding.

Parks were looking for ways to ensure full implementation of a new interpretive effort centered around the concept of holistic interpretation. After the 1994 reorganization of the national park management system, parks were aligned within geographic groups called “clusters.” Fort Sumter was a park of the Atlantic Coast Cluster. During a meeting of park managers representing the twenty-four parks in the cluster, the managers realized that, thematically, these parks could not be easily linked because of the multitude and variety of interpretive themes arrayed among them—themes that were themselves representative of a geographic diversity that ranges from Cape Hatteras south to Cape Canaveral and inland to Tuskegee, Alabama. However, the parks could be linked through honest and forthright interpretation at each site that included all people and all themes appropriate to each park. So in May of 1998 each superintendent in the Atlantic Coast Cluster agreed to five principles:

1. We will enlighten our visitors with a holistic interpretive experience, well told and rooted in the park’s compelling story.
2. We will not be deterred by controversy in presenting the park’s compelling story.

3. We will seek to make the story interesting to the visitor.
4. We will seek to share with all visitors the exclusiveness and plurality that the park’s story represents.
5. We will ensure that the story is factual and based upon the highest-quality research available.⁵

One of the first major efforts to begin implementing a broader approach to Civil War interpretation in parks began with a conference in Nashville originally intended to discuss external land issues surrounding parks. However, the managers represented there chose to include proposals for interpreting Civil War battlefields in the conference proceedings and recommendations. The published findings captured the basis for most Civil War interpretation. “We have replaced the reminiscences of returning veterans with the interpretation stressing military tactics and strategy they so loved. In so doing, we have forgotten that the audience of the veterans knew the context of the war. We often do not provide adequate context for the site-related stories we tell.”⁶ As a result of this thoughtful observation, a guiding principle was developed to help with interpreting the Civil War:

Battlefield interpretation must establish the site’s particular place in the continuum of war, illuminate the social, economic, and cultural issues that caused or were affected by the war, illustrate the breadth of human experience during the period, and establish the relevance of the war to people today.... They [museum, historic sites, and classrooms] should spark or encourage or provide a personal journey of historical inquiry.... Changing perceptions about the past, broadening our understanding of what history is and how it is construct-

ed, is at the core of our profession.⁷

Soon following the Nashville conference, several major events happened in the National Park Service that would have a lasting impact on the way Civil War history is interpreted. With Congressman Jackson's visit and subsequent legislation, the efforts of many in the National Park System to change interpretation came to the forefront. In an NPS report to Congress, *Interpretation at Civil War Sites* (published in 2000), an overview of current NPS Civil War site interpretation was included.

A review of the survey reveals that there is room for improvement in all categories including exhibits, way-sides, films, web sites, publications and personal service programs. Some Civil War sites clearly are covering the causes of the Civil War better than others. In general there is a desire on the part of battlefield managers to improve all areas of interpretation. This desire is thwarted primarily by limited staff and resources in relationship to the amount of media that needs to be made current both technically and academically.⁸

The next major step in battlefield interpretation was "Rally on the High Ground," a conference held in Washington, D.C., on May 8 and 9, 2000. In the introduction, Congressman Jackson's legislative language was noted. It directed the Secretary of the Interior *"to encourage Civil War battle sites to recognize and include in all of their public displays and multimedia educational presentations the unique role that the institution of slavery played in causing the Civil War."* Although simple in content, it has raised a public debate regarding prop-

er interpretation at Civil War battlefields. Some still believe that the war was about glory and battle tactics and should remain a "slice of time" commemorating the events and men who played them out on the battlefield. Others "begged to differ" on the causes of the war, referring to "states' rights" versus "slavery" as the real cause. This is illustrated in a letter from Dwight Pitcaithley, chief historian of the National Park Service, to a concerned citizen who had objected to NPS's interpretation at Civil War battlefields and raised two points often debated in the public arena. "Your letter," Pitcaithley wrote, "raises two concerns."

The first is that Civil War battlefields were established so that future generations could learn about military actions and remember and honor the men who fought in these special places.... Your second concern is that the National Park Service should not address causes of the war at these places and that, in any event, slavery was not the immediate cause of the war.⁹

Pitcaithley went on to point out that NPS will continue to provide the history of Civil War battles. This is a fundamental part of the need for battlefield interpretation. In reference to the second concern, he went on to say:

National Park Service interpretive programs throughout the country are designed to explain what happened at a particular park, discuss why it happened, and assess its significance. We do this at parks as diverse as presidential birthplaces, the site of the battle of the Little Bighorn and at the U.S.S. ARIZONA in Pearl Harbor. Understanding why an event happened is essential to making meaningful an event as tragic as the

American Civil War. It is also important to distinguish between the causes of the war and the reasons why individuals, North and South, fought. The first has to do with political interest and leadership while the second stems from varied political, personal, and individual responses to the unfolding secession crisis.¹⁰

Last year, the National Park System Advisory Board's report *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century* made these observations of the National Park Service:

The public looks upon national parks almost as a metaphor for America itself. But there is another image emerging here, a picture of a National Park Service as a sleeping giant—beloved and respected, yes, but perhaps too cautious, too resistant to change, too reluctant to engage the challenges that must be addressed in the 21st century.¹¹

In other words, it is time for the Park Service to move out of the “box.” To do this, the Advisory Board recommended two specific items very pertinent to battlefield interpretation. NPS should:

- Embrace its mission, as educator, to become a more significant part of America's educational system by providing formal and informal programs for students and learners of all ages inside and outside park boundaries.
- Encourage the study of the American past, developing programs based on current scholarship, linking specific places to the narrative of our history, and encouraging a public exploration and discussion of America's experience.¹²

It was in this context that Fort Sumter National Monument was rethinking its overall management efforts as well. Long-range planning

within NPS had evolved since the park's 1974 master plan was issued. By the early 1990s it became apparent that development pressures surrounding the park and a dramatic increase in visitation necessitated changing park management. No longer could Fort Sumter sit on the sidelines with a limited presence in Charleston. Following a management objective workshop in November 1994, the park began real planning that would lead to a new general management plan (GMP) for Fort Sumter. More than twenty-five organizations and individuals were invited to participate in this workshop and subsequent public planning efforts.

The new GMP provides guidance to establish and direct the overall management, development, and uses in ways that will best serve visitors while preserving the historic resources contained within the park. In addition to planning elements, the document contains a statement of the park's mission and of its compelling story. The mission statement reads:

Fort Sumter National Monument commemorates defining moments in American history within a military continuum spanning more than a century and a half. Two seacoast fortifications preserve and interpret these stories. At Fort Moultrie, the first American naval victory over the British in 1776 galvanized the patriot's cause for independence. Less than a century later, America's most tragic conflict ignited with the first shots of the Civil War at Fort Sumter.¹³

The GMP is not an action plan. Action plans emanate from the GMP. For interpretive actions, the comprehensive interpretive plan is prepared and a long-range interpretive plan is

developed. During the GMP effort, the park staff also prepared the park's compelling story. The compelling story is used to succinctly tell the importance of the resources protected and is at the heart of the interpretive effort. It is used to train rangers regarding the importance of site-specific resources and is a significant part of the foundation for defining the

History provides us with defining moments from which we judge where we are with where we have been. The Civil War provides the United States with one of its critical defining moments that continues to play a vital role in defining ourselves as a Nation. Fort Sumter is the place where it began.

America's most tragic conflict ignited at Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, when a chain reaction of



Figure 4. Panorama of Liberty Square. *National Park Service photo.*

park's interpretive themes. It focuses the park's message on the essential, most relevant stories the site has to tell and how these stories fit into a larger scientific, historic, social, and economic context. Every visitor should receive the compelling story prior to his or her departure from the park. This is Fort Sumter's compelling story:

social, economic, and political events exploded into civil war. At the heart of these events was the issue of states' rights versus federal authority.

Fueled by decades of fire and confrontation, South Carolina seceded in protest of Lincoln's election and the social and economic changes sure to follow. With Fort Sumter as an unyielding bastion of Federal authority, the war became inevitable.

A powerful symbol to both the

South and the North, Fort Sumter remains a memorial to all who fought to hold it.¹⁴

With these documents underway or completed, the park embarked on a mission to answer the burning question, Why did the nation separate?

As work began on the exhibits, the question of what to name the new facility arose. Since the site was developed in partnership with the city of Charleston, applying a name by either organization would likely have resulted in "Aquarium Park" or "Fort Sumter Park." However, Mayor Joseph Riley and the author agreed at the outset to eliminate either of these extremes and look for something in the middle ground. Out of these joint efforts came the name "Liberty" as suggested by Robert Rosen, a Charleston historian and lawyer. "Square" was added to the name to differentiate between terms used within NPS (such as "Park") that might confuse the general public as to the role the site plays in Fort Sumter National Monument. Today the development site is known as "Liberty Square."

As it turned out, this choice of name was fortunate since the word "Liberty" became a unifying concept that finally brought into focus the interpretive themes of Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Fort Moultrie, and Fort Sumter National Monument under a single umbrella. A main objective for the new development site was to provide a gateway for the NPS in Charleston as well as to other NPS sites in the area. Liberty Square was able to do just that.

The word "Liberty" also provided a platform that allowed the staff to

explore the advancements of this ideal from our birth as a nation through the Civil Rights movement in the twentieth century. This idea was developed when Mayor Riley suggested the central fountain in the Liberty Square complex be dedicated to Septima Clark (1898-1987), a lifelong educator and civil rights activist. Clark lived in Charleston and worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King to extend real voting rights to the African American populations in the South. One of the quotes to be used at the fountain is from Clark: "Hating people, bearing hate in your heart, even though you may feel that you have been ill-treated, never accomplishes anything good.... Hate is only a canker that destroys."¹⁵

From this, a draft long-range interpretive plan was completed for Liberty Square and work began to implement its recommendations.

Liberty Square is also important as an appropriate location for the interpretation of liberty, a broad, regional theme in terms of Charleston's people, geography, and nearly four centuries of European and African settlement. Here, visitors will learn about people and events associated with the liberty theme expressed at any number of locations, including Fort Sumter National Monument, Fort Moultrie, and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site.¹⁶

With this charge the staff chose to use fixed media in the landscaped area to highlight contributions to America's liberties from the Constitution era to modern times. With the basic understanding that generally only white male property-owners over 21 years of age had any real liberties in 1787, the staff began to look at other moments in history to identify those who made

significant contributions to expanding the cause of liberty. Thirteen quotations from authors such as Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Franklin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Pearl S. Buck, and others are found on bronze markers scattered throughout outdoor garden rooms of Liberty Square. Each marker invites the visitor to reflect on the meanings of liberty. An introductory marker by NPS Chief Historian Pitcaithley reads:

In 1776 this nation embarked on a great experiment, an experiment based on the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal." It has not been a steady progression, there have been many bumps in the road, but along the way this country's sense of equality and liberty and justice have been expanded to include a broad range of people, people not originally envisioned in that original Declaration of Independence. The past, like the present, was filled with choices. We are not accountable for decisions made by those who came before. We do have a responsibility to study those decisions and learn from them, to understand them in context of those times, and to apply the lessons learned to better nurture this experiment in democracy we call the United States.

The exhibit plan for the new Fort Sumter visitor education center and dock facility at Liberty Square evolved out of a fall 1999 meeting between park staff and NPS personnel from the Denver Service Center and Harpers Ferry Design Center. The interior exhibits would provide orientation and enticement to visit the fort, exhibit and interpret the Garrison flag, and interpret the causes of the Civil War, with a special emphasis on the role of slavery in America and the role of

Charleston in particular.

The next planning meeting at the park was in February 2000. Park staff met with exhibit designer Krister Olmon from California; Anita Smith, the contracting officer and exhibit designer from the NPS Harpers Ferry Interpretive Center; NPS staff from the Denver Service Center; and historian Marie Tyler-McGraw of the NPS History Office in Washington, D.C. An outline and major themes came out of this meeting. Tyler-McGraw completed the initial research and writing for content development. Park staff also submitted research materials and potential graphics to Olmon that were incorporated in his concept package. Exactly two years later, in February 2002, the exhibits were finally installed. The interim period was filled with five major text revisions and numerous editorial changes, graphic selection and acquisition, and peer review as park staff writing exhibit text grappled with sensitive topics in a politically charged atmosphere.

Assigning both a military historian and a social historian to editing and writing the text meant that while it would be a cumbersome and at times contentious process, the end product would satisfy diverse interests. And this has happened. The use of language and graphics has been painfully examined. Terms such as "enslaved Africans," "slaves," "free persons of color," and "African Americans" were used with the knowledge that the exhibits will date themselves to 2001. The staff has used images of scarred backs as well as an enslaved body servant armed to fight for the Confederacy; they have incorporated

women's voices and used first-person quotes to flesh out the narrative. The voices calling for secession were very open about what institution they felt was threatened.

The final product closely resembled the original outline. Entitled "The First Shot: What Brought the Nation to Civil War at Fort Sumter?", the exhibit contains six sections, progressing from the wide Atlantic world of colonial times to the specific site of Fort Sumter in 1861. The sections are titled "Colonial Roots of the Conflict," "Ambiguities of the Constitution," "Antebellum United States," "Charleston in 1860," "South Carolina Declares its Independence," and "Fort Sumter: Countdown to Conflict." The introductory text reads:

When the Civil War finally exploded in Charleston Harbor, it was the result of a half-century of growing sectionalism. Escalating crises over property rights, human rights, states rights and constitutional rights divided the country as it expanded westward. Underlying all the economic, social and political rhetoric was the volatile question of slavery. Because its economic life had long depended on enslaved labor, South Carolina was the first state to secede when this way of life was threatened. Confederate forces fired the first shot in South Carolina. The federal government responded with force. Decades of compromise were over. The very nature of the Union was at stake.¹⁷

The input of Walter Edgar of the University of South Carolina and Bernard Powers of the College of Charleston was invaluable. They both reviewed the text over their semester breaks during Christmas 2000 and offered insightful suggestions to improve the content. Tyler-McGraw

and Pitcaithley were also instrumental in refining the text. Everyone on the park staff had an opportunity to critique the drafts. The problem with getting park historians to write exhibit text is that they tend to be wordy and nitpicky. Further, writing by committee can end up destroying any flow in the material. After all the agonizing and creative work, a product has been produced that will engage the visiting public.

As the draft progressed, the project attracted the interest of local politicians who wanted to review the park's federal viewpoint of the "Recent Unpleasantness." So far, the perception has passed muster. But there are rumblings. A week after the opening of the exhibits in mid-August 2001, a young woman darted into the exhibit hall and took a photograph of the large 20x36 replica of Major Anderson's 33-star garrison flag. The large flag hangs above the fragile original lying in a protective case to illustrate the size of the flag as it flew over Fort Sumter in 1861. The woman told the ranger on duty: "We will be back to protest the size of that flag." Since the September 11th attacks, no one has complained about the size of that U.S. flag.

Interpretation at Liberty Square has taken on a "shakedown" mode as operations begin to approach 100%. Ferries began departing the site on August 15, 2001. Permanent exhibit installation was completed on February 22, 2002. During the intervening months, between the time the facility opened and the permanent exhibits were installed, full-scale vinyl color prints of each permanent exhibit were hung on temporary plywood frames.



Figure 5. The 33-Star Garrison Flag. *National Park Service photo.*

This gave visitors a chance to see and comment on the exhibit program prior to its production. Several comments were received, ranging from glowing to condemning. Most were positive, appreciative, and constructive. But then there was the indignant professor from an unnamed university “from off” who also resides in the fair city of Charleston. He wrote a blistering critique in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, referring to the “tendentious text,” “single-visioned interpretation,” and “biased political agenda.”¹⁸ The lack of Confederate flags on exhibit caused him to urge readers to send letters of protest to Interior Secretary Gale Norton. On the other hand, an elderly black man asked for a

copy of the text dealing with the Constitution’s treatment of slavery, and of a Library of Congress photograph of an enslaved family. He wanted to take the documents home and show his grandchildren.

Historian Gaines Foster is quoted in *Interpretation at Civil War Sites*, the 2000 NPS report to Congress:

The rapid healing of national divisions and damaged southern self-image ... came at the cost of deriving little insight or wisdom from the past. Rather than looking at the war as a tragic failure and trying to understand it or even condemn it, Americans, North and South, chose to view it as a glorious time to be celebrated. Most ignored the fact that the nation failed to resolve the debate over the nature of the Union and to eliminate the con-

traditions between its egalitarian ideals and the institution of slavery without resort to a bloody civil war. Instead, they celebrated the War's triumphant nationalism and martial glory.¹⁹

Change is difficult. Even for the dedicated staff assembled at Fort Sumter, changing Civil War interpretation was difficult. Each of us brings to the table a particular set of experiences, differing education, and varied cultural backgrounds depending on to whom we were born, where we lived, and how we were educated. Much has been done over the past ten years to implement an expanded interpretive program. It has involved increasing staff understanding and perception and broadening our community partnerships. The staff has participated in conferences, training programs, dedications, special resource studies, sensitivity sessions, and diverse cultural events to help with the transition. Today the staff sits on the "point of the sword" for the National Park Service doing its job. They are prepared to tell the story faithfully, completely, and accurately.

In 1997, as Congressman Jackson walked through the Fort Sumter museum exhibit, he noted the introductory panel outlining slavery and the war. He smiled and said, "Good." Then followed three hours of debate and discussion as we stood on the Fort Sumter parade ground. Our thoughts, beliefs, and opinions were challenged

time and time again. It was obvious: Jackson had done his homework.

The Civil War still molds and shapes opinions about people and sections of the country. Its influence reigns over the country as an unseen spirit. The war was not an isolated event that occurred 140 years ago and is now forgotten. The politics of the war and its repercussions remain with us and influence us every day, from the president to the homeless drug addict sleeping on a park bench. It is time for us to understand and place in perspective the American Civil War.

National Park Service interpretation began at Fort Sumter during a period of major civil strife and demonstration. Fifty years hence, that interpretation is clearly articulating the causes of the war in an open forum never before seen in the NPS. Times have changed, staff have changed, and understanding and appreciation have changed as well. Maybe 50 years from now we will finally grasp the importance of the Civil War in American life.

Today, the park has made many changes to expand its interpretive programming. Revisions have occurred with the introductory program for the visitor to Fort Sumter, exhibits in the Fort Sumter Museum, the NPS handbook for Fort Sumter, the Fort Sumter brochure, as well as the production of many site bulletins. Minority visitation has increased from two to seven percent. But much remains to be done.

[Ed. note: this paper was originally presented at the Organization of American Historians / National Council on Public History annual meeting, April 2002, Washington, D.C.]

Endnotes

1. Pressly, *Americans Interpret*, p. 8.
2. National Park Service, *Master Plan*, Fort Sumter National Monument, 1974, p. 2.
3. National Park Service, *Interpretive Prospectus, 1990: Fort Sumter National Monument, Fort Moultrie and Charles Pinckney National Historic Site*, p. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. National Park Service, Atlantic Coast Cluster agreement, July 15, 1998.
6. National Park Service, draft Nashville Cconference summary, "Holding the High Ground," August 1998, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 8. Draft Nashville conference summary, "Holding the High Ground," August 1998, p. 8.
8. National Park Service, *Interpretation at Civil War Sites: A Report to Congress*, March 2000, p. 5.
9. Official correspondence from Dwight Pitcaithley to Ms. Lee, October 24, 2000.
10. *Ibid.*
11. National Park System Advisory Board, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society), p. 8.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
13. National Park Service, *General Management Plan*, 1998, p. 17.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15. Fort Sumter National Monument park files.
16. National Park Service, "Draft Long-Range Interpretive Plan," p. 3.
17. Fort Sumter Visitor Education Center Exhibit text, Liberty Square, 2001.
18. Letter to the editor, *Charleston Post & Courier*, Charleston, S.C., September 7, 2001.
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Frankly, Scarlett, We Do Give a Damn: The Making of a New National Park

In this paper I will be discussing how the National Park Service (NPS) came to Natchitoches, Louisiana, and what I have learned from the experience. I will discuss how I learned that the concepts of race and culture are far more complex in Louisiana, especially in that part of Louisiana, than I ever could have imagined. I will look at more lessons in something we all know: that it is the responsibility of managers to seek out the best available scholarship, that more inclusive knowledge of history is as difficult to learn as it is difficult to interpret, and that the subtleties of history and culture are the things that make it significant.

Natchitoches, Louisiana, is in the northwestern part of the state, about a five-hour drive from both New Orleans and Dallas. Settled by the French in 1714 and known as the first permanent European settlement in Louisiana Purchase Territory, a French fort developed near the location of a large Caddo Indian village. Cane River originally was the main channel of the Red River, but natural and human-caused alterations during the 19th century changed the course of the river, so Cane River became more of an oxbow, although it remained a functional shipping route through the early 20th century. Natchitoches prehistorically and historically was a crossroads of overland and water trade routes.

In 1721 the Spanish established a presidio at Los Adaes, about 15 miles west of Natchitoches, with the intent of halting French expansion into Texas. The proximity of the French and Spanish military installations brought about a frontier interaction among the French, Spanish, and

Native Americans in the area. And this is part of the cultural complexity of the Cane River area. But to understand better the complexities of race and culture, let us run through a very short course in Louisiana history.

During the time of French rule in Louisiana (1718-1763), the *Code Noir* of 1724 enforced Catholicism on all settlers. As Caryn Cosse Bell noted in her book *The Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana*, the code “recognized the moral personality of the slave ... [and] required that bondsmen be instructed in the Catholic religion and administered the sacraments of baptism, marriage, penance, and extreme unction. Other provisions forbade the separation of a married couple and their children under fourteen years of age and prohibited slaves from laboring on Sundays and other Catholic holy days. The code sought to ensure social and political stability by assimilating slaves and free blacks into the Christian community.”¹ The French, in theory, believed that the enslaved were human beings with

souls.

French soldiers and adventurers had settled first at Arkansas Post in 1686 and then in Old Mobile in 1702, Natchitoches in 1714, and New Orleans in 1719. Consider how early this was on the interior of the North American continent, and consider the circumstances. In general, the early French colonists did not bring women with them, and although the *Code Noir* forbade both interracial marriages and liaisons, the secular male-dominated society of French colonists tended to ignore that. As both Bell and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall have noted, interracial liaisons were common by the middle of the 18th century in Louisiana.

Under Spanish rule (1763-1800), cultural influences evolved further. *Las Siete de Partidas* allowed for slave self-purchase (*coartacion*), and allowed slaves to sell extra labor to their masters or others. A lack of skilled white laborers had brought about the French government's policy of apprenticing slaves to white tradesmen, and this continued under Spanish rule, which allowed many slaves the opportunity to purchase their freedom. Also under Spanish rule, Bell noted that "slaves and free men of color monopolized many of the skilled trades."² The French had created a permanent free black military force, and the Spanish brought this group into their military. All of these were reasons that a large population of free people of color developed in Louisiana.

Following the Louisiana Purchase and the gradual influx of *les Américains* into Louisiana—despite

the long period of Spanish rule, French remained the primary language and the primary cultural influences in Louisiana—the culturally and racially more fluid society began to tighten up. Free persons of color were required to identify themselves on public documents as "f.p.c." or "h.c.l." (*homme de couleur libre*). The Louisiana Code of 1828 prohibited the legitimization of children of mixed-blood liaisons that had been allowed under *Las Siete de Partidas*, which authorized such children to become legal heirs. Hiram "Pete" Gregory, an anthropologist at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, has noted that in the 1840s "priests were writing to their bishops about how to solve the problem of it being illegal to marry mixed-race couples—it was forbidden by Anglo-American law, not Church law!"³ Other changes, too, were apparent on Louisiana plantations.

During 2001 I perused the early slave records for one of the former cotton plantations of Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Some of the records of Bermuda Plantation, which became Oakland Plantation shortly before the Civil War, had been acquired by the Historic New Orleans Collection and held considerable information about cultural change. Just studying the names of the enslaved circa 1820 revealed the strength of the French culture despite the nearly 20 years since the Louisiana purchase. Names were, for the most part, of French origin, including "Marie," "Elise," "Josephe." By the 1830s many of the enslaved came from Virginia, North Carolina, and



Figure 1. Cotton field, Cane River. *National Park Service photo.*

Tennessee, with such names as “Sarah,” “John,” “Job,” and “Esther.”⁴ According to Norman Marmillion, proprietor of Laura Plantation, another Creole plantation near Vacherie, Louisiana, the same trends appeared in the records for that plantation.⁵

What we were witnessing was one vestige of the gradual “Americanization” of Louisiana. That Americanization brought with it deep-rooted differences in the ways that enslaved people were perceived. The French and the Spanish made nominal efforts to recognize the enslaved as human beings who had souls, who should be baptized and partake of the other sacraments. The Americans tended to see the enslaved as property, equivalent to livestock. Yet in northwest Louisiana the French influences prevailed well through the nineteenth century, and even through the early twentieth-century French was the language of choice along Cane River for most people.

Now let us turn to trying to understand the term “Creole.” With origins in the Portuguese and Spanish, the term has had quite a semantic evolution. Dana Lee, anthropologist and folklorist at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, defines the word as follows:

Creole simply indicates a new world product derived from old world stock—people, produce, livestock, architecture, whatever. It was a label applied by Spanish administrators to distinguish Old World (superior, purer) from New World (inferior, impure). Rarely did people of French extraction refer to themselves as Creole. They called themselves French for the most part. In its present use in Louisiana, it simply indicates descent from colonial Europeans, whatever the admixture. On Cane River and other Louisiana communities, Creole is cultural, not racial. It is tied to genealogy, French heritage, and Catholicism.⁶

Lee’s colleague Gregory sees “Creole” as meaning “New World adaptations of French, Spanish and

African cultures both to the natural world and to each other. So all the ethnic and racial interaction that did, or did not take place, still partook of that cultural blend.”⁷ To me, the key point to remember about the term “Creole” is that it is a cultural term rooted in French Colonialism and Catholicism.

All of this was part of the context in which a thriving cotton economy developed during the first half of the 19th century. Laid out on Spanish and French land grants, the cotton plantations had access to Cane River for easy shipment of goods to New Orleans. The cotton plantations were very labor-intensive operations that expanded the numbers of enslaved people in the parish (in Louisiana a parish is a county). While most plantations were owned by French Creoles whose families had little or no racial mixing, Yucca Plantation, which later

became Melrose Plantation, was owned by Creoles of color who also had slaves.

Marie-Therese *nee* Coin-Coin was the daughter of African parents who were the slaves of Louis Juchereau de Saint-Denis of the French fort in Natchitoches. Her liaison with an officer of the fort, Pierre Metoyer, resulted in eight children. Metoyer bought the freedom of Marie-Therese Coin-Coin and that of their children and established this family on a small property on Cane River. Coin-Coin received an additional land grant in 1794 from the Spanish colonial government and expanded her holdings. Eventually her family founded Yucca Plantation. When she died in 1816, she owned 12,000 acres and ninety-nine slaves. Betje Black Klier noted in *Pavie in the Borderlands* that “Marie-Therese Coin-Coin and her children and



Figure 2. The Oakland Plantation Store. *National Park Service photo.*



Figure 3. Overseer's House and Slave Hospital, Magnolia Plantation. *National Park Service photo.*

grandchildren were the wealthiest slave-owning free family of color in the nation in 1830.”⁸

The early plantations along Cane River grew tobacco and indigo, but by the 1820s a transition into cotton was underway. This became the primary crop for the plantations in the region, although all kept some agricultural diversity—timber, grains, cattle, hogs—to support the large populations required at each plantation to bring in this labor-intensive crop. The two plantations included in the park, Oakland and Magnolia, were examples.

The Cane River area was hit hard during the Red River Campaign of the Civil War. Properties and crops were looted or burned by both sides—each not wanting the other army to gain possession. Reconstruction was diffi-

cult for all who remained, and poverty affected even those who had earlier considered themselves untouchable by that blight. Tenant farming and sharecropping were extensions of the earlier institution of slavery, and plantation commissaries that had served the enslaved evolved into plantation stores that served the tenant farmers and sharecroppers, and were also the social centers of the small village communities of each plantation.

Just across the Red River in Grant Parish is the town of Colfax. The parish was named for Ulysses S. Grant, and the town was named for Grant's vice president during his first administration, Schuyler Colfax. As historian James Loewen notes in *Lies Across America*:

How did it come to pass that Louisianans might name a parish and

town after these Republicans so soon after the Civil War? The answer is that black men were in on the naming. African Americans were voting during Reconstruction, and voting freely.... Based on 'one man, one vote,' Republicans were narrowly in the majority. But signs in Grant Parish indicated that Democrats were organizing to take away that privilege.⁹

When both parties declared victory in a gubernatorial race in 1873, President Grant told Congress that he would recognize the Republican candidate as governor. That governor replaced the sheriff and parish judge with Republicans. Fearing violence from the Democrats, African Americans around Colfax "raised a militia under the command of black veterans, posted pickets at the major roads, fashioned two makeshift cannons from pipes, and fortified the courthouse against attack." Other black farmers joined them, and they held the town for three weeks. On Easter Sunday, white Democrats attacked and slaughtered 150 people in what Eric Foner described as the "bloodiest single act of carnage in all of Reconstruction."¹⁰ Loewen noted that the Colfax riot was the beginning of the end of Reconstruction. It also showed the lack of federal enforcement of Reconstruction laws, including the 14th and 15th amendments. Most likely some of those killed were from Cane River.

These are all pieces of the history of that part of Louisiana, and all necessary parts to understand in this complex equation of what makes up a sense of place. As Cane River itself changed in the late 19th century, Natchitoches became a small

Louisiana community with considerable history and cultural diversity, but, lying as it did in the backwater of the Red River, it was in general left behind by 20th-century development.

Yet there were benefits to lack of "progress." What remained in Natchitoches was a cultural *mélange* of people, many with Creole roots, and many of whom spoke French. What remained were buildings that had architectural elements taken from French and African traditions, for the plantations continued as working corporations or leased farm properties. Deterioration set in to those buildings no longer used, but local traditions of "Waste not, want not, use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without" prevailed.¹¹ That continued use saved hundreds of historic buildings. Creoles of color recognized their cultural importance and in 1979 formed the St. Augustine Historical Society to preserve a property of cultural significance to them, and they initiated a Creole Heritage Day festival each January to serve as a homecoming celebration for all Cane River Creoles. Like the Cane River African Americans, many of the Creoles had left during the out-migration to jobs elsewhere when farming was mechanized, yet their roots remained strong in Cane River.

In the white community, the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches acquired Melrose Plantation and began telling the stories of Marie-Therese Coin-Coin and her family, of Cammie Henry and her small arts-and-crafts colony of the early 20th century, and of the African American painter Clementine

Hunter, whose primitive paintings of Cane River life depict her perspective on the world.

This is the rich cultural area where Cane River Creole National Historical Park came into being.

In 1994 Congress passed legislation creating both the park and Cane River National Heritage Area. The legislation authorized the park to “serve as the focus of interpretive and education programs on the history of the Cane River area and to assist in the preservation of certain historic sites along the river,” to preserve Oakland and the outbuildings of Magnolia Plantation, and to use a culturally sensitive approach in the partnerships needed for addressing the preservation and education needs of the Cane River area. The legislation also called for the National Park Service to coordinate a comprehensive research program on the complex history of the Cane River region.

This was the first time that I had ever seen cultural sensitivity and research mandated in legislation creating a new park.

Most people understand the concept of national parks, but what are national heritage areas? The national heritage area program is administered through the National Park Service. NPS defines national heritage areas as follows:

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in the areas. Continued use of the National Heritage Areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscapes enhances their significance.



Figure 4. Carpenter's Shop and Mule Barn, Oakland Plantation. *National Park Service photo.*

While the national heritage area program is administered through NPS, most heritage areas themselves are directly administered through commissions, not-for-profit agencies, and private staff. Most have a 50/50 matching requirement for any federal funds they receive. The legislation for Cane River National Heritage Area does not have that requirement.

An additional aspect of national heritage areas that appears common to all is the concept of local, grassroots preservation efforts. In heritage areas local people have strong traditions of historic preservation and, quite often, landscape conservation efforts that were underway long before federal designation. It is apparent that most heritage areas sought federal designation to increase awareness of those local or regional resources and programs, to enhance opportunities for federal funding, or to tap into other types of technical assistance that might be available through the National Park Service. Often the local people who push for designation of heritage areas seek to provide recognition of the significance of the resources in that community to other residents who either may not recognize their significance or who may not have the same level of concern for those resources. National heritage area designation brings with it a meaningful title, access to federal funding and technical assistance, and the opportunity to enhance preservation and conservation efforts within that heritage area on local, regional, and national levels.

And my park was located smack dab in the middle of one.

Now on to the development of the

park. Following land acquisition, the first broad step upon which the agency embarks is the general management planning process. For Cane River we were fortunate to have considerable interdisciplinary background research on history, ethnography, architecture, and archeology in formulating the vision for the park. That, combined with the public involvement required under the National Environmental Policy Act and the strong community involvement required by common sense, gave the direction the park should take.

Although both the Oakland and Magnolia Plantation units had historic structures and a very significant cultural landscape, changes to them over time and lack of information on their exact configuration in earlier periods resulted in only one appropriate action: Both properties were to look much as they did circa 1960 when the last of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers—most of whom were descended from former slaves—left the two plantations. That is the time when mechanization replaced mules and hands, and when the large cotton-picker shed (large enough to hold a machine the size of a combine) replaced the long, low tractor shed. It was the end of an era, and an appropriate end date that offered tremendous opportunities for interpretation, for we were not limited by a set moment in time. We had continuum.

Most visitors to southern plantations have little interest in anything other than the “Big House,” and so much of that is something that we as a nation have brought upon ourselves. One well-meaning Natchitoches resi-

dent who is a stalwart preservationist in the white community mailed me a flyer of another Louisiana plantation. She attached to it a note stating that she hoped the park would be up and running soon, looking like that attachment. In the photograph, a young white woman in hoopskirts and bonnet stood on the massive front porch of a Big House and cordially greeted visitors, who all happened to be white, as they walked up the front steps from garden, replete with azaleas and spring floral displays.

If you knew the park staff at Cane River, you would know that none of us do hoopskirts.

Over an extended period of time the local resident and I have had long discussions, and now she understands why the National Park Service is approaching its visitor services in a different manner. You will note that I did not say that she necessarily agreed with our approach, but she does understand the reasoning behind it.

The beauty of Oakland and Magnolia Plantations and a large aspect of their significance are the number of outbuildings that remain. Quarters occupied by enslaved people and then tenant farmers and sharecroppers, a blacksmith shop, a gin barn and a mule barn, a carpenter's shop, plantation stores, cisterns, and remnant landscapes are all manifestations of the lives of people whose families lived and worked the plantations for 200 years. Sixty-two historic structures at the park's two units not only allow but also encourage or even force visitors to understand that a plantation was more than a Big House.

At Oakland Plantation the design

for our visitor parking, for a number of reasons, is in a field at the back of the property. Visitors will park there, enter through an entrance pavilion, and then walk to the historic portion of the unit from "back of the Big House." In our interpretive programs we tell the story Solomon Williams, the enslaved blacksmith from Bermuda (later Oakland) Plantation who took outside contracts during his period of enslavement and who stayed at Oakland following the Civil War. When his descendents came looking for him they told us that they would have found him sooner but all family records indicated that he came from Bermuda, and they thought it meant the island in the Atlantic instead of this small plantation community of Louisiana. We also discuss the Prud'homme family, who held the plantation for more than 200 years and who remain deeply committed to the property's preservation. We have similar approaches at Magnolia Plantation that assist us with more inclusive approaches to history and interpretation.

Constant vigilance is required in dealing with well-meaning people to promote dialogue and understanding of history, of people, of events. This may be in a one-on-one situation, as in the hoopskirt issue, or it may be in architectural and design manipulation to force visitors' attention to a different focus.

It is the responsibility of NPS to discuss slavery and Reconstruction. When two plantations included among their property lists 175 and 275 enslaved people, respectively, it would be ludicrous to think that our



Figure 5. Big House, Oakland Plantation. *National Park Service photo.*

interpretive programs would not discuss this issue. In an area just up the road and across the river, it is our responsibility to discuss the Colfax massacre that changed the way civil rights were administered in the United States.

It is our responsibility to talk openly about slavery. We have found that most people breathe a sigh of relief when they realize it's okay to discuss the subject. They visibly relax when they discover that they can ask questions about it, and when they get answers based on historical research rather than conjecture. The one difference is that we make a point of referring to "enslaved people" rather than "slaves," thus putting the emphasis on the concept of the enslaved as people rather than property.

It is imperative that we deal with the reality of the communities in which we live. As the federal agency in

the community responsible for providing a culturally sensitive approach to park development and interpretation, it is our responsibility to bring all parties to the table to discuss sensitive issues. This process is underway right now in the development of a master interpretive plan for Cane River National Heritage Area. About 20 people representing an inclusive group of Cane River interests is working together on this project.

Explaining the complexities of race and culture in that area of northwestern Louisiana is not an easy task. It involves obtaining a grasp of French and Spanish colonialism and their legal systems. It involves comprehending the ways that those cultures adapted to the New World. It includes understanding how earlier cultures rationalized slavery and the oppression of people of color. But it also includes bringing those discussions



Figure 6. Brick slave quarters, later used as housing for tenant farmers, Magnolia Plantation. National Park Service photo.

out into the sunshine. And I have found that we have to explain these complexities to Park Service professionals from a variety of disciplines, to travel writers for newspapers and magazines, to visitors who come to the park and the heritage area, and to ourselves on the park staff. The process is an iterative one of constant refinement as the results of new research come to light.

Through the use of interdisciplinary research, some done locally and some completed by outsiders, the park has aimed to contribute to that body of knowledge of all of the resources of Cane River, and in doing so has tried to keep in the forefront a dialogue of social conscience. One cannot tell the history of two cotton plantations without discussing enslaved labor. One cannot discuss the cultural history of Louisiana without addressing the *gens de couleur libre*. One cannot under-

stand Cane River without having broad discussions on historical and cultural perspectives.

So yes, Scarlett may remain in the South throwing her temper tantrums, but at this small park in Louisiana we are not walking away slamming the door behind us. Rather we work with everyone. We work with all of the affected communities. We work hard at developing opportunities to expand thinking, to improve citizenry, to generate more excitement in the phenomenal resources of the park and the heritage area. At Cane River we have a chance to show that the roots of American's problems with race and ethnocentrism are byproducts of colonial order, not something inherent in human biology. That is what we are striving to do.

Frankly, my dears, we do give a damn.

[Ed. note: this paper was originally presented at the Organization of American Historians / National Council on Public History annual meeting, April 2002, Washington, D.C.]

Endnotes

1. Caryn Cosse Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism and the Afro-Creole Protest Tradition in Louisiana 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), p. 12.
2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. Personal correspondence, Hiram Gregory to author, August 1, 2000. Gregory is a professor of anthropology at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches.
4. Prud'homme Family Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.
5. Multiple discussions between the author and Norman Marmillion during 2001 confirmed and reconfirmed this trend.
6. Personal correspondence with the author, April 27, 2000.
7. Personal correspondence with the author, August 1, 2000.
8. Betje Black Klier, *Pavie in the Borderlands: The Journey of Theodore Pavie to Louisiana and Texas 1829-1830* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2000).
9. James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York: The New Press, 1999), p. 212.
10. *Ibid.*, 212.
11. According to Margo Haase, who lived on the Oakland Plantation property for a number of years, Alphonse Prud'homme quoted that saying frequently; and he lived by it. The eight generations of Prud'hommes who lived at Oakland used and reused items and never threw anything away. Part of the legacy of Oakland Plantation includes a huge museum collection conservatively estimated at 250,000 objects.

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Civic Engagement with the Community at Washita Battlefield National Historic Site

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, located in western Oklahoma, was created on November 12, 1996, to interpret the attack of Lt. Col. George Custer and the 7th Cavalry on Black Kettle's sleeping Cheyenne village in 1868. The word "Battlefield" as part of the name for the park may be debatable, because the park interprets an unprovoked attack on one of the greatest peace chiefs of the Cheyenne tribe. The Cheyenne people have certainly never agreed with the park's nomenclature, and it became a strong point of contention when we began the discussions, negotiations, and collaboration to develop the story of this important time of American history. John Cook, who at the time of the park's creation was the director of the National Park Service (NPS) Intermountain Region, dubbed Washita "a site of shame" and declared that we must be assertive about interpreting as well as learning from Washita's history.

It is easy to tell the story of Washita in a one-sided fashion. In developing the park's interpretive media, we made every effort to tell a balanced story of the Southern Plains Indian Wars and of the bloody atrocities that were being committed by both the American military and the Plains tribes that led up to the Washita attack. We did, however, make every effort as the National Park Service to engage the Native Americans that are affiliated with this site in the park's development. And so I speak in this article primarily from the tribal perspective.

Washita was designated as a national historic landmark in 1965 and national park status had been discussed even earlier. With the election of Congressman Frank Lucas, who grew up within a few miles of the historic site, the park was established in 1996. The Oklahoma Historical Society worked closely with a few of the

elders of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes on Washita's establishment, and one Cheyenne elder testified before Congress supporting the park. The legislation for the park was drafted to include the participation of the tribes in the park's development and educational programs. The legislation states that one of the purposes of establishing the park is to "establish the site of the Battle of the Washita as a national historic site and provide opportunities for American Indian groups including the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribe to be involved in the formulation of plans and educational programs for the national historic site." So in this case, meaningful civic dialogue is both legislated and the right thing to do.

When I arrived at Washita I came with the intention of gaining substantive, consistent involvement by the tribes in developing the park. I wanted our Native American partners to be at



Figure 1. Native American Heritage Group from Norman, Oklahoma, on the site of Black Kettle's camp, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. *Photo by Lawrence Hart.*

the table helping to make plans and decisions, not at the receiving end of a draft document that we expect them to approve. We had some successes and we made some mistakes. I'd like to share some of both of those with you.

I'll start with mistakes. One of the biggest problems that plagued the process was finding the right person to talk to. The political turnover within the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe made it very difficult to get strong consistent involvement. By executive order we must deal with tribes on a government-to-government basis. We were asked very early in the process to also work with the religious leadership of the tribe and in fact were asked to pay a visit to the sacred arrow keeper, an important spiritual leader. We did so, but then received some backlash by those in the tribe that thought that it was improper for a religious leader to work on this type of process. Other

religious factions were also unhappy that they had not been consulted. We returned to the government-to-government relationship as our main consultation relationship, although a representative of the sacred arrow keeper did attend many of our meetings. The park's contact with elders and other leadership positions in the tribe has improved recently with the hiring of an education technician, Craig Moore, whose relationship with tribal elders has been strong for many years.

The successes that we achieved through this dialogue brought the park beyond telling a basic interpretive story to relating a way of life. I'll talk about two of these successes here.

Because we had such difficulty in engaging the tribe on a consistent basis, we felt like we needed a person to help us to make sure that park issues were being taken seriously within the tribe and that tribal issues were

being addressed within the park. The tribe had assigned Gordon Yellowman as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) coordinator to work with the park, but when the tribe changed NAGPRA coordinators several times within a three-year period, thus changing our contact person, we tried to find a better way of collaborating. Yellowman devised the idea of a cultural liaison position for the tribe who would work with the park. In Fiscal Year 2001 we received an NPS challenge cost share grant to fund half of the position. The tribe agreed to fund the other half of the salary and benefits. We worked together to create a cooperative agreement and a simple position description. We jointly hired Michael Whitecloud for one year as a tribal employee. His main objective was to develop a consultation guideline that is realistic for all parties and affordable for everyone involved, allows the tribe to tell the park staff how they would like to collaborate, and gives the park staff

the important information they need to develop the park and educate the public. The position, dedicated to forming a strong bond between the two entities, gained unparalleled good will for both the park and the tribes. The park hopes to fully fund the position beginning in Fiscal Year 2003.

The second success story is a project that we call the Cheyenne Heritage Trail. The tribe has been very clear on their belief that Washita needs to educate the public about the Cheyenne tribe's living culture as well as the event in 1868. They also strongly believe, as does the park staff, that some of Washita's stories need to be told with a tribal voice. In addition, we felt that it was important to interpret the Washita attack in context rather than as an isolated event.

We were very fortunate to have a man by the name of Lawrence Hart living in the community. He is a Cheyenne, one of the traditional Cheyenne peace chiefs, and serves as one of the four principal chiefs. Hart is



Figure 2. Ranger Steve Black giving a tour of Washita to a history group from Bethel College, Kansas. Photo by Lawrence Hart.

also the executive director of the Cheyenne Cultural Center, a non-profit corporation he founded 24 years ago. He also serves on the national review committee of NAG-PRA.

Hart created the concept of developing a Cheyenne Heritage Trail. We worked with him on the concept for the trail, which would take visitors throughout western Oklahoma to various sites that were historically important to the tribe. Over the course of two years we developed a partnership that included site managers from federal, state, tribal, and private partners and entities such as the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation and the Oklahoma Historical Society. The partners determined their purpose to be the protection of the cultural heritage of western Oklahoma and education of the public about the rich Native American occupation there. The goal was to do this through increased and more effective domestic and international visitation to the area, to help those visitors to experience the heritage of the Cheyenne tribe, and to learn about the Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, and Plains Apache people.

The Cheyenne Heritage Trail was established as the first Native American Cultural Route in the state of Oklahoma. The trail is a 420-mile route that passes through historic and cultural sites that are significant to the Cheyenne people and to other tribes that lived in the historic tribal lands of western Oklahoma. The trail includes twelve sites that interpret significant portions of the Cheyenne story. The trail gives visitors the opportunity to

explore not only Native American culture but also the idea of westward expansion, cultural conflict, and the Plains Indian Wars as a part of Western history.

Visitors may travel the trail in their own vehicles using a brochure as a guide, or they may participate in a bus tour provided by companies that purchase a guided program. Each venue along the route has different activities, some of which are interactive, all of which teach visitors about Cheyenne and Native American cultures. Each partner in the Cheyenne Heritage Trail is responsible for orienting visitors to their site and to the overall concept of the trail. Washita is, of course, one of the stops on the trip.

Because a project like this had never been done in Oklahoma and because of Hart's relationships with state government, we were able to obtain the assistance of the Tourism Division. They planned and conducted debut tours with Oklahoma dignitaries and media. They retained a consultant to train the tour guides, and they developed the color brochure for the trail.

The Oklahoma Historical Society is an essential partner. They researched a historical chronology of the major events of the Cheyenne Indians in Oklahoma, which was provided for use in training the tour guides so that they can narrate the history of the culture as the coach travels between the sites. The information was also used to develop the brochure. Hart worked with a state senator to pass legislation directing the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to mark the trail with signing. The



Figure 3. Connie Yellowman, director of Fort Reno Visitor Center, giving a program at Fort Reno cemetery. Fort Reno is the first stop on the Cheyenne Heritage Trail.
Photo by Lawrence Hart.

signs have a trail logo that we developed by holding a Native American art contest.

Approximately 20,000 visitors per year see some or all of the Cheyenne Heritage Trail and that number is increasing. Tour groups have included Native American elementary and secondary students, college students from other states, Native American cultural organizations, Elderhostel groups, and museum groups.

The park could never have accomplished alone what this partnership has achieved to interpret this era of American history. Because of that fact, the partnership was awarded with the National Park Foundation's 2001 Park Partnership Award for Heritage Education, one of only four national awards given to recognize partnership efforts within the National Park Ser-

vice. It also received the Oklahoma Redbud Award, which is the state's tourism award.

The benefits of this endeavor have been substantial. The partnership has created a high degree of cooperative spirit between local, state, federal, and tribal agencies in Oklahoma. Collaboration and contact between the partners has created a sense of ownership of the Cheyenne Heritage Trail and a feeling that all parties are concerned about the best interests of educating the public about Native American heritage. This is particularly advantageous to NPS as we strive to develop a new national park site at Washita and look for creative ways to enhance partnerships and interpretive techniques.

The trail has facilitated an increase in tourism in this sparsely populated area of western Oklahoma, bringing

tourist dollars and thus economic development to the communities located there. It is giving impetus to structural restoration and rehabilitation at four of the historic sites. It is also assisting with protecting the cultural heritage of the area and educating the public about the rich Native American occupation here.

Site presentations and interpretation have been enriched and enhanced through the research done on behalf of the trail and through the continuity of the interpretation from site to site. Participants on the tour have called the tour a “classroom on wheels.”

This partnership is unprecedented in Oklahoma. The work that has been accomplished on the Cheyenne Heritage Trail is making a difference in the education of visitors. It is a model of how national parks should be working with our partners and what can be accomplished.

However, do we always take on the hard issues? Not always. Michael Whitecloud asked me soon after the September 11 tragedy how I thought it compared with the Washita. I was practically insulted and responded rather tersely that I didn’t think it was

fair to compare them, that they were totally different events. And then I started thinking. At Washita, approximately 1% of the Cheyenne people were killed. On September 11, less than 0.001% of the American population lost their lives. We need to help people make connections, and to relate historic events to contemporary events. Our interpretation needs to be compelling and it needs to be provocative.

Alexa Roberts, superintendent of Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, points out that it is not the amount of consultation that we do with tribes but the degree of honesty that we have going into the discussions. True collaboration involves revealing all of the relevant information without a hidden agenda.

The National Park System Advisory Board’s report *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century* calls on the National Park Service to connect native and ancestral people to the parks. I believe that this can be done through honest and meaningful collaboration and civic dialogue with these important partners.

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The National Park Service: Groveling Sycophant or Social Conscience?

Telling the Story of Mountains, Valley, and Barbed Wire at Manzanar National Historic Site

A revolutionary idea came to fruition in the 1870s, when the United States became the first country to designate areas to be preserved as national parks. National park units preserve some of America's most important cultural and natural resources. Wallace Stegner called national parks America's best idea and noted that parks "reflect us at our best rather than our worst." Without parks, Stegner continued, "millions of American lives ... would have been poorer. The world would have been poorer."

Stegner's perspective of the value of national parks encounters a paradox at Manzanar National Historic Site. Manzanar, located at the foot of the Sierra Nevada in eastern California, tells the story of Japanese Americans who were denied constitutional rights and were interned in one of ten War Relocation Centers because of their ethnicity.

How the National Park Service (NPS) tells the story of the internment is an issue currently being addressed at Manzanar. Some people advocate an active role for NPS in informing social conscience through its interpretations of the internment of Japanese Americans at Manzanar. While an image of the NPS's role as social conscience resonates with many, a recent letter to the park reflects the opposite sentiment. Calling the National Park Service "a groveling sycophant," the writer of the letter suggests that NPS has succumbed to the "Japanese American propaganda machine" and neglects and even refuses to tell the truth about the War Relocation

Centers. In this paper, I focus on efforts the NPS has taken and is taking to engage the public in a dialogue as it develops the overall management plan for and interpretation of Manzanar.

The first challenge at Manzanar is to provide an adequate context through which the public can be engaged in a discussion of social issues related to the internment of Japanese Americans. Manzanar National Historic Site is characterized by an abundance of sagebrush and dust; only a few remnants of the camp are visible. Without physical reminders it is difficult to explain to visitors that this was indeed an internment camp.

When you visit Manzanar today, you can be so inspired by the location's beauty that you miss the important story told there. Manzanar is located in one of the primary recreation areas for millions of Southern Californians. The park is surrounded by recreational opportunities such as fishing in countless alpine lakes and streams, hiking in the Sierra Nevada, and climbing Mount Whitney. In fact,

some visitors have mentioned that, with its location near such beautiful mountains, the camp experience couldn't have been so bad. The camp has been likened to a summer camp in the mountains rather than an important site in the history of the struggle for civil rights.

To ensure that visitors gain a sense of history and place, the Japanese American community pushed very hard for reconstruction of various camp features. These include the barbed wire fence that surrounded the camp, one of the eight guard towers, a barracks building, and other significant camp features.

Reconstruction, as many readers will know, is one of four treatment options for historic sites; the others are preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration. Reconstruction represents the alternative with the least historic authenticity and is defined as "the depiction of one period in history using new materials based on archaeology and other research findings."

Usually, NPS discourages reconstructions. The following abstract from a session on reconstruction at the 1997 Society for American Archaeology outlines the debate:

The reconstruction of historical and archaeological sites and features has long been a controversial subject among professional archaeologists and historians. Some preservation purists claim that the public is unnecessarily misled by many reconstructions that have not been absolutely verified by archaeology and documentary records.

The abstract goes on to note that others have advocated a more liberal approach, emphasizing the education-

al and interpretive value of reconstructions.

The National Park Service has clear management policies about reconstruction. As stated in its 2001 *Management Policies*, "[n]o matter how well conceived or executed, reconstructions are contemporary interpretations of the past rather than authentic survivals from it." Thus, NPS will not reconstruct a missing structure unless four criteria are met: there is no alternative that would accomplish the park's interpretive mission; there is sufficient data to enable an accurate reconstruction; the reconstruction occurs on the original location; and the NPS director approves the reconstruction (NPS 2000). Thus, members of the Japanese American community and others had to demonstrate cause to allow reconstruction be made a part of the park's general management plan.

As I mentioned earlier, not much physical evidence of the camp remains. Only three of over eight hundred buildings still stand. Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence of foundations, sidewalks, rock gardens, and the camp road network. That these remnants speak volumes can be heard in this quote from *Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston:

It is so characteristically Japanese, the way lives were made more tolerable by gathering loose desert stones and forming with them something enduringly human. These rock gardens had outlived the barracks and the towers and would surely outlive the asphalt road and rusted pipes and shattered slabs of concrete. Each stone was a mouth, speaking for a family, for some man who had beauti-

fied his doorstep (Houston and Houston 1973, p. 191).

However, not everyone sees the crumbling foundations, rockwork, and other physical remnants from the same perspective. One *Los Angeles Times* article from 1997 criticized the lack of facilities at, and the appearance of, the site:

Manzanar National Historic Site was created as a memorial to remind future generations that in times of crisis, the constitution can be dangerously fragile. Yet today, Manzanar looks more like a vacant lot than a hallowed memorial. The site is littered with beer bottles and graffiti. There are no visitors' centers, no rangers on duty, no guided tours or displays. Cattle graze the area, trampling archaeological sites, while tourists who pull off the highway leave confused and disappointed.

We have taken great strides to begin to address the problems noted in this article. Many people, particularly in the Japanese American community, have long recognized the problems noted in the *Los Angeles Times* article and have been actively engaged in the development of Manzanar's general management plan. Even at that time, people like T. Shiokari expressed strong support for reconstruction efforts, noting: "I strongly urge the NPS to depict the typical conditions when the Japanese race was first evacuated into the centers, and also the conditions near the end of the war where gardens, schools, recreation facilities were made available."

The current chairperson of a citizen's advocacy group known as the Manzanar Committee, Sue Kunitomi Embrey, also participated in the dialogue about the park's management

plan. In fact, the Manzanar Committee was instrumental in having one of the ten former internment camps designated as a national park unit. Embrey reported the sense of the group this way:

We strongly recommend the reconstruction of some of the rock gardens located throughout the camp area to give the viewer an enhanced visitor experience. We support the placement of one or more barracks in the demonstration blocks.... A demonstration block would not be complete without the inclusion of latrines, mess hall and laundry building. We encourage the addition of these structures in the demonstration block. It is absolutely essential that one or more guard towers be reconstructed.

These and other similar views greatly affected the general management plan for Manzanar. The approved plan for the park calls for reconstruction of the camp's barbed wire fence, camp entrance sign, guard tower, and barracks buildings. The fence and camp entrance have already been reconstructed and we will be reconstructing one guard tower in the next few years. We will relocate and restore one or more of the camp barracks buildings that still exist in the local area.

The National Park Service has worked closely with the Japanese American community in determining the initial development and management of the site. However, I must reject "groveling sycophant" as an accurate description of NPS efforts to develop and interpret the site. Even within the Japanese American community, there are disagreements about how to tell the internment story. These often focus on whether the relocation

centers such as Manzanar ought to be called "concentration camps." Two quotes from the *Rafu Shimpō*, a newspaper published in Los Angeles, illustrate each side of this controversy. A letter by Kelly Shinatku on stated that:

You may say 'bah humbug,' but I believe that future generations must not forget what this government did to its own citizens. Using the term concentration camps when referring to the internment of Japanese Americans imparts to those who did not live through the camps an unambiguous picture of what happened.

In response, the editor, George Yoshinaga, reported a conversation he had with another former internee, also named George:

Like this writer, George is dead set against referring to the relocation camps as 'concentration camps.' He was in Manzanar.

At the present time, NPS has decided to use "internment" as the best way to avoid being caught up in a whirlwind of controversy that could obscure the significance of the site.

Since the designation of Manzanar as a unit of the National Park System, the Manzanar Advisory Commission, with members from the Japanese American, Native American, ranching, and local communities, has actively participated in a dialogue about the development, management, and interpretation of the site. And of course, in accordance with the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act, public involvement has been solicited for all major management actions.

The National Park Service continues to consult with a variety of groups and individuals in the development of the park's interpretive programs.

Much like the Manzanar Advisory Commission, the review panels are composed of different groups within the Japanese American community, veterans, local Owens Valley residents, Native Americans, academics, and NPS staff. Mock-ups of the park's proposed interpretive exhibits were recently produced and displayed in Los Angeles and the Owens Valley in order to solicit public comment about their content.

I believe this extensive review and planning process will facilitate, if not ensure, that a truthful, balanced context will be presented to the visiting public. It is through such efforts that NPS can fulfill what I believe must be its role as the caretaker of sites of social conscience rather than, as some fear, becoming the source of that social conscience.

The forthright, candid interpretation of sites such as Manzanar will help us avoid repeating the mistakes of history. A statement by Robert Sproul of the Fair Play Committee in 1944 eloquently summarizes a longstanding and powerful goal for parks such as Manzanar:

Whenever and wherever the constitutional guarantees are violated in the treatment of a minority, no matter how unpopular or helpless, the whole fabric of American government is weakened, its whole effectiveness impaired. Each such violation establishes an evil precedent which is inevitably turned against another minority later and eventually the very principle on which our Nation is founded, namely, the dignity and worth of the human individual.

Manzanar National Historic Site and similar sites should help to com-

municate the lessons of history, to ensure that the dignity of the human individual is upheld, both in America and in the world.

It is important to remember the words of United States Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, as quoted by Michi Nishura Weglyn in the book *Years of Infamy*:

You may think that the Constitution is your security—it is nothing but a piece

of paper. You may think that statutes are your security—they are nothing but words in a book. You may think that the elaborate mechanism of government is your security—it is nothing at all, unless you have sound and uncorrupted public opinion to give life to your Constitution, to give vitality to your statutes, to make efficient your government machinery (Weglyn 1996, p. 32).

[Ed. note: this paper was originally presented at the Organization of American Historians / National Council on Public History annual meeting, April 2002, Washington, D.C.]

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Activating the Past for Civic Action: The International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience

In 1987, Nelson Mandela organized an unprecedented meeting of prominent Afrikaaners and top leaders of the African National Congress. He chose to hold it at the Slave House at Gorée Island in Senegal, where slave traders and slaves lived cheek-by-jowl in the 18th century before slaves were transported to the Americas. The meeting proved to be the turning point in the struggle against apartheid. Nelson Mandela later told French President François Mitterrand that the haunting site of the African slave trade served as one of the keys that unlocked the door to new communication, making his release and everything else possible.¹

On February 14, 2002, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum invited an unusual group to pay a visit to the recreated 1897 home and factory of Harris and Jennie Levine. Packed in an intimate circle, leaders of conflicting sectors of the garment industry today—workers and manufacturers, retailers and union organizers—listened to the story of how this Russian immigrant family slept, ate, raised a family, and turned out hundreds of dresses in a tiny 325-square-foot space. Why did these people, who spend most of their time attacking or avoiding each other, want to come together to talk here? As one participant put it, “the Museum provides a neutral environment that facilitates discussion among all of us in the garment industry. The tour is extremely balanced, making people from all sides of the issue feel included. The environment here puts everyone a little off-balance, in a way that really opens discussion. It provides a wonderful

opportunity to look at all these issues together.” After a day-long summit about what new perspective could be gained by looking at the garment industry in the past, the participants emerged with new ideas about how all sides could work together to prevent sweatshop conditions in the future.

What these two stories tell us is that historic sites have a special power to inspire and shape important new dialogues on pressing issues that divide us. The Lower East Side Tenement Museum was founded in 1988 to offer our visitors a usable past—that is, to offer history as a resource for considering and addressing issues in the present. Located in a neighborhood whose residents today hail from 36 different countries, the heart of the museum is a tenement at 97 Orchard Street where an estimated 7,000 immigrants from over 20 different nations made their homes between 1863 and 1935. Entering the carefully restored apartments of families who

actually lived in our building, you will meet America's revered immigrant ancestors before they were accepted, before they lost their heavy accents—for some, before they were considered “white.” Our families’ stories touch the most pressing issues of our time, but allow visitors to consider them through the lives of individual people, and from the safe distance of people living generations ago. On one tour, we introduce two families struggling to make ends meet and be accepted in America during economic crises. You’ll meet Nathalie Gumpertz, a German single mother who struggled to raise her three children as a dressmaker after her husband abandoned her after the Panic of 1873, speaking German in the face of the first English-only law to be imposed in the United States. You’ll then visit the Sicilian Baldizzi family, who went to great lengths to enter the country illegally, only to be forced to go on government relief during the Depression. Another tour brings you to Harris and Jennie Levine, the Russian immigrants who opened a dressmaking shop with three employees in their tenement apartment in 1892—creating the very type of space the word “sweatshop” was, in that moment, coined to describe. After hearing of all the reforms that were introduced to eradicate the sweatshop, you’ll be able to visit the Rogarshevsky family in 1918, and hear how Abraham, who worked as a presser in a new modern factory, nevertheless fell victim to tuberculosis, alternately called the “tailor’s disease” or the “Jewish disease.”

Each of our families had a totally personal, idiosyncratic experience. At

the same time, these individual people, whether they knew it or not, were at the center of national debates taking place from Congress to the corner store. Their stories provide a safe yet generative place from which to explore pressing questions we’re still grappling with today, including: Who is American? Who should help people with economic needs—the neighborhood, private charities, the government? What are fair labor practices? What is a sweatshop?

The Tenement Museum offer programs that invite people of all ages and backgrounds to address these questions in different ways. After hearing the stories of 97 Orchard Street’s former residents, visitors can participate in public dialogues about their own families’ immigration experiences and larger immigration issues. In “Tenement Inspectors,” a collaboration with New York City’s Department of Housing and Preservation, we invite school children to learn about how housing standards and conditions changed over time in our building, who organized to change them, and how they can take action against violations in their own homes. The museum established an Immigrant Programs Department to serve the 37% of our neighborhood who are recent arrivals to this country and to showcase the cultural expressions of contemporary immigrant theatrical, visual, literary, and digital artists. Through this department, we host English and civics classes for new immigrants. Students learn how previous generations of immigrants faced the challenges of settling in a new country, finding a job, making a home—and how they organized to win

many of the basic rights in labor, housing, and cultural expression that all Americans now enjoy. Each class then participates in a discussion of challenges immigrants face today, and develops ideas for how to face them, leaving the program with practical information about rights and resources found in the first guide for new immigrants in New York City, published by the Museum with *The New York Times*.

To us, the connections between past and present, between history and civic participation, are absolutely natural, and quite inseparable. According to a recent national study conducted by David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig, thousands of Americans feel the same.² Thelen reveals America's "participatory historical culture," documenting countless ways in which diverse Americans use the past in their everyday lives, individually and collectively. After analyzing the ways respondents turned to history to decide how to raise their children, where and with whom to live and work, and how to organize for social change, Thelen and Rosenzweig discovered that overwhelmingly "the point of engaging the past was to understand choices in the present to shape the future."³

Museum professionals increasingly got the point, and new conversations began to emerge about the identity of the museum. Lone, but significant, voices in the museum field began to talk of moving the role of the museum beyond its 19th-century identity as a keeper of relics, and even beyond its hard-fought 20th-century identity as a trusted educational institution.

More than places for passive learning, we could re-imagine museums as centers for active exchange on issues that matter outside their walls. The American Associations of Museums (AAM) published *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums*, in which it envisioned the museum as "a center where people gather to meet and converse ... and a participant in collaborative problem solving. It is an active, visible player in civic life, a safe haven, and a trusted incubator of change."⁴ Announcing the publication of the book, AAM's president and chief executive officer, Edward Able, boldly declared that "the times demand that museums take this [civic] responsibility seriously as a core value."⁵ The Ford Foundation articulated its own vision of the civic museum space, celebrating "a growing number" of cultural institutions that "are moving to claim an active, intentional role in public dialogue around the kinds of contemporary issues that provoke multiple viewpoints." Such institutions are "an extraordinary civic force, and one whose potential remains significantly underacknowledged."⁶ To promote greater acknowledgment of this potential, the foundation spearheaded the Animating Democracy Initiative, which provided a wide range of resources to arts- and humanities-based civic dialogue projects.

Yet outside of professional conferences, our practice remained anathema. Comparing their collections of, say, Wedgwood china or paintings by Vermeer, to ours, which includes a few hundred buttons, a laundry ticket, and a mummified rat found in our ceiling,

many of our fellow museums couldn't see how we had anything in common. While some found our inclusion of contemporary immigrant stories "funky," few gave any serious thought to playing a similarly active role in their own communities. Those who did embrace the general idea of civic engagement interpreted its meaning so differently from us and from each other that no consistent set of practices was emerging to give the idea weight. On the other side, human rights and social welfare agencies often refused first invitations to visit and discuss collaborations with us, considering museums effete, precious, and a big waste of time. Accepted neither as museum nor as advocate, yet feeling strong in our identity, we searched for a crowd, and a name, to call our own.

Founding a Coalition

The Tenement Museum's president, Ruth Abram, put out a call to museums around the world describing the role she felt historic sites could play in their societies, and asking if anyone else felt the same. Eight responded: the District Six Museum (South Africa), remembering forced removal under apartheid; the Gulag Museum (Russia), the only Stalinist labor camp to be preserved in Russia; the Liberation War Museum (Bangladesh), excavating killing fields and memorializing the genocide of the Bangladeshi people during the Liberation War of 1971; the Maison Des Esclaves (Senegal), an 18th-century slave transport station; the National Park Service (USA), representing the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls and other sites;

Memoria Abierta (Argentina), commemorating the "disappeared" during the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s; Terezin Memorial (Czech Republic), a labor camp used to model the "humane practices" of the Nazi regime to the Red Cross; and The Workhouse (United Kingdom), a 19th-century solution to poverty. Supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, we organized a meeting at the foundation's villa and study center in Bellagio, Italy. Realizing that our new approach to museum work required new support, we unanimously decided to form the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience.

Our founding declaration described the role we believed historic sites should play in civic life. It reads: "We hold in common the belief that it is the obligation of historic sites to assist the public in drawing connections between the history of our site and its contemporary implications. We view stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function."

We established strict criteria for membership in the coalition as a way of challenging ourselves, and other museums around the world, to meet our civic obligations. We defined a site of conscience as a museum that:

- interprets history through historic sites;
- engages in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues and promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function;
- shares opportunities for public

involvement in issues raised at the site.

In our view, there was nothing inherent in a site that guaranteed it would play the civic role we envisioned, and nothing that precluded it from doing so. Instead, for us a site of conscience was defined by the commitment of its stewards to play an active role in engaging its audiences in civic dialogue around contemporary issues. The most powerful site of the Atlantic slave trade cannot spontaneously inspire democratic exchange about contemporary racism, and risks lying dormant at the margins of civic life. On the other hand, there are almost no limits to the stories and themes that can inspire important dialogue. Sites representing the triumph of democracy, social justice, or human rights, such as the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, where the International Declaration of Human Rights was drafted, are as powerful as sites representing their failure, such as the Maison des Esclaves in Senegal. Sites representing the histories of human interaction with the natural world, like the Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, are as important as sites interpreting humans' interaction with one another. The door was wide open to any site: the onus was on the stewards to activate these sites as democratic forums.

Giving a Site Conscience: Moving from Temple to Forum

What's involved in establishing a site of conscience? Member sites have worked to make their sites centers for civic dialogue on three levels: opening new perspectives on civic issues by

writing new narratives; activating these new narrative perspectives by fostering civic dialogue; and building a forum by designing new spaces for dialogue to happen.

Opening new perspectives on civic issues. For many sites emerging from repressive political contexts, their first task was to write new national and community narratives, identify new actors and heroes, and expose truths that had been long denied. Rewriting these narratives is the first step in liberation; writing these narratives into the public memory by installing them in a museum is the first step in guaranteeing that liberation for future generations. The District Six Museum in South Africa tells the story of how the apartheid government razed a racially integrated neighborhood and displaced its thousands of residents. The museum's aim is "to ensure that the history and the memory of forced removals in South Africa endures and in the process will challenge all forms of social oppression." Similarly, Memoria Abierta in Argentina recovers documentation of abuses under the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s in order to "promote a social conscience that values active Memory as a means to avoid history from repeating itself." For these and other sites, simply telling the story is a radical political act, when many of the perpetrators are still in power and the line between historical artifact and legal evidence is blurred. For sites in more stable, but unfinished, democracies, rewriting narratives is an important first step in creating opportunities for broader civic engagement. The Tenement

Museum challenges the canonic story of European immigrant success and inclusion in America, often used against new immigrants from Asia or Latin America struggling today. Instead, we introduce visitors to immigrant families before they were accepted in this country, when they faced discrimination, labor abuse, and poverty.

Activating new perspectives: Dialogues for Democracy. Telling a new story is critical, but to foster new civic participation and generate new democratic processes, it is not enough. Sites of conscience are committed to making explicit connections between the past and the present, actively engaging visitors in discussing the future, and inspiring and equipping them to participate in shaping it. Together, directors designed a series of programs, called Dialogues for Democracy, to take place at each site. In developing its dialogue for democracy, each site was asked to consider:

- What is the story you want to tell?
- Why do you need to tell that story; that is, what is the contemporary political and social context in which you are working that makes this story important to tell?
- What civic questions do you want your visitors to consider during a visit to your site?
- How will you engage them in dialogue around these questions?
- What impact do you hope to have and how will you measure it?

The Workhouse in England preserves a rare surviving example of a Victorian “solution” to poverty, structures that once loomed on the outskirts of every town as threats to the

“idle and profligate.” After touring the segregated quarters and forced labor yards of the workhouse, visitors enter an exhibit titled “What Now? What Next?” that compares the classification and segregation of Britain’s poor from the Victorian era through the present. The Workhouse invites policy makers and advocates such as the international leadership of Oxfam and representatives of Britain’s welfare system, as well as their general public, to engage in dialogue around the following questions: Where would the people of the workhouse be today? How have things improved, or become worse? What solutions to poverty and its related issues may we try in the future—is there anything new that has not been tried before?

The District Six Museum covered its floor with a map of the destroyed neighborhood, and invited former residents to place their homes, streets, stores, and community spaces. This memory mapping project became the basis for land reclamation claims, and the museum organized and hosted one of the Land Courts on its site. Former residents sat in chairs directly on the map of their old neighborhood, as the court granted them, in the words of one, “our land back, our homes back, our dignity back.”⁷

The Gulag Museum hosts international conferences on human rights issues, inviting policy makers and advocates to use the story of the gulag to imagine the future of democracy in Russia.

Alarmed by the rise in racist violence in Czech Republic and the lack of public discussion around it, the Terezin Memorial designed a series of

teacher training workshops and school programs that use the perspectives of the Holocaust to foster open dialogue on the current situation. Stressing the importance of individual citizen participation, and the consequences of inaction, the workshops analyze recent patterns of discrimination and violence against Roma peoples, as well as emerging neo-Nazi movements, and ask students and educators to develop ideas for how to build a pluralistic and tolerant society for the future.

Just a few weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center, in response to the dragnet for Arab and Muslim immigrants and the national anxiety around potential terrorists in our midst, the Japanese American National Museum held a public town hall meeting, also broadcast on local radio. The museum invited a representative from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), together with former internees of Manzanar and other camps, to engage a live and call-in audience in a discussion of maintaining democracy and national security.

Building a forum: designing a space for dialogue. What does a site of conscience—a forum-museum—look like? Many sites have realized that a commitment to serving as a forum for civic dialogue requires a new physical design. Traditional museum design has focused on passive learning, guiding visitors along a linear path of panels or cases in which the interaction is solely between the visitor and the information presented. But what if the mission of the museum is to engage visitors with each other?

Several sites are struggling with how to build dialogue into their designs. In the architectural plans for its new National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, the Japanese American National Museum is incorporating both a “forum,” a 200-seat auditorium that “serves as the centerpiece for the National Center’s Commitment to discourse, dialogue, and community engagement,” as well as a “democracy lab” designed for “group discussions, polls of current national and local issues, and more.”⁸ *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site, dedicated to preserving sites related to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that brought an end to segregation in public education, is building a new visitor center in the former Monroe elementary school, a segregated school for African Americans in Topeka, Kansas. The visitor center was designed under an overarching concept of “discovery and discourse,” and “will include spaces for individual reflection and group discussion.”⁹

While these sites model their democratic forums after spaces of official public deliberation, such as the town hall or the legislature, others recreate the more intimate, spontaneous, and marginal places where important civic engagement happens. The Tenement Museum’s dialogue space is called “the kitchen”; the room’s soft lighting, kitchen tables, and mismatched chairs welcome visitors to participate in an informal dialogue that begins with personal experiences—those histories that are told and retold in the kitchen—and uses them as the starting point for a discus-

sion of larger issues around immigration. The Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh created a mobile museum, a sort of democratic forum on wheels, that travels to schools around the country. According to Director Akku Chowdhury, the space of the Bangladeshi classroom remains undemocratic: desks are arranged in rows; students must stand up to speak and must speak directly to the teacher; free exchange and inquiry are not encouraged. Rather than conduct its programs in the classroom spaces, Liberation War Museum staff park the bus on school grounds and invite students to board. In the intimate space of the bus, surrounded by exhibits on the genocide of Bengali people and their struggles for democracy, the rules and culture of the classroom don't apply. Students sit in a circle and engage in open discussions around questions including Who is Bangladeshi? Which of the country's founding ideals has been realized? Which have not? Where do you see evidence of that? Why do you think this is the case? What can I do to help realize them?

Defining democracy: truth-seeking vs. dialogue. The coalition itself has provided a spirited forum in which to debate how historic sites can serve as democratic institutions and demonstrate democratic processes. At the heart is a debate over what democracy looks like, and what is the most effective path to reaching it. Coalition members come from a wide variety of political contexts. All sites interpret experiences and events that relate to pressing issues of today, but some, like Memoria Abierta, are living in the

immediate aftermath of these events, while others, like the 18th-century Slave House in Senegal, are looking back on a longer legacy. This difference in distance informs how different members view the role of their site in their society, what they view as the most urgent democratic project, and how they seek to engage their audiences.

Some sites, particularly those representing government agencies, such as the U.S. National Park Service, or larger institutions, such as the British National Trust, were concerned that being a site of conscience was too "political." By "political," they meant explicitly advocating a specific position on a contemporary issue, such as who should receive public assistance and for how long, or who should be allowed to immigrate to the United States. Instead, these members resolved to serve as open forums for dialogue on all sides of contemporary debates, taking care to pose questions with a variety of possible answers. For many, that meant including multiple perspectives in their narratives, as in the Tenement Museum's audio introduction to its "sweatshop" exhibit, featuring the voices of workers, contractors, designers, and union organizers. For others, it meant inviting participants from a variety of perspectives to exchange experiences at the site, such as when the Gulag Museum brought together former prisoners and former guards to meet and tell their stories, or when the Japanese American National Museum invited both an INS agent and a former internee to speak on racial profiling.

For other sites, multiple perspec-

tives slapped of moral relativism. Directors of the District Six Museum, Memoria Abierta, and the Liberation War Museum are just a few of the members based in human rights movements. Their projects are an integral part of larger truth-seeking efforts, related to proving that crimes against humanity occurred, bringing perpetrators to justice, and establishing truth commissions. These sites' specific goal within the larger human rights effort is to develop a public consciousness or acceptance of certain facts as indisputable. Exposing the total abrogation of democracy and developing a strong public memory of this abrogation is their highest priority in their effort to build a democratic culture. These sites leave the truths of human rights violations unquestioned, but offer the future of their countries as an open debate, inviting visitors to consider a variety of ways they can participate in shaping it. The District Six Museum asks children of displaced families to return to District Six and imagine the future of the neighborhood. It asks, What are my rights and responsibilities as a citizen? How does my city work? How can I make my city work for me? After telling the story of how torture and abuse occurred under the noses of Argentine people for over a decade,

Memoria Abierta asks, When I see an injustice happening, does it involve me? Am I responsible or implicated?

Spreading the Word

The coalition's greatest ambition is to put itself out of business. We dream of the day when citizens all over the world, faced with a significant social issue, will automatically turn to historic sites to consider and address it. Just as Mandela used the Slave House in Senegal to change race relations in South Africa for decades to come, political leaders can find new incubators of peace on every continent. We dream of the day when historic sites will be seen as some of the most important training grounds for democratic societies, places where young people learn to be active citizens. We hope that historic sites interpreting a single moment or event will be continually renewed by citizens challenging the latest legacy of what happened there as it takes new form in their societies. In short, we dream of the day when the role for historic sites that the coalition envisions is so taken for granted that it needs no name or special group to support it. In the meantime, with great enthusiasm, we challenge ourselves to redefine what historic sites are here to do.

For more information on the Coalition and its member sites, or to download an application, go to <http://www.sitesofconscience.org>.

Endnotes

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Dialogue Between Continents: Civic Engagement and the Gulag Museum at Perm-36, Russia

In December 1999, at the initiative of National Park Service (NPS) Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust, the agency became a founding member of the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience. At the coalition's first formal meeting, Rust met Victor Shmyrov, director of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 in Russia, another founding institution of the coalition. Shmyrov's museum preserves and interprets a Gulag camp built under Joseph Stalin in 1946 in the village of Kutschino, Russia, near the city of Perm. Known as Perm-36, the facility served initially as a regular timber production labor camp. Later, the camp became a particularly isolated and severe facility for high government officials. In 1972, Perm-36 became the primary facility in the country for persons charged with political crimes. Many of the Soviet Union's most prominent dissidents, including Vladimir Bukovsky, Sergei Kovalev, and Anatoly Marchenko, served their sentences there. It was only during the Soviet government's period of "openness" of Glasnost, under President Mikael Gorbachev, that the camp was finally closed in January 1988. Although it is estimated that there were over 12,000 forced labor camps in the former Soviet Union, Perm-36 is the last surviving example from the system.

Since 1996, the museum has undertaken the task of preserving and reconstructing the camp as a historic site. The museum has sent several delegations to the U.S. to learn from the National Park Service. These groups observed interpretive and educational programs, looked at self-financing examples, and visited significant American sites that deal with difficult issues and recent history. During a trip in April 2001, the Gulag Museum's staff asked Rust to send a team of preservation and museum professionals from NPS to visit Perm-36 and provide technical assistance in

four specific areas that required on-site consultation:

1. Surveying all historic structures and developing prioritized guidelines for the stabilization, preservation, treatment, repair, and reconstruction of the built elements of the camp.
2. Reviewing of the museum's organization and staffing with recommendations leading towards meeting international standards for professional museum operations.
3. Creating a museum storage space for the preservation of artifacts and archival materials at the site

and providing recommendations for future preventative conservation treatment.

4. Writing general guidelines for promoting the historic site internationally to visitors through tourism, publications and sales items, and web-based technology.

A team of five NPS professionals, including experts in preservation and museum management, was selected to provide this assistance by traveling to the site and working with key museum staff (Figure 1).

exhibits, and a gallery where he was installing a new temporary exhibit. The exhibit featured family photographs from the Stalinist period, all of which had faces of individual family members removed or blotted out, an apparently common practice among families whose relatives had been identified as political enemies of the state and sent to camps or executed. This eerie and powerful exhibit indicated the history and subject matter the team was to experience in Russia. Once the team arrived in the Ural



Figure 1. The NPS team and staff of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36. Photo by Oleg Trushnikov.

Summary of Itinerary

The team members arrived in Moscow on September 4, 2001. In Moscow, the team was met by Yuri V. Reshetnikov, the primary exhibit designer for the Gulag Museum at Perm-36. The team toured the museum at the Andrei Sakharov Archives, where Reshetnikov had designed the

region, in the city of Perm, the team saw the outside of the prison used to incarcerate and then distribute prisoners to the forced labor camps throughout the region. The prison still holds criminals today. The team also visited the memorial to victims of Soviet repression recently built on the outskirts of town before proceeding to

Perm-36, which lies in a remote area of the Urals about four hours' drive from Perm.

Site History

The Gulag Museum at Perm-36 preserves, documents, and interprets the last surviving forced labor camp of the Soviet era (1917-1992).¹ Its stated mission is to establish a historic site that serves as a memorial museum of the history of political repression and totalitarianism in the former Soviet Union. The museum also seeks to promote democratic values and civil consciousness.

Taken as a whole, the labor camp at Perm-36 powerfully illustrates the entire period of the forced labor camp system in the Soviet era. Although the Czarist regime preceding the Revolution did convict political opponents for crimes against the state and incarcerated them in prisons throughout the remotest parts of the country, the forced labor system implemented by the Bolsheviks was a new phenomenon in Russian history.² The Soviets used the system both as a means of imprisoning those who threatened the state and of providing necessary labor to support the rapid programs of industrialization and economic expansion instituted in the years following the Revolution. This system of forced labor and political repression reached a peak under the rule of Stalin, when the numbers of labor camp prisoners soared to almost three million people in the early 1950s.³ During the entire period of Soviet forced labor camps, from 1917 until 1988, it has been estimated that about 20 million people were imprisoned.⁴ But to fully appre-

ciate the overall impact of such a repressive system, it should also be noted that over a million people worked as camp personnel between the 1920s and 1950s. In other words, the entire society was deeply affected by this social institution, both as oppressor and oppressed.

The labor camp museum in Kutchino is divided into two properties. The main facility served as a forced labor camp and detention center from 1946 to 1988. The second property, less than a mile down the road from the main facility, served as a camp industrial building (ca.1952-ca.1956), soldiers' barracks (ca.1956-ca.1972), and a "maximum security" unit (1979-1988).⁵ This maximum security facility housed those considered especially dangerous by the state: dissidents and human rights activists who continued their public agitation after release from their first prison terms.

The history of Perm-36 can be broken down into three major periods of significance: the Stalinist labor camp (1946-1956), the labor camp for high Soviet officials (1956-1971), and the labor camp for dissidents and human rights activists (1972-1988). Each period illustrates a significant aspect of the history of totalitarianism and political repression in the Soviet Union. The first period documents the typical forced labor camp found throughout the country when the number of prisoners soared after World War II, and the country embarked on a massive reconstruction project. The use of forced labor was an integral part of the post-war economy. As one historian has put it, "in the conditions of the universal postwar

devastation and impoverishment, the Gulag participated in the construction of the Soviet military-industrial complex and helped it grow and gain social prestige.”⁶ All areas of the economy relied to one extent or another on forced labor; the forestry work carried out at this labor camp was quite typical of the period. The second period documents the incarceration of high Soviet officials, including members of the KGB, the judicial branch of government, and the military. These officials, treated as privileged prisoners, nevertheless had to be separated from the rest of the prisoner population because of fears for their security. The final period documents the incarceration of dissidents and human rights activists who posed the most serious threat to the internal stability and security of the Soviet Union. Many of these prisoners had national and international reputations for their work in human rights, national liberation movements, and other dissident activities throughout the Soviet republics. During the last period, the existence and location of the camp was a highly guarded secret. The construction of the maximum security unit in 1979 illustrates further the increasing pressures the Soviet authorities felt to obliterate internal dissent by severely punishing those activists who repeatedly defied the state. Finally, it was this camp that was the last of the forced labor camp system to be closed down in 1988 under President Mikhail Gorbachev’s policies of Glasnost. Today, it stands as the best-preserved reminder of Soviet oppression. When once there were over 12,000 camps in the country, Perm-36 is believed to be the

only intact camp left.

Period 1, 1946-1956: Stalinist labor camp. During the first period, the labor camp served as a typical logging camp established under the Stalinist regime. Built to exploit the heavily forested areas of the Ural region, this camp and many others relied on the manual labor of thousands of imprisoned citizens to provide timber downstream to the many cities and towns devastated during World War II. The timber camps were built from logs as temporary facilities: as soon as the prisoners cleared the forests (about five to ten years), the authorities moved the prisoners into a new section of the forest where they would build a new camp.

This camp also served as a base camp for four satellite camps located deep in the forests. It served as the headquarters for the operation, providing the distribution point for all the prisoners and for food and other supplies. The base camp housed about one thousand prisoners, and each of the four satellite camps housed between six and eight hundred prisoners. The base camp consisted of four barracks with about 200 to 250 prisoners each. It also contained a hospital unit, storage facility, wash house, outhouse, and punishment cell. Less than a mile down the road from the camp, at a site near the Tchusovoy River, a storage area for the logged timber was created. The prisoners at the various camps within the complex hauled the logs to this site during the year, and floated them down river during the spring floods.

Between 1946 and 1951, this labor camp complex was a typical low-secu-

rity camp which housed prisoners sentenced to short terms (up to five years). If the prisoner was finishing up a longer sentence, he might be transferred to such a camp to complete his term. These low-security prisoners were not considered dangerous.

By 1951, the prisoners had fully exploited the forests surrounding the camp and its satellite camps. The satellite camps moved farther from the base camp to better exploit remaining forests, and the base camp was supplied with vehicles for transporting timber. This development was considered technologically advanced in a camp economy system that relied overwhelmingly on manual labor.⁷

Also, at this time (as part of the national reform laws passed in 1948), the Soviet authorities implemented a plan throughout the Soviet labor camp system to administratively separate living zones for prisoners and working-industrial facilities where the work took place. These reforms tried to address the severe problems of overexploitation of the prisoners and improve worker output.⁸

At Perm-36, the newly constructed industrial zone contained buildings to service the vehicles, provide workshop space for the base camp prisoners, provide central heating to the camp, and house an office for accounting and industrial management. In addition, on the area previously used for storing timber near the river, a new facility was constructed to house workshops where the prisoners loaded manufacturing planks into packing boxes.

Because there was less demand for labor at this type of operation than previously required for forestry work-

ers, the total camp population dropped by a half, and two barracks were no longer used. Between 1952 and 1956, one barracks was converted into a canteen and another into a camp headquarters.

Period 2, 1956-1971: Labor camp for Soviet officials. Between 1956 and 1958, the camp was converted to house Soviet officials, including KGB, judicial branch authorities, and military officials accused of abuses of power. These prisoners had to be isolated from the rest of the prisoner population because their lives would have been threatened by other prisoners. Of course, there was great irony in this—that those who had been the oppressors of the innocent became the oppressed themselves. These officials were soon replaced by those Soviet officials accused of criminal activity, such as committing theft or accepting bribes.

The Soviet officials who were imprisoned could not (or would not) perform much labor, and the timber processing operation was closed down. The building built for this use near the river was converted into living quarters for the soldiers who guarded the camp. The rest of the camp remained essentially unchanged. Those prisoners who could work labored in the workshops in the industrial zone.

Period 3, 1972-1988: Labor camp for dissidents and human rights activists. Beginning in the 1960s, each labor camp throughout the Soviet Union was identified by region (letter code) and number. Until 1972, this camp was called “UT-

389/6,” meaning it was located in the Perm region and it was timber camp number 6. Beginning in 1972, when Soviet officials converted the camp into a secret camp for dissidents and human rights activists, the camp location was camouflaged by the two-letter code “BC.” One major concern of the Soviet officials was the ability of dissidents to leak information to the general population and to the foreign press. The camp’s code name was one of many efforts to stop all such leaks. There were a total of thirty-four “normal” labor camps in the Perm region, plus those two set aside for especially dangerous criminals of the state, BC-389/35 and BC-389/36. This number provides the origin of the camp’s name today, “Perm-36.”

The creation of special camps for dissidents and human rights activists, such as Perm-35 and Perm-36, marked a new chapter in Soviet attempts to quiet opposition to the state. The student uprisings in much of Europe in the late 1960s and the challenges from Soviet Bloc countries, particularly Czechoslovakia, fostered an awakening among Soviet intellectuals, many of whom circulated their opposition through the Samizdat (underground press) to fellow Soviet citizens and abroad. Their collective resistance created a serious problem for the Soviets, both in terms of maintaining internal stability and promoting a positive image abroad.

Perm-36 was identified as the best place for these dissidents because it had been very well secured while used as a camp for high Soviet officials. The high Soviet officials were transferred to a new facility at Nizhniy Taghil in

1971, and in the year that followed, the camp was again reconfigured to house the dissident population. The headquarters was reconstructed in masonry, a new outhouse was built, the paths were paved, and a new barracks for guards was built outside the camp fence. In the industrial zone, the workshop and maintenance shed (Building 11) were reconfigured to house new machinery for the production of parts for domestic laundry irons. When production began sometime in 1972, the prisoners produced parts for a manufacturing plant located about 50 kilometers from the camp. Some of the prisoners worked in general camp maintenance, such as in the forge shop and in the boiler house. On July 13, 1972, the first 300 prisoners were transferred from Mordoviya.

Although the make-up of the prisoner population at Perm-36 changed from year to year, about 50% had been convicted of anti-Soviet propaganda, about 25% had been convicted of treason, and about 25% had been convicted of Nazi collaboration during World War II.

In the early 1970s, the problem of repeat offenders among dissidents and human rights activists was relatively minor. As the decade wore on, however, it became an increasing problem for the Soviet authorities. In their search for a new place to provide almost complete isolation for the recidivists, the authorities identified the former guard barracks near the Perm-36 camp as an ideal location. The building was reconstructed and the immediate surrounding area was reinforced with a series of barbed wire and high wooden fences topped with watchtowers in

1979. An administration building and checkpoint was constructed, as was a barracks for the guards. On March 1, 1980, the first 23 or 24 prisoners arrived. Here the prisoners experienced almost total isolation for ten-year terms. They lived under the harshest of conditions in cramped twenty-four-hour-locked cells with one or three other prisoners, worked in small workshops in the same build-

ing, and exercised in small pens, closed boxes lined with metal and covered with barbed wire, not much larger than their cells. During the course of their term they saw only the other prisoners in their cell and the guards who ushered them from place to place within the building (Figure 2).

Perm-36 ceased operation as a labor camp, the last to close in the Soviet Union, in January 1988.



Figure 2. The guard tower at the maximum security unit. *Photo by William Brookover, National Park Service.*

Civic Engagement at the Gulag Museum

Over the past several years, the Gulag Museum has developed a number of impressive educational programs for visitors to the site and for schools throughout the Perm region.

First and foremost, the Gulag Museum is a historic site. It uses a real place to teach about the history of totalitarianism and political repression in the former Soviet Union. Drawing on the three major periods of significance, a rich program of sharing the complex history of the place and discussion is presented to the site's 30,000 annual visitors.⁹ The museum staff sees the site as a vehicle to teach visitors about the darker side of the Soviet past: to understand how a population is affected living under a totalitarian system of government. Although they are concerned with such questions as "What happened here in this place?" they are even more interested in asking "How does a totalitarian state affect the individual citizen?" In addressing these questions to Russians today, they ask how the system of repression that existed not even a generation ago *still* affects Russian citizens and all of Russia today.

The site itself possesses great power. Even unfurnished and in its present state of incomplete reconstruction, it conveys a remarkable sense of the power of the state and the vulnerability of the individual. The labor camp's remote location, its Spartan structures, the rows of wooden and barbed wire barriers (fully reconstructed in the maximum security unit) all convey a powerful story even

without the narrative intervention of tour guides, exhibits, or furnished interiors. The museum is lucky to have a remarkable understanding of the site's history and significance already.

The museum's director, Victor Shmyrov, has clearly articulated one key point in developing the desired visitor experience: knowledge and education must be primary to the experience, emotion must remain secondary. As stated above, visiting the Gulag Museum is a truly powerful experience. Visitors, particularly Russians, often respond emotionally to this experience because it brings up highly charged feelings about the nation's recent past. There is certainly a place for emotion and reflection in the desired visitor experience, but it cannot be at the sake of educating the public about the system of political repression that permeated Russia under the Gulag system. Visitors to the site are encouraged to discuss, debate, and engage the subject matter intellectually as a necessary foil to the emotional reactions the place elicits.

Hard work is already paying off. The Perm regional government has publicly acknowledged its belief that the presence of the museum and its educational programs the area has positively influenced the democratic process in the region. More and more teachers want to bring their classes to the site, and the demand for traveling exhibits on the Gulag system has steadily increased. The museum is now working with the regional government to amend the school curriculum to include the repressive history of Soviet Russia and the introduction of

liberal democratic values in the nation.

The museum is now collaborating with a number of NPS sites to create an exhibit for American sites to host. The exhibit will incorporate civic engagement principles in its organization—stating questions and encouraging the audience to enter the conversation. Formal dialogue opportunities and educational programs will accompany the exhibit to ensure that all visitors have an opportunity to engage the material.

Conclusion

It is difficult to articulate in words the power conveyed by visiting the museum at Perm-36. Imagine if a group of dedicated Americans had established a historic site museum at a slave auction site or plantation at the end of the Reconstruction period in the 1870s. Imagine the power that experience would have had for visitors who had recently been enslaved or owned slaves. Imagine the kinds of dialogue it could have created. Imagine the potential impact of such an historic site in the country as it moved to

enact restrictive codes for African Americans and Jim Crow laws. This analogy points to the kind of power the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 conveys to Russian and international visitors today.

For the group of NPS professionals, the visit had tremendous impact, even though few of us knew much about the Gulag system and the millions of people it affected before going on the trip. To hear first-hand from those who lived in and survived the system provides an unprecedented opportunity for learning and greater international understanding. The visit was made all that more poignant, when the events of September 11, 2001, put an exclamation point on our experience. The team had struggled to understand how an entire population could be controlled by fear. After learning of the tragedies in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania perhaps we had a better understanding of just how that can happen. Thanks to the efforts of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36, Russia will not forget and it will not happen again.

Endnotes

1. Sources: Victor Shmyrov, the museum's director and a professionally trained historian of 20th-century Russian history, provided most of the detailed information about the camp's history during interviews with him and his staff on September 8 and 9, 2001. For contextual information, several published sources were consulted, including Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (New York: Bantam Books, 1963); Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the Gulag: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993); Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000); and Natan Sharansky, *Fear No Evil* (New York: Random House, 1988).
2. Jakobson, *Origins of the Gulag*, p. 10; Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, p. 12.
3. Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, p. xv.
4. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
5. Various terms have been used by the Gulag Museum staff to describe this unit of the camp, including "extraordinarily severe camp," "extremely severe camp," "especially severe camp," and "maximum security camp." All of these terms except the last sound awkward in the English language. This paper uses the term "maximum security," even though the facility as it existed at Perm-36 provided much harsher conditions than at any maximum security prisons in the United States.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

7. Ibid., pp. 116-117.
8. Ibid., p. 109.
9. This visitation figure was quoted by Shmyrov several times while visiting the U.S. in November 2002. Although about 8,000 people actually visit the camp, 30,000 people are reached annually through programs, traveling exhibits, and museum activities. Visitation projections at the museum suggest that this number may quadruple in the next five years.

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